

# Props for Clean Water

Los Angeles keeps eye on clean water goals through stormwater improvements.

**T**he \$500-million Proposition O (Prop O) clean water bond, approved by Los Angeles voters in 2004, is currently funding 32 stormwater improvement projects in the second largest city in America. It is full steam ahead for the coastal city as it builds these improvements that will clean up pollution from its rivers, lakes, and beaches. Prop O is committed to protecting water quality, providing flood protection, increasing water conservation, providing habitat protection, and creating open space.

As of April 2010, nine out of the 32 bond projects have been completed, and eight more are in construction. Projects include low flow diversion structures, installations of detention tanks and hydrodynamic separators, wetlands, and stormwater best management practices such as biofiltration systems, catch basin screens, and permeable pavement.

Prop O projects will help Los Angeles comply with water quality requirements by the California Coastal Commission and the EPA. Design and construction of these projects are managed by the city's bureaus of engineering and sanitation. The Bureau of Contract Administration provides inspection services to ensure that the projects are built according to contract plans and specifications. A Citizens Oversight Advisory Committee and Administrative Oversight Committee are also involved to make sure that each Proposition O dollar is spent towards water quality improvement projects. For more information about the Los Angeles Proposition O bond program, go to [www.LAPropO.org](http://www.LAPropO.org) or call 213-978-0333.



*The Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation project will improve lake water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and improve the urban park by constructing in-lake basin improvements, in-lake vegetation and habitat improvements, and parkland structural best management practices.*



*Riprap protects the soil from erosion in front of the storm drain on a median along Imperial Highway in Los Angeles.*





*Catch basin inserts and covers, installed in three phases. Phase 1 (completed): 8,000 inserts and 6,000 screens installed to achieve 20 percent trash reduction in the Ballona Creek and Los Angeles River watersheds. Phase 2 (completed): Installed 6,400 screens to increase trash reduction from 20 percent achieved in Phase 1 to 30 percent in the Ballona Creek and Los Angeles River watersheds. Phase 3 (in progress): Installation of 34,000 more catch basin screen covers.*



*Upgrades are being made to an existing stormwater double-box culvert to allow dry weather flows into a low flow diversion unit in the Pacific Palisades.*



*One of seven bioretention filters installed in Venice as part of the grand Boulevard Tree Wells project.*



*The Imperial Highway Median Stormwater best management practices project treats urban runoff through infiltration trenches and vegetation.*

## Water and Wastewater Rate Survey Results

Results from the sixth *50 Largest Cities Water and Wastewater Rate Survey* are now available. The survey highlights customer charges for water and sewer service for residential, industrial, and commercial customers.

“This survey is a tool for managers of water infrastructure to see how their rates compare with national trends,” said John Kersten, Associate Vice President and Water Industry Lead in Black & Veatch’s management consulting division. “The primary source of income for these utilities to pay for operating, maintaining, expanding, and updating their infrastructure is through water and sewer rate collections, which must be continuously adjusted to address rising costs.”

Black & Veatch’s analysis cites five key issues that influence rates and sheds more detail around the value of water and wastewater services and the solutions needed to address these two areas of vital infrastructure:

**Commodity price increases.** Primarily in electricity, chemicals, and natural gas costs. A leading contributor to operating and maintenance costs of water and wastewater facilities—highlighting the important inter-relationship or nexus of water and energy.

**Lower consumption and high fixed cost.** In gener-

al, demand or a consumer’s usage is declining while many utility costs, such as debt service, are fixed. Since most pricing structures include volume-based charges, revenues are declining while costs are not.

**Benefits.** Pension obligations and health care benefits are prompting an increase in labor costs.

**Influence of wastewater legal action.** Significant capital programs are being implemented in most major cities to comply with legal action related to wastewater system performance.

**Aging infrastructure.** Updating and replacing aging infrastructure are significant costs for most water and sewer utilities.

Analysis of the 2010 survey results indicates the average annual increase in typical residential water bills is about 5.3 percent from 2001 through 2009, while the increase in typical residential sewer bills is approximately 5.5 percent. This trend correlates with findings from *The 2009 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure*, published by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), showing about \$2.2 trillion of investment is needed to improve vital infrastructure over the next five years. The full Black & Veatch survey results are available at [www.bv.com/top50ratesurvey](http://www.bv.com/top50ratesurvey).