

## **Background on the Santa Ana Sucker Issue**

Last year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued a draft rule designating most of the Santa Ana River, and other areas, as critical habitat for the Santa Ana Sucker, a small native fish listed as a federal Threatened Species in 2000. A group of 15 agencies spanning from Big Bear to Orange County, and Southern California Edison have formed to coordinate their efforts through the Santa Ana Sucker Task Force (Task Force) to respond to the proposed designation through a biological and economical study. This designation examination stems from a lawsuit settlement with environmental groups and USFWS and is anticipated to examine over 9600 acres, 6500 of which are located in the Santa Ana River and its tributaries, including Mill Creek.

The Santa Ana Sucker's habitat in the Santa Ana River is predominantly in the Riverside area in locations with gravel bottoms. Juveniles prefer water slightly shallower as compared to adults at 18 inches. The Santa Ana Water Shed Project Authority has studied the Santa Ana Sucker in the Riverside area for many years and reports have identified and estimated its population from just a few fish to nearly 3500 fish per mile, depending on the year and section of river observed. Because of the information known about the Santa Ana Sucker it is not presumed to live in the upper reaches on the Santa Ana River. Flows in the upper reaches are less consistent and often no flows are present at all. Flows in the Riverside area of the Santa Ana River are far more stable as the river receives water on a constant basis for a City of San Bernardino wastewater treatment plant. . At that time the level of effort and cost was not known. Through the efforts of the Task Force and San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (Valley District), who are coordinating this effort, a budget and list of tasks has been established.