

Santa Clara River

Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)

Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, March 6, 2024
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Santa Clarita City Hall
23920 Valencia Blvd. Valencia, CA 91355
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Ali Elhassan, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (Agency)
Steve Cole, Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agency)
Francisco Guerrero, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Jerrid McKenna, City of Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services (Agency)
Hunt Braly, Poole & Shaffery (Community)
Mary Johnson, Agua Dulce Town Council (Community)
Sandra Cattell, Sierra Club (Community), Vice-Chair
Ivan Volschenk, Evolve Business Strategies (Community)
Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, Santa Clarita Valley Community Hiking Club (Community)
Bruce Hamamoto, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Councilmember Laurene Weste, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Oliver Cramer, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Damon Letz, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Darin Seegmiller, Santa Clarita (Municipal), Chair
Amanda Begley, TreePeople (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

Committee Members Not Present:

No Committee Members were absent.

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Darin Seegmiller, Chair of the Santa Clara River (SCR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed Committee Members, provided an overview of the meeting agenda, and called the meeting to order. Chair Seegmiller welcomed and introduced new Committee Member Councilmember Laurene Weste.

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (District) staff gave a brief WebEx tutorial. District staff facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

3. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

This Agenda Item was moved up before Agenda Item 2.

Member Oliver Cramer disclosed a discussion with Vice-Chair Sandra Cattell regarding the history of E. coli in the Santa Ana River.

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2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 16, 2023

District staff presented the previous meeting minutes. Vice-Chair Cattell motioned to approve the meeting minutes from November 16, 2023. The motion was seconded by Member Ivan Volschenk. The Committee voted to approve the November 16, 2023 meeting minutes with 16 votes in favor and 1 votes in abstention (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

4. Committee Member and District Updates

Chair Seegmiller was interviewed by Spectrum News 1 regarding Santa Clarita's Stormwater Infiltration Program.

Vice-Chair Cattell shared that the Sierra Club is hosting a "Clean It Up" campaign with local high schools. Vice-Chair Cattell highlighted that Castaic High School is already participating in the campaign by submitting a video encouraging community members to clean up after their pets to fight against potential bacterial pollution.

District staff provided an update, noting:

- 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 at the February 15 meeting and will begin SCW Program goal-setting sessions at the March 20 meeting. The Committee is welcomed to attend and provide input. More information can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).
- Round 4 Transfer Agreements (TA) and Addendums are currently underway and are available for download in the TA Module. Developers can refer to the reminder email sent on January 24 for checklist instructions on how to navigate the new Module.

5. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Amanda Begley shared an update highlighting efforts under each general role of the Watershed Coordinator team, including the roles of project guide, connector, and educator. Watershed Coordinator Begley shared an update highlighting the Q3 Report, SCR Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) project updates, new connections formed in the region, education outreach and events, a numerical overview of events and meetings held, and upcoming events. Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#) and attached.

6. Public Comment Period

District staff compiled all public comment cards received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting and uploaded them to the SCW Program website. One public comment card was received. Comment cards are available on the [SCW Program website](#) and attached.

Erum Razzak (Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB)) expressed interest in the implementation of the SCW Program and its relationship to the implementation of the Regional MS4 permit. Razzak shared that LARWQCB hopes projects highlighting water quality improvements, MS4 permit compliance, and multi-benefit projects with community benefit and recreational enhancements will be prioritized.

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7. Discussion Items

a) Summary of Scientific Study from CASC Engineering and Consulting

District staff presented the Scientific Study (SS) Proposal Questionnaire. The SS Proposal Questionnaire can be found on the [SCW Program website](#) and attached. District staff noted that every submitted SS is reviewed by an independent peer reviewer. In Round 5, the SCW Program received a total of five SS applications across all nine watershed areas. For the SCR WASC, the Identifying Best Practices for Maintaining Stormwater Drywell Capacity will be presented.

Ali Sharbat (Cal Poly Pomona) provided a brief overview of this study, noting that the SS will identify best practices for maintaining drywells, including ensuring that the infiltration infrastructure capacity remains intact. 24 sites have been identified, two of which are within the SCR watershed area. The applicant is requesting roughly \$80,000 each year for the next five years from the SCR WASC to conduct this study.

Member Steve Cole highlighted the importance of understanding long-term maintenance of drywell facilities, as there are many obstacles that make maintenance difficult. Member Cole inquired if this study is proposing to employ maintenance techniques or if it will be monitoring how the system performs over time. Sharbat stated that the SS would mainly focus on observations, as this study would serve to better understand the many variables of drywells to inform best maintenance practices. Sharbat shared that one of the main goals is to develop new guidelines systematically through the study's findings.

Member Jerrid McKenna requested an annual progress report of this SS to better follow and track the study. Sharbat agreed that an annual progress report is already being considered and that the study team would reach out to coordinate with the Watershed Coordinators to fulfill that request.

Member Weste asked about the long-term goals and benefits of this study. Sharbat emphasized the importance of compiling findings and recommendations into guidelines adopted by municipalities and Los Angeles County to make informed decisions while planning future infiltration infrastructure.

Vice-Chair Cattell inquired about how pretreatment methods are being considered for specific recommendations. Chair Seegmiller additionally inquired about the study's consideration of pollutant loading. Sharbat clarified that water quality impacts of the infiltration process is not included in this study; however, conversations about water quality can be conducted with the well owners if interest is expressed. Chair Seegmiller expressed that, if possible, it would be of interest to this watershed to choose a drywell that also intends to address water quality issues. The project team confirmed that the first step for this study would be to understand drywell owners' needs, and that water quality can be a considered factor during this stage.

Committee Members inquired about the drywell selection process within this watershed. The project team shared that potential drywells will be evaluated with several criteria such as drywell age, drainage surface area, traffic volume, soil type and other considerations. This criteria will be used consistently throughout Los Angeles County to determine the best selection of 24 drywells that the study team can access and study.

Member Ali Elhassan asked whether the developed guidelines would be universally applicable to all drywells, or whether the recommendations would be tailored to individual cases. Sharbat articulated that each drywell possesses distinct qualities and considerations, and recommendations would be tailored for drywells with similar characteristics.

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Vice-Chair Cattell asked how the project team decided on the distribution of drywells being studied in each watershed area. The project team explained that drywell distribution across watershed areas is based on geologic uniformity, watershed area, and population. The project team decided that two drywells would initially be selected for this watershed area, though the number of studied drywells could increase pending discussions with the SCR WASC. Chair Seegmiller suggested that the project team identify priority drywells within this watershed area and solicit input from the SCR WASC before making any commitments. The project team agreed, highlighting this as one of the initial tasks to be addressed once the proposal is approved through the SCR WASC and the County.

Member Cole inquired if there will be a change in the number of drywells being studied in each watershed area if a certain WASC does not want to participate in this study. The project team clarified that the number of drywells being studied in each watershed area is independent of individual WASC funding decisions.

i) Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

b) Project Updates and Budget Confirmation for Projects with Continued Funding Requests

Richard Watson, on behalf the Gateway Water Management Authority, delivered an overview of the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, highlighting that all nine watersheds approved funding for the project, with the most recent five approvals obtained within the past year. Transfer Agreements are currently in progress, and once finalized, the project team will initiate Task 1, focusing on the stakeholder process and the selection of a consultant team. Watson emphasized that, due to compliance challenges with the existing fecal indicator bacteria standards, it is imperative to present data collection to advocate for changes in standards to LARWQCB. Watson affirmed that the project team plans to utilize the first year of funding allocated by the SCR WASC at the outset of Task 1. Continuous updates will be provided to the Committee as the project unfolds. Additionally, during the study's stakeholder committee phase, a request will be made to include a representative from the SCR WASC in the stakeholder committee to ensure ongoing collaboration.

District staff clarified that the WASC will be voting on the approval of funds for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 for this continuing SS, as part of the project's five-year funding request. FY24-25 represents Year 3 of the funding agreement, which follows \$15,866 previously allocated in FY22-23 and \$111,065 previously allocated in FY23-24. As a result, over \$125,000 is set aside for the project team to access once the agreement is signed with the District. Watson confirmed that the project will begin as soon as the Transfer Agreement is executed, confirmed once a resolution with the Gateway Water Management Authority is settled.

District staff presented the SIP tool, which can be accessed on the [SCW Program website](#).

District staff specified that Project Modification Requests (PMR) were reviewed for any project requests that deviate from what was approved in the previous SIP. District staff stated that Newhall Park submitted a PMR to request reallocation of future funding to FY28-29. This reallocation is included in the 5-year budget snapshot available on the SIP tool.

Vice-Chair Cattell asked for more information about PMRs and the PMR process. District staff clarified that any modification that was not included in a project's approved scope of work would need to submit a PMR. Ryanna Fossum (Stantec, Regional Coordination) added that the District receives all PMR forms and deems each PMR as either consistent or inconsistent with the adopted SIP. A minor change, such as

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redistribution of funds or like-for-like substitutions in BMPs, would be considered consistent, and not need to be reviewed by the WASC. A major change, such as requesting additional funds, would be considered an inconsistent PMR and would need to be moved into a discussion item for the SCR WASC to consider.

District staff shared that the two Technical Resources Program (TRP) project applications under consideration for this FY, including the Bacteria Mitigation – MTD 1643 and the Old Orchard Park – PD 0717, are requesting up to \$300,000 dollars to develop a Feasibility Study that can be used for future Infrastructure Program (IP) funding requests. Chair Seegmiller added that these two projects are identified in the City's Watershed Management Plan (WMP), and implementation of the WMP allows the SCR WASC to maintain compliance with the MS4 stormwater permit.

Member Elhassan inquired about urban runoff addressed by the TRPs, including how the runoff would be monitored and pre-treated and the volume of runoff that would be infiltrated into the groundwater. Chair Seegmiller clarified that the purpose of the TRPs is to conduct additional analysis to develop a Feasibility Study. More information on these projects could be reported to the WASC at a later stage in the project. Chair Seegmiller added that water quality monitoring would be an important aspect for these two TRPs.

Vice-Chair Cattell expressed interest in inviting a speaker to present urban runoff best management practices utilized in other areas to the WASC. The Committee discussed future opportunities and other best practices on how to reclaim urban runoff for surface water and ponding features throughout the watershed. Chair Seegmiller stated that some of the discussion points that came up are considerations for the Bacteria Mitigation TRP.

i) Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

c) Santa Clara River (SCR) Project Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Stormwater Investment Plan

District staff presented the SIP tool on screen and projected the allocation of funding for the next five years. A total of \$5.8 million, derived from SCW Program tax revenue along with available rollover funds, is available each year. The percent of funding allocated for each FY is as follows: 85% for FY24-25, 6% for FY25-26, 3% for FY26-27, 2% for FY27-28, and 70% for FY28-29 (attributed to the Newhall Park Infiltration Project). The Committee discussed the presented SIP scenario with all considered projects, noting that the funding reallocation PMR has led to increased funding availability from FY25-28.

Member Hunt Braly raised a concern that the Hasley Canyon Park Stormwater Improvements Project, has not utilized SCR WASC funds despite approval several years ago. Member Braly requested that discussion for this topic be agendaized for future discussion. Chair Seegmiller acknowledged this issue and mentioned discussions at a ROC meeting regarding the potential expedited processing of certain project types to avoid extended delays.

Member Hamamoto inquired about the required funding allocation caps for SS. District staff clarified that the WASC mandates allocating at least 85% of the five-year funding to IPs, with a maximum of 5% for SS and 10% for TRPs.

Vice-Chair Cattell asked about the Program's disadvantaged community benefits allocation, to which District staff responded that the Via Princessa Park and Regional BMP Project and Newhall Park Infiltration Project are deemed beneficial to disadvantaged communities.

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Upon further inquiry, District staff clarified that although the SIP covers a five-year period, only the first year's allocation is approved. The subsequent four years are earmarked but subject to revisit and approval each year.

i) Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

d) Recurring Meeting Time

This Agenda Item was moved and revisited after Agenda Item 9a.

i) Public Comment Period

This Agenda Item was moved and revisited after Agenda Item 9a.

8. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

9. Voting Items

a) Approve the final FY24-25 Stormwater Investment Plan for SCR Watershed Area including Watershed Coordinator and approve submission to the ROC for review

Member Braly motioned to approve the final FY24-25 SIP for the SCR Watershed Area including Watershed Coordinator, and approve submission to the ROC for review (Funding Scenario: All Considered Projects). The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Cattell. The Committee voted to approve the final FY24-25 SIP for SCR Watershed Area including Watershed Coordinator and approve submission to the ROC for review with 17 votes in favor and 0 votes in abstention (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

7. Discussion Items

e) Recurring Meeting Time

Chair Seegmiller asked if the fourth Thursday at 10:00 am could be a new recurring time for the SCR WASC meeting moving forward. Upon request, District staff agreed to send out a poll to Committee Members to confirm availability for the time change proposed. Chair Seegmiller recommended canceling the March WASC meeting that is currently scheduled, due to a lack of discussion items. Vice-Chair Cattell suggested that if the SCR WASC is missing more than one meeting each month, there should be a Watershed Coordinator report sent out to WASC Members to relay updates.

i) Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

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10. Items for Next Agenda

Member Weste and Vice-Chair Cattell highlighted the issue of invasive Arundo and Tamarisk plants within the watershed area. The Committee agreed to discuss the topic of Arundo removal and invasive species solutions at a future WASC meeting.

11. Adjournment

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

		Quorum Present				Voting Items (see meeting minutes for additional details)	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 11-16-2023 Meeting Minutes	Approve the Final Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Stormwater Investment Plan for SCR Watershed Area including Watershed Coordinator and approve submission to the ROC for review (funding scenario: all considered projects).
Agency	District	Julian Juarez	x	Jennifer Aborida		y	y
Agency	Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency	Ali Elhassan	x			y	y
Agency	Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency	Steve Cole	x	Rick Viergutz		y	y
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Francisco Guerrero	x	Christopher Lapaz		y	y
Agency	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services	Jerrid McKenna	x	Susan Nelson		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Poole & Shaffery	Hunt Braly	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	Agua Dulce Town Council	Mary Johnson	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	Santa Clarita Sierra Club	Sandra Cattell**	x	Diane Trautman		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Evolve Business Strategies	Ivan Volschenk	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation	Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel	x	Heidi Webber		y	y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		y	y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		y	y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Councilmember Laurene Weste	x	Tyler Pledger		a	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Oliver Cramer	x			y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Damon Letz	x	Dan Duncan		y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Darin Seegmiller*	x			y	y
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	TreePeople, Inc.	Amanda Begley	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	16	17
Total Voting Members Present		17			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	1	0
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	17	17
Municipal Members		7			Approved	Approved	

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 COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN



Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address	Signature
Ali Elhassan	Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency		P
Allen Ma	LA County Public Works		A
Amanda Begley (non-voting)	TreePeople		N/A
Bruce Hamamoto	LA County Public Works		P
Christopher Lapaz	LA County Sanitation Districts		A
Councilmember Laurene Weste	Santa Clarita		P
Damon Letz	Santa Clarita		P
Dan Duncan	Santa Clarita		A
Darin Seegmiller	Santa Clarita		P
Diane Trautman	Santa Clarita Sierra Club		A
Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation		P
Francisco Guerrero	LA County Sanitation Districts		P
Heidi Webber	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation		A
Hunt Braly	Poole & Shaffery		P
Ivan Volschenk	Evolve Business Strategies		P



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COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN

Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address	Signature
Jennifer Aborida	FCD		A
Jerrid McKenna	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services		P
Julian Juarez	FCD		P
Mary Johnson	Agua Dulce Town Council		P
Oliver Cramer	Santa Clarita		P
Peter Massey (non-voting)	TreePeople		N/A
Peter Warda	Evolve Business Strategies		A
Rick Viergutz	Santa Clarita Valley GSA		A
Sandra Cattell	Santa Clarita Sierra Club		P
Steve Cole	Santa Clarita Valley GSA		P
Susan Nelson	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services		A
Tyler Pledger	Santa Clarita		A

Santa Clara River Watershed Area Steering Committee Meeting PUBLIC SIGN-IN



*Signing or completing this form is voluntary for members of the public

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Webex Attendees
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Alex Aguirre	Hans Tremmel Brown-Caldwell	Josafat Flores	Mike Antos
Alexandro Garcia	Jackie Stone - LACPW	Josephine Gutierrez	Richard Watson
Allen Ma - LACo Public Works	Jennifer Aborida	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Ryanna Fossum Regional Coordination
Chris Lapaz	Jenny Chau	LACFCD - SCWP Host	Santa Clarita City Hall
Erum Razzak - LARWQCB	JonPaul Sarro	Lynne Plambeck	Tiffany