

May 09, 2018



TO: Hon. Sheila Kuehl, Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Hon. Janice Hahn, Chair Pro Tem, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Hon. Hilda L. Solis, Supervisor, First District, Los Angeles County
Hon. Mark Ridley-Thomas, Supervisor, Second District, Los Angeles County
Hon. Kathryn Barger, Supervisor, Fifth District, Los Angeles County
Mark Pestrella, Director of Public Works, Los Angeles County

RE: Safe, Clean Water Program

Dear Supervisor Kuehl,

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) and the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) are committed to working with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to ensure safe and clean water for future generations through a multi-benefit stormwater and urban runoff capture program to increase water supply, improve water quality, and investment in communities.

CBE is a forty-year environmental health and justice organization that works with communities affected by industrial pollution. We empower communities by providing organizing skills, as well as legal, technical and scientific resources that assist neighborhoods in taking control of decisions that affect their health and quality of life. CBE works in the communities of Southeast Los Angeles, Wilmington, Richmond, and E. Oakland.

CEJA is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. They represent approximately 20,000 Asian Pacific American, Latina/o, and African American residents in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Los Angeles, Inland Valley and San Diego/ Tijuana area.

We write to strongly encourage the Safe, Clean Water Program to prioritize distributed and neighborhood scale, nature-based solutions to capture, infiltrate, treat and use stormwater and dry-weather runoff. Such projects and programs can help achieve a more sustainable and equitable water future for all communities in Los Angeles County.

Safeguarding public health is our top priority and that is why we are committed to advancing a regional water resilience plan that mitigates against extreme weather variability, increased drought, flood risk and urban heat. We support a plan that reduces trash and pollution in our waterways, beaches and habitat throughout the Los Angeles region.

Policy encouraging multi-benefit stormwater and an urban runoff capture program is at the core of supporting communities that have historically been overburdened by pollution, heavy metals, and the extractive economy. Recently, the Our Water Los Angeles Coalition organized a tour of Machado Lake in Wilmington for 30 community members. Community members learned about the transformation that Machado Lake underwent and the various benefits it supports to the community and natural

environment. Community members then identified and prioritized forms of climate adaptation through water resiliency projects in their community such as:

- 1) Installing a stormwater collection system as an opportunity to create a water source for a school garden and baseball field at Banning High School to address major flash flooding which frequently inundates various campus entrances and residential areas;
- 2) Utilizing impermeable water embankments near active oil drilling sites. Active oil drilling impacts local residents' air and water, therefore, impermeable water embankments would mitigate groundwater contamination and filter stormwater runoff as well as address some concerns regarding health;
- 3) Increase nature-based projects, urban gardens, and green alley ways to collect stormwater, localize water, and protect the environment and residents from toxic stormwater.

Funding for projects should be distributed in a manner that promotes equity for underserved communities and mitigates displacement. It is imperative that frontline, low-income, and communities of color, otherwise known as Disadvantaged Communities (DAC's) by CalEnviroScreen are prioritized in receiving this funding and projects are placed in DAC's so that they can truly reap the benefits. We suggest 41% of all funding be allocated to DAC's. Having community expertise and engagement is essential in the planning and implementation of projects to mitigate displacement. Therefore, we are advocating for community members, environmental non-profits, community-based organizations focusing on Social Justice have a seat at the decision-making table. We believe in a Just Transition towards a regenerative economy, that includes deep democracy which is led by the people, for the people.

Furthermore, our hope is to work closely with county and local agencies to increase environmental awareness programs that encourage and train community members to participate and promote greater watershed stewardship.

We appreciate the County of Los Angeles' strong commitment to achieving a safe and clean water future for all residents. We stand ready to work with you on providing input on the Safe, Clean Water Program and to assist with outreach to communities and leaders throughout Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

Communities for a Better Environment and the California Environmental Justice Alliance
Darryl Molina Sarmiento, CBE Executive Director
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CC: Safe, Clean Water Program Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Leslie Friedman Johnson, Conservation and Natural Resources Group
Rachel Roque, Conservation and Natural Resources Group
Kelly Cook, Conservation and Natural Resources Group
Genevieve Osmena, Public Works, Los Angeles County
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board