



Compton Creek

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson was in Los Angeles today, announcing an official EPA finding that [Compton Creek, a portion of the Los Angeles River, is a “navigable water” of the United States](#). This finding means that Compton Creek can receive the protection of the Clean Water Act: most prominently, it means that any attempts to fill it or otherwise degrade it must receive a Section 404 permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers. It’s an important protection: a nice backgrounder is [here](#).

And there was Villaraigosa, standing right next to Jackson. The Mayor certainly made sure that everyone knew he would be there. Earlier in the day, he sent out a press advisory heralded a “major announcement” with Jackson, and [blogged about it](#) (or had a staffer blog about it) on the Huff Po.

Great — except what precisely is he going to do about it? Why is it relevant to the policy of the City of Los Angeles?

Well, the City could fork over some restoration money — unlikely in this budgetary environment. Or it could do some serious organizing around the project. Or the Mayor could personally do some fundraising for it. Or he could ensure that every member of Congress that represents the area (all of them Democrats) could know about this project and support it. Or a whole lot of things.



What we get is this:

Working with community partners and the federal government, we can make the LA river a place where Angelenos hike, picnic, swim, and fish together.

That's it. No action plans, no follow-through, nothing.

I think that Villaraigosa would be happy if the Los Angeles River was restored. But what will he do? Cue the crickets.

UPDATE: Okay, I wrote too fast, straying into an area I don't know much about (the Clean Water Act) in order to make a point about something I *do* know about (local environmental policy). Administrator Jackson said that a finding that the entire LA River is "traditionally navigable" would put it *and all its tributaries* under federal jurisdiction. But as [Sean argued some time ago](#), that's not really the issue because there are a lot of hooks for federal jurisdiction aside from navigability: there may be some regulatory implications, but the feds have a lot of authority either way.

If Sean is right, which I suspect is the case, then the whole Compton Creek thing was a pure photo-op; if Jackson's statement is right, then as far as Villaraigosa is concerned, it's *still* a pure photo-op, because he still has no plan for advancing the ball on the issue.