



Parks Improve Our Water Quality

Parks offer a natural way to improve the quality of our drinking water and beaches.

Watersheds are a geographic area that rivers, streams, and tributaries flow into. For Southern California, our largest watershed is the Santa Ana River. The headwaters start in the San Bernardino Mountains and run more than 110 miles through San Bernardino and Riverside Counties emptying into the Pacific Ocean in Orange County.

Residents at the top of the watershed can greatly affect the water quality for those living downstream and for our ocean. For example, a cigarette butt flicked out of a car in Redlands can make its way to Huntington Beach—scores of miles away. Therefore, having a mechanism to clean the water along the way is important.

Natural lands along the river and the river itself provide important and eco-friendly opportunities

to reduce pollution, capture debris, and allow water to percolate into underground aquifers. Riparian (stream-loving) vegetation slows the water down enough to sift out the larger debris particles and can capture them for easier removal before they reach our coastline.

Trash is carried down the watershed and can end up at our beaches, polluting them and forcing beach closures because of harmful bacteria and debris.

Many of our communities are covered with pavement and buildings. This hardscape impedes the ability of our lands to naturally filter the water. Permeable surfaces, like those found in parks, improve our water quality and keep our oceans clean.

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