



25 Years as LA's Water Watchdog

LOS ANGELES  
**WATERKEEPER**®

2014-2018 IMPACT REPORT





# A MESSAGE FROM BRUCE REZNIK

For a quarter century, Los Angeles Waterkeeper (LAW) has served as LA’s water watchdog, safeguarding our inland and coastal waters using the law, science and community action. We work to eliminate pollution, achieve ecosystem health for our waterways and secure a resilient, multi-benefit, low-carbon water supply for the region.

## We’re on the water, in the water, and in the community fighting for clean water for all Angelenos.

We’re behind the scenes, holding our elected and appointed leaders accountable to a clean water agenda. We’re in the streets, in the dead of night, collecting runoff in the pouring rain to hold industrial polluters accountable. We’re on our boat, patrolling Santa Monica Bay to prevent illegal fishing and dumping. We’re in the field, investigating water quality at forgotten stretches of LA’s once-thriving river and creeks. We’re downtown in the courtroom, defending our clean water rules and pushing our lawmakers to do better.

Through the relentless advocacy of LAW and our many partners, the Los Angeles region is poised to invest more than \$20 billion in our water infrastructure over the next two decades. It is up to us to ensure that our investments are spent wisely—implementing multi-benefit stormwater capture projects, enhancing wastewater recycling efforts, cleaning up our contaminated groundwater, and ensuring LA River restoration maximizes ecological health while safeguarding local communities.

Read on to learn more about our vision and the immense progress our small team has already made in pursuit of swimmable, drinkable, fishable water for all Angelenos.

Sincerely,

Bruce Reznik  
Your Los Angeles Waterkeeper

# OUR THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

How does Los Angeles Waterkeeper address the complex issues facing our rivers, streams, and coastal areas? We treat our waterways as we would a patient who needs to be nursed back to health. First, identify and address the source of pollution. Next, restore ecological integrity to our waterways. Finally, make fundamental changes to the way we manage our water for longterm health. Understanding these priorities is key to achieving a climate-resilient, equitable water management system.



## POLLUTION PREVENTION

Eliminate ongoing pollution from sewage spills, industrial facilities, and urban runoff.



## HEALTHY HABITATS

Restore ecological integrity to our coastal and inland waterways.



## SYSTEMS CHANGE

Make fundamental changes to the way we manage our water to be smarter, more equitable and sustainable.

# ABOUT US

## Our Mission

Los Angeles Waterkeeper safeguards LA's inland and coastal waters by enforcing laws and empowering communities.

## Our Vision

Los Angeles Waterkeeper envisions the Los Angeles region as an international leader in integrated, sustainable and equitable water management; a region that is water self-sufficient, and where all waterways throughout the county are safe, healthy, and accessible to the public as major amenities.

## Our Values

### TRANSPARENT

Providing the public, decision-makers, our partners and media with the rationale for our actions and raising the level of public discourse about the issues in which we engage

### PRINCIPLED

Basing our decisions on the best available scientific, legal and public policy rationale, while taking ownership of our actions and demanding the same from others

### IMPACTFUL

Addressing the most pressing issues affecting the health of our inland and coastal waters and seeking to address the root causes of degradation so that we are as effective as possible

### TENACIOUS

Advocating passionately and fearlessly for those policies and actions necessary to ensure the health and safety of our local waterways, even in the face of potential repercussions

### EMPOWERING

Inspiring and engaging local communities throughout LA County to steward our shared environment

### COLLABORATIVE

Valuing the power of relationships and building broad-based coalitions to help ensure that generations to come will be able to better enjoy the region's resources



# Our Team

**Sharon Soormaghen**, Communications Manager / **Arthur Pugsley**, Senior Attorney /  
**Rebecca Light**, Office Manager / **Michael Quill**, Marine Programs Director / **Mithsy Hernandez**,  
Outreach & Volunteer Coordinator / **Melissa von Mayrhauser**, Watershed Programs Manager /  
**Bruce Reznik**, Executive Director / **Kelly Clark**, Staff Attorney / Not pictured: **Liz Jones**, Staff  
Attorney / **Geraldine Burrola**, Development Manager / **Danielle Sidaros**, Accountant



**\$300 million**

secured per year to fund multi-benefit stormwater capture projects in Los Angeles County through the passage of Measure W

**50+**

**industrial facilities**

brought into compliance with environmental rules through our enforcement actions



**1,000 miles  
of cleaner roads**

from reduced urban runoff across Los Angeles and Ventura Counties thanks to our lawsuit against CalTrans

**1,200 meters  
along the LA River  
and its tributaries**

**monitored**  
for water quality and  
ecosystem health

**35,000**  
hours volunteered  
since 2014

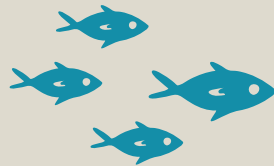
**150+ MPA**  
violations reported  
to CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife  
between 2014-2018

**43+ miles**  
of coastline patrolled  
in our LA County Marine Protected Areas



**90%**

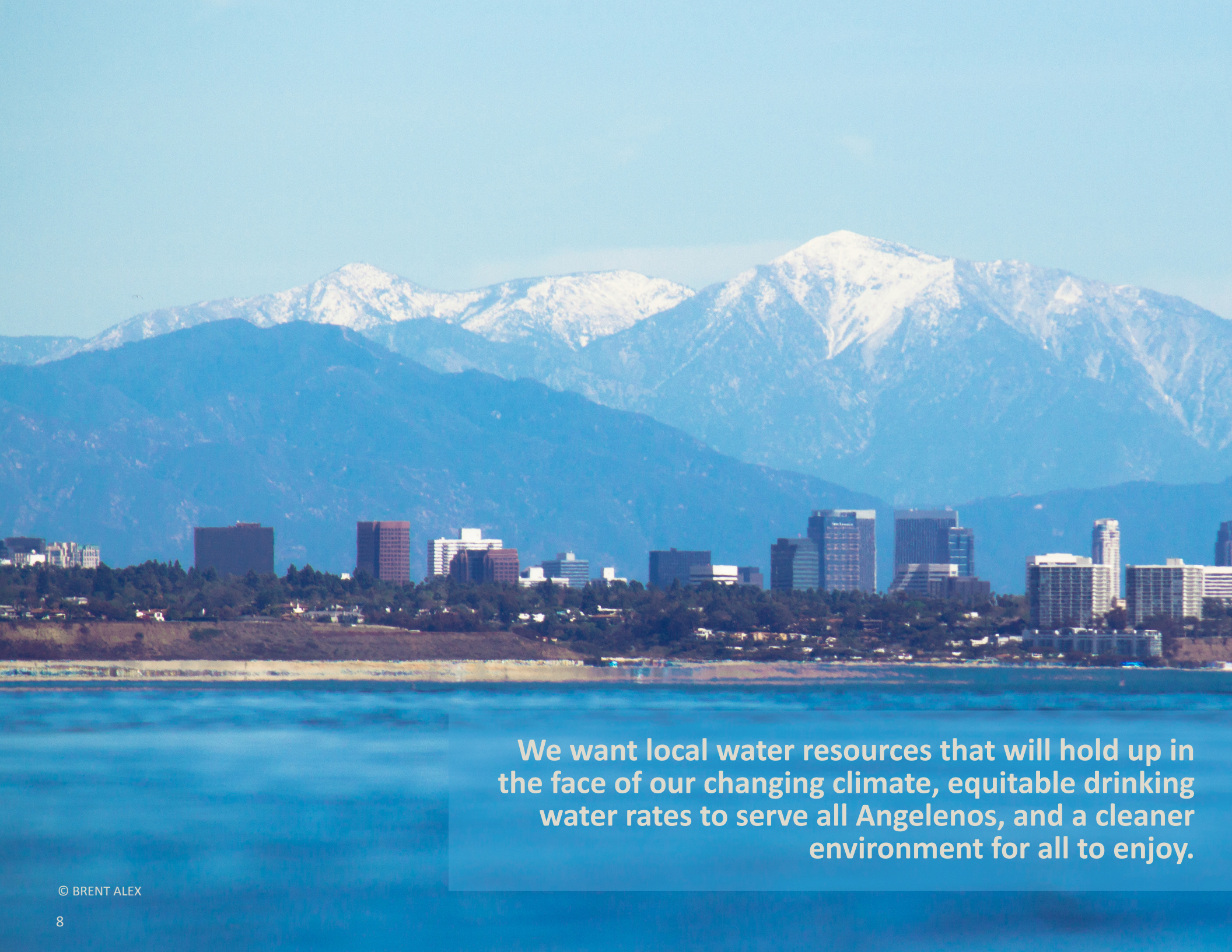
**90% reduction**  
in sewage spills  
since 2000 thanks to  
our landmark settlement  
with the City of LA



**360 dives**

helped transform 25 acres  
of barren reef into  
flourishing kelp forest





**We want local water resources that will hold up in the face of our changing climate, equitable drinking water rates to serve all Angelenos, and a cleaner environment for all to enjoy.**



# OUR VISION FOR LOS ANGELES

LA was built on concrete infrastructure designed to fill our taps with water from what were once considered limitless sources: Western rivers. We looked at rainwater as a liability that brought the dangers of flooding along with it. We flushed our pollution problems down the storm drains, through our concretized rivers-turned-flood-control-channels, and out to sea.

But LA is transforming. Grey to green. Importing to localizing. Liabilities to assets. We understand the risks of our changing climate and the pollution burdens our disadvantaged communities face at disproportionate rates.

If we focus on developing LA's local water portfolio and eliminating investment in expensive, energy-intensive water transfers and ocean desalination projects, we can ensure a sustainable water supply for LA while reducing pollution and minimizing our carbon footprint.

We can accomplish this through our "4-R" integrated approach to water management:

**REDUCE** Alleviate demand through conservation and efficiency measures

**REUSE** Invest in multi-benefit stormwater capture and use

**RECYCLE** Expand successful wastewater purification programs

**RESTORE** Remediate contaminated groundwater supplies



## MEASURE W

Urban and stormwater runoff is the single largest source of pollution to the region's inland and coastal waterways, and LA sees an astounding 100 billion gallons of runoff every year. Thanks to LAW's leadership and the work of a broad coalition, Measure W – LA County's Safe Clean Water Measure – passed with 69.45% of the vote in November 2018. This means we now have \$300 million per year to invest in projects to capture, clean, store and reuse urban and stormwater runoff, while creating vibrant green spaces across LA!

# OUR VISION FOR THE LOS ANGELES RIVER



## RAFT

Through our River Assessment Fieldwork Team (RAFT), community members embark on monthly excursions to monitor water quality and ecological health along ten stretches of the river and its tributaries.

By investigating both hard-bottom and soft-bottom sites, volunteers see firsthand how a more natural river can ease pollution concerns. RAFT members gain scientific monitoring skills and develop the ability to advocate for the health of the river.

Most people think of the 51-mile Los Angeles River as a concretized flood channel blighting local communities, housing LA's massive homeless population, and transporting polluted stormwater and sewage to our coast. What if the river could once again serve as the lifeline and jewel of our region, weaving together our diverse communities and powering our economy and growth?

Although revitalization efforts have garnered international attention, the sad truth is that ecological restoration and neighborhood protections along the entirety of the river have taken a backseat to economic development opportunities that threaten to undermine environmental and community well-being.


This fractured approach won't heal our river. Los Angeles Waterkeeper is dedicated to developing and promoting a shared, holistic vision for the LA River as soon as possible; otherwise, opportunities to prevent displacement, create a more natural river, and ensure a thriving river and communities will be foreclosed for generations to come.



We want to see a healthy LA River that supports abundant wildlife, connects river-adjacent communities, protects local neighborhoods from flood risk and displacement, promotes climate resiliency, and enhances community health, equity, and economic opportunity.







**LAW is fighting to ensure a healthy, vibrant, and natural coastline that promotes access for all Angelenos while serving as an economic and community resource.**

# OUR VISION FOR THE COAST

What could be more quintessential Los Angeles than the image of the sun setting over the Pacific Ocean? Our iconic beaches are treasures here in Southern California. We cherish the coast as our free playground. LA County beaches attract 50 million people and generate \$16 billion in economic activity every year. So why do we treat our ocean as a dumping ground?

We discharge 500 million gallons of treated sewage into the ocean every day in Los Angeles. Ocean dumping is not only tragic for our marine ecosystem, it's also wasteful. Instead of letting wastewater pollute our coast, LAW has been advocating—and even suing—to ensure our local water agencies dramatically increase our already existing water recycling programs.

Curbing ocean dumping is just one battle in the fight for our coast. It's equally important that we thwart continued industrialization of our shoreline, which is why we successfully campaigned against repowering LA's coastal power plants and continue to oppose efforts to build seawater desalination facilities in the South Bay.



## MPA WATCH

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is an area of the ocean where consumptive human activities, such as fishing, are limited or restricted in order to protect or conserve marine life or habitats. In 2010, the Southern California MPAs were adopted, and we established our MPA Watch Boat-Based Survey Program shortly after. We bring more than 300 volunteers on board every year to collect critical data that helps improve management of these “underwater parks,” and to provide once-in-a-lifetime experiences on the water. We are proud that this program promotes coastal access for students, underserved youth, volunteers, and Angelenos of all stripes!



# 5 years A LOOK BACK



## 2014

### DIRTY FOR THE DROUGHT LAUNCHES

Thousands of Angelenos join LAW by taking a pledge to forgo washing their cars for 60 days in an effort to raise awareness about the increasingly severe drought conditions facing Southern California.



### SETTLEMENT REACHED WITH MAGIC MOUNTAIN

LAW, along with Wishtoyo Foundation, Ventura Coastkeeper and Friends of the Santa Clara River, reached an agreement that holds Magic Mountain accountable for the trash and pollution they were contributing to the Santa Clara River.

### NEW LEADERSHIP

LA Waterkeeper appoints new CEO, Bruce Reznik: longtime San Diego Coastkeeper Executive Director, founding member of the California Coastkeeper Alliance, and Waterkeeper Alliance Board member.

## 2015

# 2016

## SETTLEMENT WITH LA COUNTY OVER CLEAN WATER ACT

LAW and NRDC reached a settlement with LA County over Clean Water Act violations resulting in \$4 million for a 'green street' in Watts and stormwater capture projects in LA's most underserved communities.



## COMMUNITY WATER WATCH LAUNCHED

Having worked with community members to help collect and test water samples almost since our inception, LAW launched Community Water Watch to engage volunteers in sampling stormwater runoff from heavily polluting industrial facilities during storms.



## SEWAGE SPILLS DOWN 90%

City of Los Angeles reports record-low sewage spills, down 90% since 2000, thanks to our landmark 1998 lawsuit against the city over chronic spills.

## INDUSTRIAL SETTLEMENT YIELDS FIRST ZERO-DISCHARGE AGREEMENT

In a settlement with LAW over stormwater violations, Davis Wire commits to capturing all of the stormwater from its 35-acre Irwindale facility on-site, effectively achieving 'zero discharge.'

# 2017



## PROTECTIONS FOR SEA OTTERS RESTORED

Judge restores protections for otters in areas surrounding their habitat in litigation joined by LAW, The Otter Project & EDC.

# 2018

## MALIBU WATER TREATMENT FACILITY OPENS

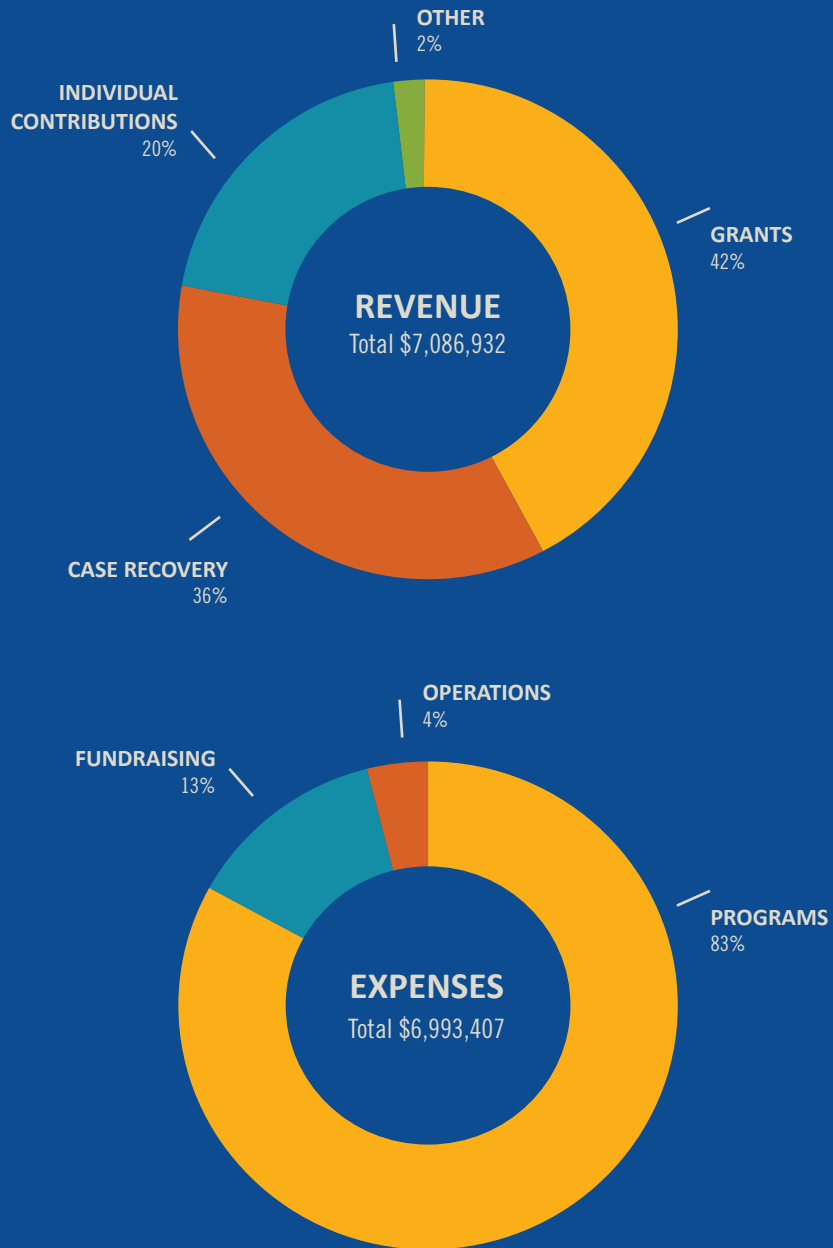
Thanks in part to our advocacy efforts, Malibu opens the Civic Center Water Treatment Facility, which will alleviate water quality concerns in Malibu Creek and Malibu Lagoon.

## MEASURE W PASSES

Thanks to LAW and a broad coalition, Measure W passed—bringing in \$300 million per year to capture, clean, store and reuse stormwater and create vibrant green spaces across LA!

# FINANCIALS

2014-2018



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

ASSETS	DEC 2018	JAN 2014
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$946,322	\$708,139
Accounts Receivable	\$220,314	\$32,027
Prepaid Expenses	\$28,629	\$40,742
Property & Equipment	\$ -	\$ 17,473
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$1,195,265</b>	<b>\$798,381</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable	\$178,307	\$9,017
Accrued Vacation	\$38,335	\$10,819
Deferred Rent Credit	\$ 13,535	\$ -
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$230,177</b>	<b>\$19,836</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$965,088</b>	<b>\$778,545</b>





## PARTNERS MAKE IT POSSIBLE

They say it takes a village, but at Los Angeles Waterkeeper it takes a city. We are grateful for the countless community of partners, lawyers and volunteers that donate their time and resources. You make our mission possible.

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