

# Upper San Gabriel River Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



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Thursday, February 22, 2024  
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM  
LA County Sanitation District – Conference Room E&F  
1955 Workman Mill Rd  
Whittier, CA 90601  
WebEx Meeting

## Committee Members Present:

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)  
Tom Love, Upper San Gabriel Valley Water District (Agency)  
Francisco Guerrero, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)  
Drew Ready, Council for Watershed Health (Community)  
\*David Marquez, Urban Semillas (Community)  
\*Wesley Reutimann, Active SGV (Community)  
Fernando Villaluna, Los Angeles County (Municipal), Vice-Chair  
Michael Sledd, Glendora (Municipal)  
Julie Carver, Pomona (Municipal), Chair  
Matthew Hudson, Industry (Municipal)  
\*Mario Flores, Duarte (Municipal)  
James Cortes, Day One (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

\*Committee Member Alternate

## Committee Members Not Present:

Kelly Gardner, Main San Gabriel Basin (Agency)  
Sean Woods, Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation (Agency)  
Romany Basilyous, Baldwin Park (Municipal)  
Paulina Morales, West Covina (Municipal)

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

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## **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Julie Carver, Chair of the Upper San Gabriel River (USGR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

Los Angeles County Flood Control District (District) staff facilitated Committee Member introductions. A quorum was established. District staff provided a brief WebEx tutorial and direction on submission of public comments to the Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program website.

## **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 18, 2024**

District staff presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Member Tom Love motioned to approve, seconded by Member Julian Juarez. The WASC voted to approve the meeting minutes with 9 votes in favor, 1 vote in abstention, 0 votes opposed, at 1 absent at the time of vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

## **3) Committee Member and District Updates**

District staff provided the following updates:

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- Fiscal Year 2022–2023 (FY22-23) Regional Program Annual Reports were due December 31, 2023. Progress reports must still be completed even if there was no activity done on the project or if the Transfer Agreement has not been executed for projects.
- The last Quarterly Report was due on February 15. The next Quarterly Report is due on May 15.
- On January 31, the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) voted to send the Biennial Progress Report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board). The ROC began discussing next steps and timeline on February 15 and will begin SCW Program goal-setting sessions on March 20. The Committee is welcome to attend and provide input. The Final Biennial Progress Report, presentations, ROC meeting details, and more information, can be found under the ROC webpage on the [SCW Program website](#).
- Municipal progress/expenditure Annual Reports were due December 31, 2023. Municipal Annual Plans are due in April before the FY and the Reports are due in December.
- Round 4 Transfer Agreements (TA) and Addendums are available for download in the TA Module. Project applicants and developers should refer to the reminder email sent out on January 24 for checklist instructions on how to navigate the new Module. Those who did not receive the email should contact District staff and provide the project name and contact email. The new Module is for projects included in the Round 4 Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) and future SIPs only. Projects from previous SIPs can submit documents via email.
- WASC Members whose job connects to specific projects should ask colleagues or consultants to attend WASC meetings to share about or advocate for those projects during SIP deliberations to ensure a fair and transparent Regional Program process. WASC Members should also avoid using their position as WASC Members to advocate for projects from their home entities.

#### 4) Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator James Cortes presented recent updates. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). Watershed Coordinator Cortes announced a few upcoming events, including:

- A community presentation on “Water and Community Knowledge: Lessons from the Upper San Gabriel River” on March 7. The event will highlight community engagement efforts conducted in the region to date. This event is a watershed-wide event, and an invitation will be sent out soon. The event flyer is attached to the presentation which can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).
- A resource booth at the West Covina Spring Festival on March 10.
- A resource booth, in collaboration with the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Coordinator at City of STEM event at the Los Angeles State Historic Park on April 6.
- A resource booth, in collaboration with the Rio Hondo Watershed Coordinator, at the Earth Day 2024 event with LA County Sanitation District in Whittier on April 13.

Watershed Coordinator Cortes also highlighted the WC Tribal Engagement Working Group and the Schools & Stormwater Working Group.

District staff stated that if more than 50% of the WASC attends the workshop on March 7, then the webinar will be subject to the Brown Act. District staff advised that the Watershed Coordinator monitor the RSVP list to ensure this limit is not reached. The webinar will be recorded.

#### 5) Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communications disclosed.

#### 6) Public Comment Period

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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. The comment cards can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Anthony Ortega (City of Pomona) provided public comment in support of the Fairplex Stormwater Capture Project PMR.

Jorge Anaya (City of Pomona) presented the public comment card from Chris Diggs regarding the Fairplex Stormwater Capture Project PMR. Anaya noted that the project location will need to be moved across the street from the Fairplex to Ganesha Park.

## 7) Discussion Items

### a) Project Modification Request Overview for the WASC (Presentation by Stantec)

Ryanna Fossum (Stantec, Regional Coordination) presented the Project Modification Request Overview to the WASC. The presentation can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Fossum noted that all PMRs undergo review by District staff and are categorized based on consistency or inconsistency with the adopted SIP. If a PMR is consistent with the SIP, District staff will notify WASC Members. However, inconsistent PMRs, indicating significant alterations that may affect budgets or project scopes, are flagged for WASC discussion. Fossum provided example questions the Committee Members can ask the project proponents to make informed decisions and the possible options available to WASCs to address inconsistent PMRs. More information can be found in the presentation or in the [Project Modification Guidelines](#).

District staff reviewed all PMRs and provided determinations on consistency with the SIP. The District summarized the two PMRs received for the WASC which were as follows:

- Zamora Park which was determined to be consistent with the SIP. The change created a Functionally Equivalent BMP.
- Fairplex Stormwater Capture Project which was determined to be inconsistent. The location of the project has changed. The PMR has been moved to the WASC for discussion.

### b) Project Modification Requests for WASC discussion

#### i) East San Gabriel Valley Watershed Management Group Fairplex Stormwater Capture Project

Anthony Ortega and Oliver Galang (Craftwater Engineering) presented the PMR for the Fairplex Stormwater Capture Project on-screen for the Committee's review. The PMR can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). The project proponents noted that the existing location can no longer support the project and presented Ganesha Park as the new project location. The project proponents noted that this change will not affect the budget for the design, which is being funded by the SCW Program. Additionally, the project proponents noted that Ganesha Park is a priority for the community to implement park improvements. A community outreach plan has been finalized and active outreach efforts will begin in the spring of this year.

Member Love confirmed that the PMR is a scope change and that the funding request has not changed. Member Love asked what conflict caused the location to change. Galang noted that the Los Angeles County Fair Association did not want any future construction to conflict with the location of their open fields. The Project proponents reminded the WASC that they had presented this issue to the WASC last year.

Member Love asked how the project benefits have changed. Galang noted that the project will provide a greater number of benefits at the new location compared to the former location. Additionally, the proposed

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location will now be on public property rather than private Fairplex property. Galang stated that this project location change will lead to less challenges with right-of-way (ROW) since the site will be on city land. Galang added that the site's drainage area will expand from the existing drainage area and that the proposed site has easier access to the channels. Galang emphasized that Ganesha Park has been flagged by the City of Pomona as a priority site that the community has identified for site improvements.

Member Drew Ready requested that the project proponents elaborate on the project's Water Supply Benefit and use of nature-based solutions. Member Ready noted that the WASC was originally critical of the project's lack of nature-based solutions. Galang reminded the WASC that the Water Supply Benefit points were previously awarded based on flexible desktop analysis when the project was funded in 2021. Water Supply Benefit points for infiltration are now only awarded if the applicant can prove infiltrated water will enter a managed aquifer. Galang noted that obtaining approval from the local water authority would be challenging. The proposed site location is downstream of the original site and the groundwater level is only 20 feet below the surface. Galang noted that there will be a geotechnical study to analyze the infiltration if the PMR is approved to confirm Water Supply Benefits. Galang added that the proposed project site is expected to produce the same Water Supply Benefits as the original.

Additionally, Galang stated that the project will capture, treat, and release water so there will be Water Quality Benefits. Galang noted that there is an existing open grass field at Ganesha Park which will give the project proponents the opportunity to add native landscaping to the park. Project proponents also intend to add paths and exercise equipment at Ganesha Park.

Member Wesley Reutimann requested clarification regarding differences in land use at the original and new project locations. Galang clarified that at the Fairplex location, all construction would need to replace existing features in-kind so there would not have been nature-based improvements and enhancements at the site. Galang added that Fairplex did not want the piping from the pump station to affect upcoming Fairplex plans. Additionally, it was confirmed that natural turf, rather than artificial turf, would be used at the new proposed Ganesha Park location.

Member Ready requested clarification regarding the unchanged design costs. Galang noted that the City's budget for implementing the design phase would remain the same and that the re-design can be completed with the existing funds. The project proponent articulated a few benefits for completing design at the new location, including improved Water Quality Benefits. The new design will still be able to treat an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile storm.

District staff requested confirmation that the project was budgeted for design only. Galang noted that the project proponents will be looking for construction funding in 2025 from the SCW Program. The City is also looking for additional funding from a Caltrans stormwater partnership. The project proponents will continue to look for more funding sources in the future. The City of Pomona will evaluate their financial situation when the application is prepared.

Anaya noted that the project proponents had control measures in place and had been in communications with Fairplex. These conversations were included in the supporting documentation attached to the PMR. Additionally, the City of Pomona has contributed \$2.3 million annually to the Infrastructure Program and would like to see projects serve the disadvantaged community. Anaya added that the new project location at Ganesha Park received conceptual approval from the District. Galang confirmed that Ganesha Park is located in a disadvantaged community.

Member Matthew Hudson asked if Ganesha Park was previously considered as a project location, given the community support. Galang noted that during the project concept phase, a beneficial partnership developed between Los Angeles County Fair Association and the City of Pomona, which contributed to the selection of the original site.

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**c) FY 24-25 Scientific Studies Peer Review Summary**  
**i) California State Polytechnic University, Pomona**  
**Identifying Best Practices for Maintaining Stormwater Drywell Capacity**

Chair Carver described that the intent of the independent and rapid review was to provide an unbiased evaluation of the technical adequacy and robustness of each proposal, with four steps:

1. Creating a standardized review template
2. Organizing a technical expert review panel
3. Assigning and distributing the proposals
4. Synthesizing the expert panel's proposal reviews

Chair Carver shared that the Scientific Studies (SS) Peer Review Summaries are intended to be a resource for WASC decision making. The summary has been prepared for the WASC and public and is available on the [SCW Program website](#). Chair Carver welcomed the WASC to ask the study applicant to respond to concerns brought up in the summary.

Ali Sharbat and Mehrad Kamalzare (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona) gave a brief background of the SS on Identifying Best Practices for Maintaining Stormwater Drywell Capacity. The SS Presentation from the previous WASC meeting can be found on the [SCW Program website](#)

When asked how the study will complement existing research, Sharbat noted that this study will fill in crucial gaps in the literature and industry guidelines for operations and maintenance (O&M) best practices for drywells.

Member Ready asked for clarification regarding how the study proponents will disseminate findings and best practices. Sharbat noted that findings will be shared widely with California State Polytechnic University, Pomona's large network of students and experts. Additionally, the study proponents have included tasks centered around outreach and dissemination and will work with the Watershed Coordinators to schedule workshop events to present findings and hold discussions with those in the industry. Additionally, the study proponents will prepare annual reports that will be shared with different departments, municipalities, and agencies to obtain feedback. The study's goal is to draft guidelines for O&M that will be shared with those managing deep infiltration infrastructure.

Upon inquiry, Sharbat clarified that ideally, the study will investigate newer drywells.

Member Ready asked if the study involves analyzing pre-treatment. Sharbat clarified that the plan includes taking samples from the vector trucks when the drywells are cleaned. Sharbat noted that the pre-treatment operations will directly impact the infrastructure and all operations will be monitored and documented.

Watershed Coordinator Cortes noted that the reviewers expressed general approval of the study, but noted concerns regarding how the study will maximize control of the many compounding variables. Watershed Coordinator Cortes requested clarification regarding selection of the wells. Kamalzare noted that the study will utilize selection criteria to confirm sites. Kamalzare acknowledged that despite challenges to manage the variables, the team is prepared and will focus on correlating degradation in drywell capacity. The proponents emphasized the importance of having more sites funded to create more useful comparisons.

The WASC and District staff discussed the ability for the study proponents to respond to and make updates per the peer review before the SIP deliberation. While Infrastructure Program (IP) projects are not allowed to deviate from the original application, the question is unprecedented for SS. District staff will look into whether the SS can adopt recommendations from the peer review and follow up with more details.

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## **8) Public Comment Period**

Second Public Comment Period was removed due to lack of voting items

## **9) Voting Items**

There were no voting items.

## **10) Items for Next Agenda**

The next meeting is scheduled for March 28, 2024 from 1:30pm to 3:30pm. See the SCWP website for details. Items on the agenda include:

- a) Upper San Gabriel River (USGR) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Stormwater Investment Plan

District staff noted there was one (1) IP, one (1) SS, and one (1) PMR which will be considered in the SIP deliberation.

## **11) Adjournment**

Chair Carver thanked WASC Members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.