

Santa Ana River

Once a wild and free river, running nearly 100 miles from the mountains of San Bernardino County down to the Pacific Ocean...the Santa Ana River has suffered the fate of many of California's rivers. It was a little too wild, and with water in such great demand, that the Santa Ana is now a dry concrete channel for much of the year.

The source of most of the Santa Ana River's water is melted snow from the mountains. Even though southern California is often very dry, seasonal storms can bring danger. The Army Corps of Engineers considers the Santa Ana to be the greatest flood hazard west of the Mississippi River. After a devastating flood in 1969, two dams were constructed to control the flow.

Where the train crosses the Santa Ana River west of Loma Linda, California, you can see the cement channel studded with concrete baffles...designed to slow the water flow and prevent it from surging over the banks after a heavy rain.

It's clear from the urban sprawl along the tracks that southern California is a popular place to live. Cities need water, as do the farms to feed a growing population. Local water agencies channel water away from the Santa Ana and other rivers to quench competing needs for the limited water flow.

You can get a closer look at the Santa Ana from the recreational trail which runs 30 miles from the Pacific Ocean to Corona, California. Several other shorter segments of the river offer bicycle trails as well.

Source(s):

Hoffman, Eva J. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Ana_River

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