



Diving Into the Los Angeles River

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Picture courtesy of Los Angeles Magazine.

Historical Timeline of the LA River

1870-1880 -
Population in Los
Angeles increases &
demand for water.



1969 - Cuyahoga
River Fire



1972 - Clean Water
Act (CWA) Passed

2008 - Kayakers
kayaked 51 miles
down the Los
Angeles River



2015 - Obama
Administration
institutes Clean
Water Act.



1938 - Los Angeles
River Flood and
involvement of U.S
Army Corps of
Engineers



1970 -
Environmental
Protection Agency is
established




2006 - *Rapanos v.
United States*

2010 - Los Angeles
River came under
protection of the
CWA.



2016 - Trump
Administration
prompts the EPA to
dismantle the rule.

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- A black and white photograph of a natural landscape. In the foreground, there is a field of low-lying vegetation and shrubs. In the background, there are dense trees and a line of what appears to be a fence or a ridge. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a bulleted list of text.
- Long ago, Los Angeles was submerged in water alongside the formation of mountains that is now known as the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys.
 - The unconstrained run-off into the Los Angeles Basin provided the city with an exquisite and large amount of topography such as shrubs, forests, dense woods, and wild animals.
 - Some examples of the native vegetation that the Los Angeles area had to offer was large riots of native wildflowers, wild grapes, sage, rose bushes, and sycamore trees.



- The Los Angeles area also provided wetlands in which it included river systems that provided clean and infiltrate more water and supported a large amount of biodiversity in the Los Angeles region.
- The River also provided rich sedimentary deposits from their periodic floods which helped California become the leading agricultural state at that time.




As the population increased in Los Angeles in the late nineteenth century (1870-1880) as did the demand for water. This rapid growth necessitated the expansion of the domestic water system, however, despite the additional reservoir systems, water was sparse, and more resources were needed.

By the 1930's, the city of Los Angeles rapidly expanded into areas where the river caused a great deal of flooding, in which it cost millions of dollars' worth of damages.

This created a conflict between the city's head of development and the river's unpredictable nature.





The Los Angeles flood of 1938 was the turning point for all water systems within the surrounding areas. This historical disaster ultimately drove the involvement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin encasing the river in a deep concrete passage, which would be used to efficiently move flood water and prevent spilling.



A river that was once an ecosystem used for traveling and simply enjoying was turned into a cement waterway. According to *The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death and Possible Rebirth*, the entire process took nearly 20 years and 3.5 million barrels of cement.





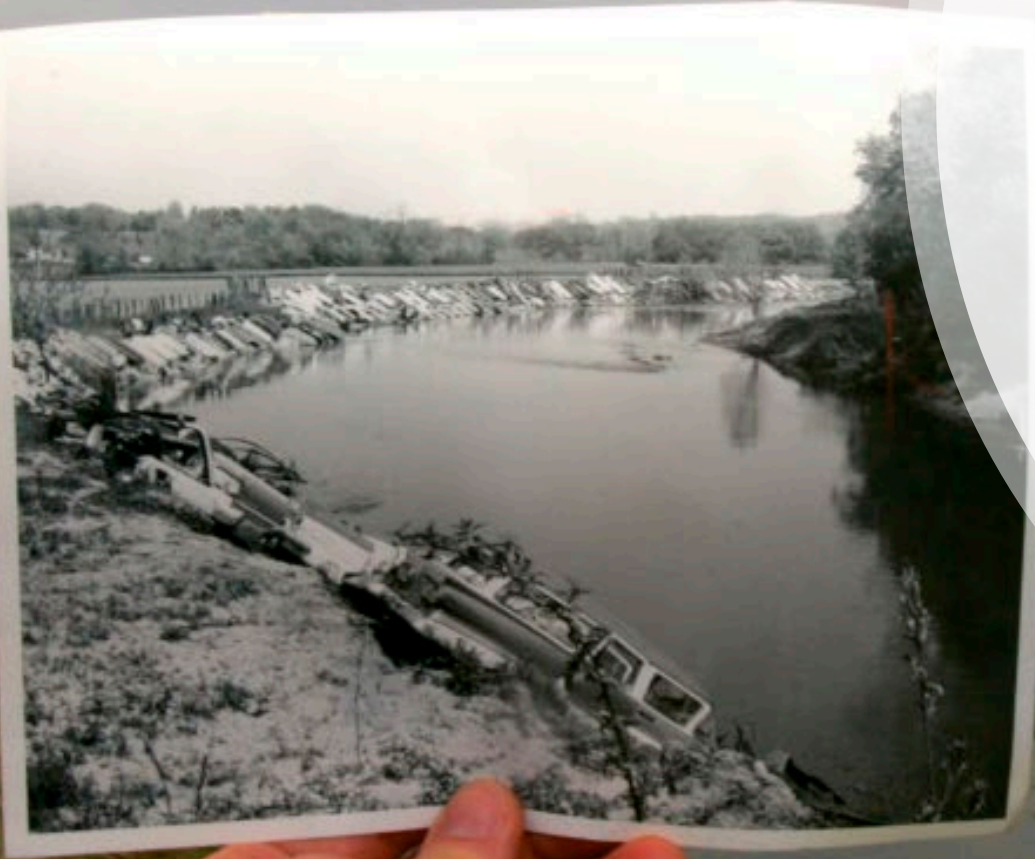
The destruction of the original Los Angeles River and the making of what one writer called 'an inhospitable drainage ditch' brought many advocates and protestors. Specifically, one writer by the name of Lewis McAdams who believed the river should be opened and enjoyed by the people.

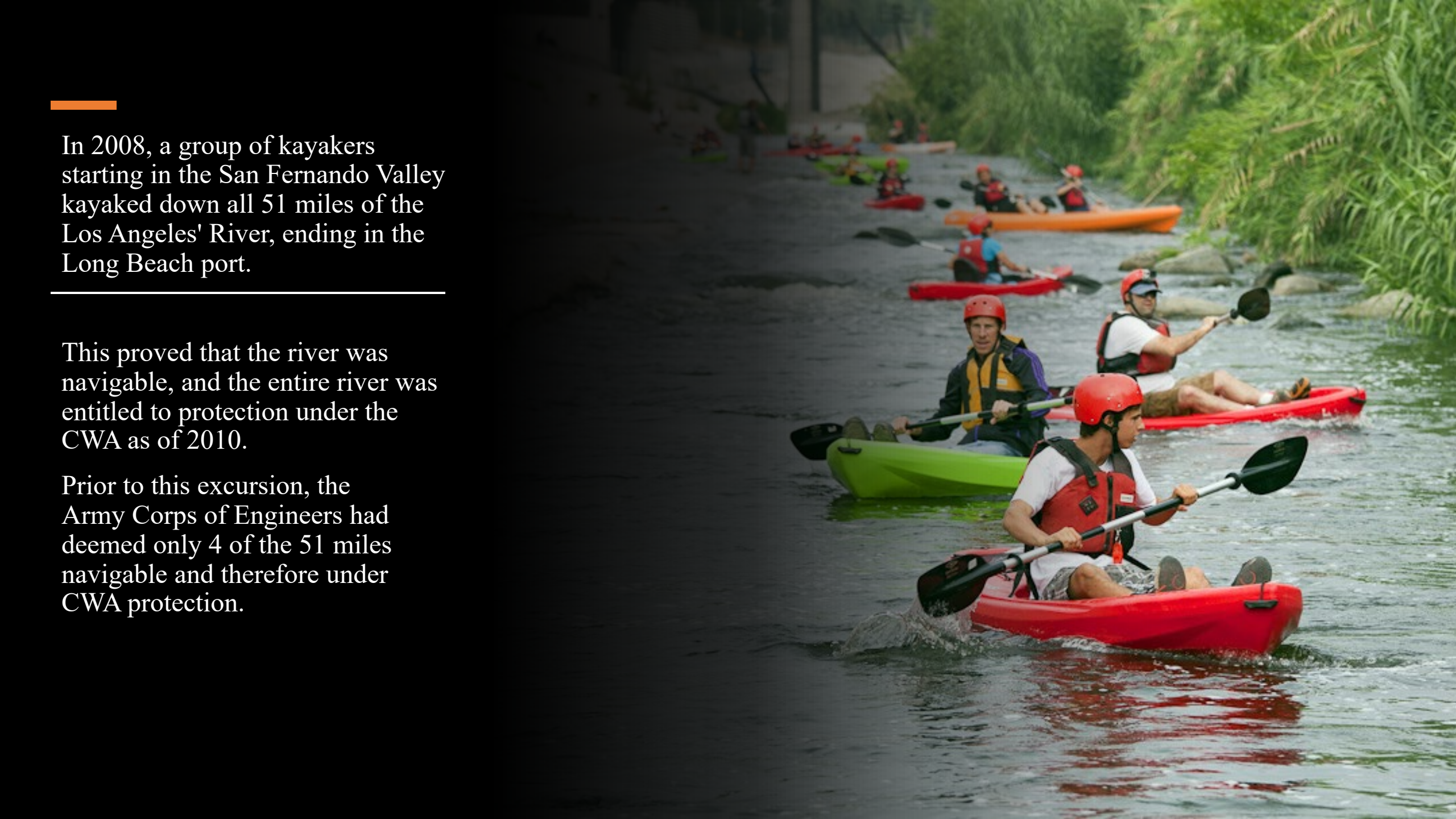
In fact, he was so determined that he founded a non-profit called Friends of the Los Angeles River, which advocated for both the protection and restoration of the natural and historic heritage of the river. Because of his advocacy, by 1997 Los Angeles County had constructed a plan to do just that and in the same year the first bike path was created on the Elysian Valley section of the river.

Following the Cuyahoga River Fire of 1969, the Environmental Protection Agency was created and in 1972 President Nixon signed the Clean Water Act into law.

Regulating water quality standards and pollution input for navigable waters of the United States (WOTUS). The original definition of WOTUS was limited to navigable surface waters that would be used for commerce.

In the 2006 *Rapanos v. United States* case which failed to reach an opinion, Justice Scalia wrote that the CWA did not refer to "occasional", "intermittent", or "ephemeral" flows of water in its definition of WOTUS.



A group of kayakers are paddling down a river. In the foreground, a man in a red helmet and life vest is in a red kayak, paddling. Behind him, another man in a red helmet and life vest is in a green kayak. Further back, several other kayakers are visible, some in orange and red kayaks. The river is surrounded by lush green vegetation on the right bank. The water is dark and calm.

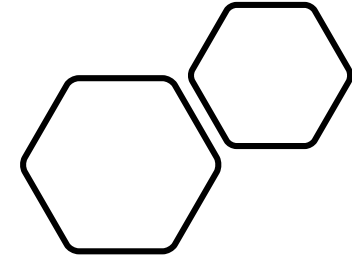
In 2008, a group of kayakers starting in the San Fernando Valley kayaked down all 51 miles of the Los Angeles' River, ending in the Long Beach port.

This proved that the river was navigable, and the entire river was entitled to protection under the CWA as of 2010.

Prior to this excursion, the Army Corps of Engineers had deemed only 4 of the 51 miles navigable and therefore under CWA protection.

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In 2015, the Obama Administration instituted the Clean Water Rule which clarified and expanded the reach of the CWA.

In 2016, the Trump Administration ordered the EPA to dismantle this rule, limiting what are considered WOTUS. This eliminates case-by-case nexus of what is considered a WOTUS and increases corporations and polluters ability to discharge effluents into water bodies.

Repealing the Clean Water Rule could have significant impacts on tributaries connecting to the Los Angeles River, possibly affecting water quality for thousands of residents.

To get involved with the Los Angeles River Clean Up project go to Friends of the LA River.com to sign up for restoration and clean-up projects.

<https://folar.org/get-involved/>



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