

SCOPE STRATEGIC COMMUNITY AGENDA

May 14, 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 Solis, Supervisor, First District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Hon. Mark Ridley-Thomas, Supervisor, Second District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Hon. Kathryn Barger, Supervisor, Fifth District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Mark Pestrella, Director, Public Works, Los Angeles County

Re: Safe, Clean Water Program

Dear Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Director Pestrella,

For over 25 years, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) has worked with South Los Angeles and greater South Los Angeles-area families, facing high and chronic unemployment and underemployment, long-standing disinvestment, and some of the highest environmental and social vulnerability across the county. In that time, our grassroots leaders have led multi-sector coalitions—bringing together community-based organizations, public sector labor unions, and environmental organizations—to create solutions that have led to green jobs with strong on-the-job training pipelines and recovery of public funds for budgets at the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the nation's largest public utility, all while ensuring co-benefits, like lower energy bills, for low-income families. Furthermore, by maintaining consistent communication with a supportive voter base of over 50,000 Los Angeles county voters, our membership has mobilized thousands of voters across Los Angeles County to support progressive tax structures and reallocation of taxpayer money to fund programs and services that benefit poor, low income, working class, and other vulnerable residents and families across the county.

It is from this foundation of community power, a civically engaged progressive voter base, and our organizational history that we urge the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, as you work to develop a multi-benefit stormwater and urban runoff capture program, to prioritize:

- (1) **Progressive Parcel Tax structure** that taxes larger properties at a higher rate, before assessing the overall taxed amount. Currently, the initiative language taxes non-permeable surfaces, however, given the solutions that low-income families have implemented to otherwise reduce water and energy costs, including paving over lawns, we recommend a tax structure with protections for low-income homeowners, that creates a split roll: a low, flat tax each year for

properties smaller than 2,000 square feet and 15 cents per square foot for properties larger than 2,000 square feet.

- (2) **Community-Engaged Decision-Making** that strengthens the community investment benefit thresholds on the scoring rubric and the overall outcomes of investments by creating direct mechanisms for residents to inform distinctions between projects directly within and projects that indirectly benefit disadvantaged communities. Specifically, we recommend:
- a. Scoring Rubric Changes. With the current scoring guidelines, projects can be approved without any community investment benefits, which may lead to further perpetuation of investments not funding priorities that have been identified by low-income communities. Recommended changes:
 - i. Threshold score applied by the Technical Committee increased to score of 75
 - ii. Community Investment Benefits increased to 30 points
 - 1. C1 increased to 15 points to award higher scores for applicants who create community investment benefits directly within disadvantaged communities
 - 2. C2, no change
 - 3. C3, no change.
 - a. will allow for community investments with significant regional benefits and indirect community investment benefits for disadvantaged communities
 - b. Watershed Area Steering Committee. We advise inclusion of a community environmental justice seat in the Watershed Area Steering Committee, expanding the committees to sixteen seats. This will ensure community members' environmental justice priorities are taken into account in recommending projects that will be funded with taxpayer money. The watershed area steering committee members should have knowledge of the areas they represent to support a regional focus on infrastructure improvement and design, to lend to review and recommendation of projects submitted for Safe, Clean Water Program funds. Families in disadvantaged communities are adversely impacted at disproportionate rates by the impacts of a changing climate. When the county experiences lowered access to water, as in the case of the 2012-2016 drought, the increased cost of water and the compounding impacts of higher temperatures compel disadvantaged communities to create individual-level solutions. This expertise, coupled with an intimate knowledge of the areas most in need of improvement, support a high need for community members and an environmental justice community-based organization to participate on the Watershed Area Steering Committees
 - c. Funding for Programs. Per AB 1180 (Los Angeles Flood Control District: taxes, fees, and charges), ensure that Regional, District, and Municipal sub-programs of the Safe, Clean Water Program maintain adequate levels of funding for programs, and not just projects, that provide multiple benefits like increasing water supply, improving water quality, and providing community enhancements. Community engagement and education programs,

in particular, must be funded in order to maximize the impact of any infrastructure or capital projects that aim to meet water management goals in the county.

- d. Funding for Community Enhancements. Ensure that Regional, District, and Municipal sub-programs of the Safe, Clean Water Program maintain funding commitment for and clear directive on the importance of integrating community enhancements as eligible strategies for funding. Community enhancements, such as the greening of schools, parks, and wetlands, and increased public access to rivers, lakes, and streams, are integral to the success of the county's intention to increase "water resiliency, economic security, and equity-focused strategies and policies" (as stated on page four of Draft Program Elements Document). To achieve these goals, programs must not only include community enhancements, but in disadvantaged communities, must prioritize nature-based solutions to capture and infiltrate stormwater for local use and regional benefit.
- e. Project Funding Priority. Funding priority should be given to projects and programs that have been thoroughly vetted by and decided on with direct influence from the communities in which they will be implemented. While we are supportive of cost-efficiency as a consideration in determining funding priority, we believe that a narrow focus on cost-efficiency may result in disproportionately underfunding projects or programs that have been prioritized by community members and are multi-benefit. In turn, this threatens the ability of the County to meet its economic security and equity-focused goals.
- f. Eligible Applicants. Ensure that "Project Applicant" definition is broader than "M4 Permittees" and includes schools, municipalities, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and the currently listed stakeholders. The water challenges we are facing require that we all take part in developing and implementing solutions; from capital infrastructure and maintenance, which certain entities are better equipped to undertake, to community programs and enhancements, which other entities are better equipped to undertake.
- g. Eligible Expenditures. Include community engagement and technical assistance as eligible expenditures related to project and program development and implementation. These activities are critical to reaching vulnerable and historically excluded populations and getting closer to a model of community-engaged decision-making.

(3) **Clearly-Defined Training, Hiring, and Job Creation Policies and Metrics** for all taxpayer funded projects and programs resulting from the Safe, Clean Water Program, especially connected to the development and implementation of nature-based solutions projects in existing Urban Water Management Plans and Enhanced Watershed Management Plans in the county, which could expand local municipal models that could sustain public sector jobs beyond public works. To ensure access to good public sector jobs as a benefit of program funding, including for operations and maintenance, additional direction is needed from the County and municipalities. Los Angeles County's construction career policies, such as Community Workforce Agreements that encourage local and disadvantaged worker hiring should apply to

projects funded by this program. As we make large-scale investments in our regional water infrastructure using nature-based solutions, we must also see this as an opportunity to invest in good, green career-path training and jobs opportunities.

- a. Develop a Scoring Process that Prioritizes Job Creation and Training Benefits. Ensure the scoring process prioritizes funding for strong, competitive projects and programs that include best practices and raise the floor on capital infrastructure investment across the region. Best practices may include, but are not limited to, those derived from workforce training models that have a proven track record for job placement, paid training, and targeted enrollment/hiring for individuals with barriers to employment.
- b. Targeted Hire and Community Workforce Agreements. Existing targeted local hire policies and community workforce agreements should apply to projects funded through the Safe, Clean Water Program and be clearly referenced and defined in the Program Elements Document. Projects and programs funded by SCWP provide opportunities to support ongoing workforce development efforts– connecting residents to new jobs in a manner that is equitable and targeted to reach excluded and vulnerable workers, .
- c. Cementing the Role of Public Sector Employees. To ensure projects are operating at maximum efficiency and are accountable to the public, we recommend: (1) establishing a specialized public sector maintenance team, within the entities responsible for developing and implementing projects; (2) ensuring adequate funding for maintenance of projects; and (3) requiring that project planning require development and funding of public sector workforce pipeline programs into those maintenance careers. Publicly financed projects should be prioritized, with living wage, job quality, and reporting standards in public-private projects that comply with that of public projects. Public-private projects should prioritize integration of public sector maintenance teams or qualifying workforce programs into their maintenance plan.
- d. Funding for Programs. Maintain funding for local workforce job training programs as eligible expenditures to ensure development of a projects that incorporate that aforementioned best practices, provide multiple benefits to local communities, and support a well-trained workforce in this growing area of the construction sector.
- e. Tracking Employment Impacts. Employment data in applications and evaluations should use certified payroll reporting systems and avoid generating estimates of employment using formulas of investment-to-employment ratios. Certified payroll reporting can provide the following jobs metrics while maintaining the confidentiality of individual workers: Job classification by trade or occupational category; Job classification by journey level or apprentice level; Rate of pay; Number of hours worked per week; Disadvantaged status, including zip code of residence; Race, ethnicity, and gender; and Certifications held.

We appreciate the County of Los Angeles’ commitment to achieving a safe, clean and resilient water future for all residents. We stand ready to work with you on crafting a Safe, Clean Water Program that

equitably and meaningfully invests in disadvantaged communities and, with that achieved, assisting with outreach to communities, leaders, and voters throughout Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

Jante' Pruitt
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