

Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Thursday, April 21, 2022
2:00pm - 5:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Genevieve Osmena, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Art Castro, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
*John Huynh, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
Alfredo Magallanes, LA Sanitation & Environment (Agency)
Cathie Santo Domingo, LA Recreation & Parks (Agency)
Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)
Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)
John Luker, Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (Community)
Max Liles, NBCUniversal, Inc. (Community)
Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)
Yazdan Emrani, Glendale (Municipal)
Patrick DeChellis, La Cañada Flintridge (Municipal)
Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair
Max Podemski, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice Chair
Christine Peters, Los Angeles (Municipal)
*Jalaine Verdiner, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
*Brent Maue, Pasadena (Municipal)
Adi Liberman, Environmental Outreach Strategies (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
Carlos Moran, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Clarasophia Gust, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees.

1. Welcome and Introductions

District Staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx in both English and Spanish.

Max Podemski, Vice Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) WASC, welcomed Committee members and called the meeting to order. District Staff facilitated the roll call of Committee members. All Committee members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 6, 2022

District staff presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes, by Member Yazdan Emrani. Member Genevieve Osmena seconded the motion. The District facilitated the roll call of Committee members and the Committee voted to approve the April 6, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no committee member updates.

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District staff provided an update:

- Quarter 3 Quarterly Reports are due May 15, which should capture all expenditures through March. This applies for projects approved in Round 2 of the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) (Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022).
- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans were due April 1 to the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP). Annual Plans are required to receive the Municipal Program revenue. The District intends to add functionality to the existing reporting module to streamline the Annual Plan process. A webinar was conducted in March. The recording of the webinar is available here: <https://safecleanwaterla.org/municipalities/>
- Public Review for the Safe Clean Water Program Guidance ended March 27. The District is now compiling comments and feedback and will present an update on that soon.
- On March 29, the Board of Supervisors voted to continue meeting virtually, acting under the authority of Assembly Bill 361 which authorizes public committees to meet without complying with all the teleconferencing requirements of the Brown Act when the situation warrants it. The Board is reviewing every 30 days and will act to cover all the commissions and committees under their authority.
- The District will be sending out a survey in preparation for potential in-person WASC meetings.
- The Executive Office sent letters of resignation to Committee members who did not adhere to the Board's vaccination policy.
- The ULAR WASC has 8 Infrastructure Program (IP) projects, 5 Scientific Studies (SS), and 2 Technical Resources Program (TRP) projects to consider for the FY22-23 SIP.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Carlos Moran provided an update on watershed coordinator activities (refer to Watershed Coordinators Presentation).

- The Council for Watershed Health is hosting a Schools and Stormwater Symposium on May 19.
- The Integrated Regional Water Management "Water Talks" Program is hosting a series of workshops. Several WASC members will present at the session focused on the Upper Los Angeles River watershed.
- The Watershed Coordinators sent information to the WASC concerning the SIP Project Scenario Tool, which shows the geographic distribution of the proposed projects.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Chair Teresa Villegas disclosed meeting with staff from the City of Los Angeles to discuss the projects under consideration for the SIP.

6. Public Comment Period

District Staff compiled all public comment cards received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting, loaded them to the SCWP website, and displayed them on-screen. Public comment cards or other correspondence received after 5:00pm will be added to the meeting minutes.

Gordon Haines (City of Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation and Environment) provided public comment expressing support for Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation and Maintenance, noting that the project was constructed with funds from Proposition O.

Juan Fregoso (Office of City of Los Angeles Councilmember O'Farrel) provided public comment expressing support for Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation and Maintenance.

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Dawn Petschauer (City of Los Angeles) provided public comment expressing support for the LRS Adaptation Addressing the LA River Study as the Rio Hondo WASC approved the study.

Richard Watson (Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, Project Applicant) provided an update on the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, which has been approved by five WASCs, omitted by two, and will be considered by two more (including this WASC). The study will move forward in the locations that were approved. Watson emphasized that waiting to determine the study team was by design.

John Jones (East Side Riders Bike Club) provided public comment expressing support for the Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway.

7. Presentations and Discussion Items:

a) Upper Los Angeles River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan (SCW Portal & Summary of Resources)

District Staff noted that the LA River Green Infrastructure Project and the Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway have reallocated their funding request across SIP fiscal years. Members of the WASC have submitted their revised project rankings. District Staff reminded the WASC that two Infrastructure Program (IP) projects from the previous SIP were awarded funding for design plan to submit requests for construction funding in future years. Although they solicited input from projects approved in previous SIPs, the District did not receive responses about whether any may be able to reallocate their funding requests amongst fiscal years. The District encouraged any proponents of previously funded projects who may be present to speak on this.

Member Osmena noted that the revised rankings have resulted in a tie between the two TRP projects under consideration. Member Osmena suggested the WASC approve both. Member Osmena further suggested approving the Top 3 Scientific Studies (SS): Additional Funding Request to Support the LRS Adaptation Addressing the LA River Bacteria TMDL for the ULAR Watershed Management Group, Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation, and Maximizing Impact of Minimum Control Measures, observing that all three received high ratings from the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) peer review. District Staff shared the funding scenario for 0 IP, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS, which resulted in an allocation of 92% in FY22-23. Because it includes previously approved IP projects, this funding scenario meets the criteria for spending a minimum of 85% on IP projects.

Member Alfredo Magallanes asked the District to show the funding scenario for All IP, 0 TRP, and 0 SS projects, which resulted in allocations of 116%, 119%, and 180% in FY22-23, 23-24, and 24-25, respectively. When excluding the North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture Project, the fiscal years allocations were not over 100%.

Member Christine Peters suggested reviewing funding scenarios for both TRP, Top 3 SS, and varying numbers of IP projects to better understand how many IP projects the WASC can include in the FY22-23 SIP. The funding scenario for Both TRP, Top 3 SS, and the Top 2 IP projects (Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture and Reuse and Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Projects) resulted in an allocation of 95% for FY22-23. Adding the third ranked IP project, Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project, resulted in allocations of 96%, 91%, and 80% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25. Adding the fourth ranked IP project, Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation and Maintenance, resulted in allocations of 97%, 94%, and 83% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25. Adding the fifth ranked IP project, La Crescenta Green Improvement Project, resulted in allocations of 99%, 96%, and 86% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

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Adding the sixth ranked IP project, Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway, resulted in allocations of 99%, 98%, and 91% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

The WASC also considered the funding scenario for Top 5 IP, 0 TRP, and 0 SS which resulted in allocations of 96%, 91%, and 82% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25. The funding scenario for Top 6 IP, 0 TRP, and 0 SS resulted in allocations of 96%, 92%, and 86% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

Watershed Coordinator Moran reminded the WASC that the watershed coordinators know of at least a dozen projects that will be submitted in Round 4 for the WASC's consideration, several of which were developed with support from the Watershed Coordination Team. Watershed Coordinator Moran urged the WASC to consider the implications of decisions about allocations of future year funds result in projects which were developed in close coordination with the Watershed Coordinators and the communities that would benefit be unable to receive funding.

Member Miguel Luna echoed Watershed Coordinator Moran's concerns and cautioned the WASC against spending the entirety of the next three years' funding today. The WASC evaluated the funding scenario for the Top 4 IP, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS, which resulted in allocations of 97%, 94%, and 83% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

Member Jalaine Verdiner suggested that adding the next two IP projects, La Crescenta Green Improvement Project and Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway, to the funding scenario wouldn't make much of an impact. The funding scenario for Top 6 IP, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS resulted in allocations of 99%, 98%, and 91% in in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25. The WASC observed that 4 of the 6 IPs in that list have Disadvantaged Community (DAC) benefits, not including the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project or the La Crescenta Green Improvement Project. The WASC consulted the SIP Project Scenario Tool to visualize the locations of the Top 6 IP project compared with the locations of DACs.

Vice Chair Podemski emphasized the WASC's dual responsibilities of funding DAC benefit projects and distributing projects geographically across the Watershed Area. Vice Chair Podemski noted that the WASC has already funded several large projects in North Hollywood, in the vicinity of the Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project. Removing the Whitsett Fields Park project from the Top 4 IP funding scenario (3 IP, Both TRP, Top 3 SS) results in allocations of 95%, 88%, and 74% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

Member Verdiner pointed out that the money being invested by each jurisdiction should be realized in those jurisdiction and asked District Staff to show the previous scenario but add the La Crescent Green Improvement Project. The funding scenario for those 4 IP projects, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS resulted in allocations of 97%, 90%, and 77% in in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

The WASC discussed favoring projects that will contribute matching fundings, so as to maximize the impact of SCWP investments. The WASC observed that the LA River Green Infrastructure Project includes a large request but no matching funds.

Member Luna reminded the committee that equal distribution is not necessarily equitable and emphasized that DACs have contributed to measures such as Measure W without reaping the benefits.

Member Cathie Santo Domingo asked the WASC to consider whether they are comfortable committing so much of future years' funding allocations and expressed a desire to leave "wobble room" for future years.

The funding scenario for Top 4 IP, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS resulted in allocations of 97%, 94%, and 83% in in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

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Member Patrick DeChellis observed that the WASC is currently experiencing the repercussions of previous years' decisions. The WASC observed that dropping the fourth ranked IP project results in minimal impacts in future fiscal years. Chair Villegas drew the distinction that the allocations for the FY20-21 and FY21-22 SIPs were below the threshold of concern. Member DeChellis clarified that their comment was in reference to commitments made for future years. The funding scenario for the Top 3 IP, 0 SS, and 0 TRP projects resulted allocations of 93%, 87%, and 76% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25.

The WASC considered the funding scenario with for Top 4 IP, 0 TRP, and 0 SS, which resulted in allocations of 94%, 89%, and 79% in FY22-23, FY23-24, and FY24-25. The funding scenario for Top 4 IP, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS resulted in allocations of 97%, 94%, and 83%, 41%, and 22% in FY22-23, FY23-24, FY24-25, FY25-26, and FY26-27. The group observed how the LA River Green Infrastructure Project would ramp up its spending over time and weighed it in relation to the Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project which also requests a large amount of funding that benefits DACs.

Member Maue again cautioned the WASC against overcommitting funds for future years. The Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project totals \$8.4 million and includes matching funds, as opposed to the LA River Green Infrastructure Project which totals \$31.8 million and does not include matching. The funding scenario which includes the Top 4 IP projects and the LA River Green Infrastructure Projects (5 IP total) in addition to Both TRP and Top 3 SS resulted in allocations of 98%, 96%, 94%, 55%, and 66% in FY22-23, FY23-24, FY24-25, FY25-26, and FY26-27.

Member Huynh reminded the WASC that they started FY22-23 SIP deliberations with 89% already allocated. The WASC reviewed the funding scenario with the LA River Green Infrastructure removed and the third ranked SS removed: Top 4 IP, Both TRP, Top 2 SS resulted in allocations of 97%, 92%, 81%, 40%, and 22% in FY22-23, FY23-24, FY24-25, FY25-26, and FY26-27.

In past years, the District has cautioned the WASC against allocating more than 80% of their SIP. If the WASC approves a SIP with high commitments, they may not be able to fund a large IP project for a number of years.

The committee revisited the funding scenario for the Top 4 IP, Both TRP, and Top 3 SS. Adding the Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway (5 IP total, Both TRP, Top 3 SS) changes the allocations to 98% and 95% for FY22-23 and FY23-24. Removing the third ranked SS (5 IP, Both TRP, Top 2 SS) resulted in allocations of 97% and 93% in FY22-23 and FY23-24. The WASC observed that both scenarios result in an availability of approximately \$2.6 million for next year.

Chair Villegas noted that as the largest Watershed Area, the ULAR WASC's strength is their ability to fund a great variety of projects.

8. Public Comment Period

Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh (North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture, Project Applicant) provided public comment that Los Angeles Department of Water and Power submitted the same project last year for a higher funding request and it was very well received by the WASC. Dr. Eftekhazadeh questioned why the WASC isn't considering the project this year, even though the funding request is much lower. Dr. Eftekhazadeh noted that the WASC previously approved projects that did not contribute much to water quality benefits.

Chair Villegas noted that Eftekhazadeh's project did score as an eligible project. The Chair reminded that the North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture project was submitted without partnership or permission from the City of Los Angeles that is responsible for the parcel where the project was proposed to be located.

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The Chair expressed that both the Scoring Committee and the Watershed Area Steering Committee had deliberated appropriately, and that the Chair felt the criticism was unwarranted.

9. Voting Items

- a) **Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the ULAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review**

Member DeChellis made a motion to approve the FY22-23 SIP for the ULAR WASC including the Top 4 IP and Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway, Both TRP and Top 3 SS (5 IP total, Both TRP, Top 3 SS):

Infrastructure Program projects:

- Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project,
- Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway,
- Jackson Elementary Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Project,
- Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture Project, and
- Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation and Maintenance

Scientific Studies:

- Additional Funding Request to Support the LRS Adaptation Addressing the LA River Bacteria TMDL for the ULAR Watershed Management Group,
- Maximizing the Impact of Minimum Control Measures, and
- Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation

Technical Resources Program projects:

- Camino Verde Pocket Park Regional Stormwater Capture Demonstration Project, and
- San Fernando Calles Verdes.

Member Pantoja seconded the motion. District Staff reiterated the allocations are 98%, 95%, 88%, 44%, and 23% for FY22-23, FY23-24, FY24-25, FY25-26, and FY26-27, respectively. District Staff noted that the selected projects meet the ratio criteria for program distribution and DAC benefits. The District facilitated the roll call of Committee members and the Committee voted to approve the final FY22-23 SIP funding recommendations for the ULAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Note that the FY22-23 SIP would result in the following allocations assuming funding construction costs for the two projects that were previously awarded design funds only: 98%, 95%, 97%, 59%, and 30% in FY22-23, FY23-24, FY24-25, FY25-26, and FY26-27. This scenario is not the final SIP but a means for future ULAR WASC discussions.

10. Items for Next Agenda

There is no upcoming meeting scheduled. The meeting on Wednesday, May 4 would have been needed if the WASC did not vote on the SIP. The next meeting date is to be determined.

District Staff will reach out to the WASC to determine a location for the potentially in-person meeting.

11. Adjournment

Chair Villegas thanked WASC members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

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		Quorum Present				Voting Items	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 4-6-2022 Meeting Minutes	Approve the Final FY22-23 ULAR SIP funding recommendations (5 IP, 3 Top SS, All TRP) & approve submission to the ROC for review
Agency	FCD	Genevieve Osmena	x	Ramy Gindi		y	y
Agency	Water Agency	Delon Kwan		Art Castro	x	a	y
Agency	Groundwater / Water Agency 2	Paul Liu		John Huynh	x	y	y
Agency	Sanitation	Alfredo Magallanes	x	Michael Scaduto		y	y
Agency	Open Space	Cathie Santo Domingo	x	Javier Solis		y	y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Ernesto Pantoja	x	Sergio Rascon		y	y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Miguel Luna	x	Yvette Lopez-Ledesma		a	y
Community Stakeholder	Environment	John Luker	x	Wendi Gladstone		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Business	Max Liles	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	EJ	Veronica Padilla-Campos	x	Felipe Escobar			n
Municipal Members	Glendale	Yazdan Emrani	x			y	y
Municipal Members	La Canada Flintridge	Patrick DeChellis	x	Maged El-Rabaa		y	y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Teresa Villegas	x	Barbara Romero			y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Max Podemski	x	Ackley Padilla		y	y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Christine Peters	x	Rafael Prieto		a	y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles County	Mark Lombos		Jalaine Q Verdiner	x	y	y
Municipal Members	Pasadena	Kris Markarian		Brent Maue	x	a	y
Watershed Coordinator	Environmental Outreach Strategies	Adi Liberman	x				
Watershed Coordinator	Council for Watershed Health	Clarasophia Gust					
Watershed Coordinator	Council for Watershed Health	Carlos Moran	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	11	16
Total Voting Members Present		17			No (N)	0	1
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	4	0
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	15	17
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

Attendees

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Adi Liberman	Dawn Petschauer	Juan Fregoso	Richard Watson
Alfredo Magallanes	Diana Campos	Juliann Rooke	Rochelle Wilson
Alynn Sun	Donald Voss	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Ron Bitzer
Amanda Zeidner	Ernesto Pantoja	Lauro Alvarado	Ruth Siegel
Art Castro	Esther Woo	Lidia Rivera	Shahriar Eftekhazadeh
Ashley Lozada	Genevieve Osmena	Maggie Gardner	Shant Oganessian
Brent Maue	Gordon Haines	Marisa Perez-Reyes	sheila brice
Brianna Datti	Ida Meisami	max Podemski	Somer Sherwood-White
Brianne Logasa	Jalaine Verdiner	Mayra Cabrera - LACFCD	Susie Santilena
Burns & McDonnell Pohl	Jason Casanova	Michael Drennan	Ted Gerber
Cameron McCullough	Jeannette Hernandez	Michael Scaduto	Teresa Villegas
Carlos Moran	Jennifer Amarant	Miguel Luna	Thuan Nguyen
CARMEN ANDRADE	Johanna Chang	Mike Antos (Regional Coord.)	Veronica Padilla
Cathie Santo Domingo	john huynh	Pablo Forni	Wendi Gladstone
Christine Peters	John Jones III	Pat DeChellis	wendy dinh
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	John Luker	Peter Tonthat	WSP Diaz-Carreras
Conor Mossavi	Jose Escajeda	Rafael Piamonte	Yaz Emrani
Cordoba Corporation Chupa	Joyce Amaro	Rafael Prieto	