

South Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, March 20, 2024
1:00pm - 3:00pm
Edward C. Little Water Recycling Facility
1935 S Hughes Way, El Segundo, CA 90245
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Marcela Benavides-Aguilar, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Matthew Veeh, West Basin MWD (Agency)
*Aimee Zhao, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
Dave Pierce, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
*Darryl Ford, Los Angeles Recreation and Parks (Agency)
Craig Cadwallader, Surfrider Foundation (Community), Chair
Hany Fangary, Fangary Law Group (Community)
*Roland Jen, Carson (Municipal)
Susie Santilena, Los Angeles (Municipal)
Thuan Nguyen, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
James Flannigan, Torrance (Municipal)
*Doug Krauss, EWMP: Beach Cities (Municipal)
Carla Dillon, (Lomita) EWMP: Dominguez (Municipal)
Vanessa Hevener, (Rancho Palos Verdes) EWMP: Peninsula (Municipal)
Nancy Shrodes, Heal the Bay (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Caryn Mandelbaum, Resident (Community)
Bo Savage, Los Angeles Conservation Corps (Community)

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Craig Cadwallader, Chair of the South Santa Monica Bay (SSMB) 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 February 21, 2024

Chair Cadwallader presented the minutes from the last SSMB WASC meeting held on February 21, 2024. Member Doug Krauss motioned to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Member Cara Dillon. The WASC voted to approve the meeting minutes with 12 in favor, 1 in abstention, and 1 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet attached).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District staff provided an update, noting:

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- Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (FY23-24) Quarterly Reports were due February 15. 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 next Quarterly Report is due on May 15.
- The Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) voted to send the Biennial Report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board). The ROC will begin watershed goal-setting sessions on April 11. The WASC is welcome to attend, virtually or in-person, and provide input. Final Biennial Report, presentations, ROC meeting details, and more information, can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).
- Annual Plans are due April 1. Municipal Annual Plans are due in April before the FY and the Annual Reports are due at the end of the calendar year in December.
- Round 4 Transfer Agreements and Addendums are available for download in the Transfer Agreement Module. District staff sent an email on January 24 with instructions on how to navigate the new Module. Transfer Agreements will not be downloadable until the Infrastructure Program (IP) Project Developer contract information is uploaded. The new Module is for projects included in Round 4 Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs) and future SIPs only. Projects included in previous SIPs can continue submitting documents via email.
- WASC Members whose job connects them to specific projects should ask colleagues or consultants to attend WASC meetings to share about or advocate for those projects during SIP deliberations and should avoid using their position as WASC Members to advocate for projects from their home entities.
- The new [SCW Program website](#) has officially been launched, representing a significant step for transparency, accessibility, and collaboration. The website includes new features and enhancements such as the resource library, search feature, and calendar. Bookmarks previously saved from the old site will redirect the user to the correct location on the new site.

Ryanna Fossum (Stantec, Regional Coordination) shared that the Regional Coordination team prepared the first FY23-24 Q3 Quarterly Funding Report & Matrix, now available on the [SCW Program website](#), under the Resources tab. The Funding Report includes a high-level overview of recent funding policy highlights and a funding matrix that shares currently active and upcoming funding opportunities that may be relevant to SCW Program infrastructure projects. This is the first of what will be provided quarterly for participants in the SCW Program. This tool was created to help project proponents find leverage funding and to help alleviate funding constraints on the WASCs.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Nancy Shrodes provided an update on recent outreach and engagement efforts. Highlights include hosting a watershed-wide event on February 24 at the West Basin Municipal Water District's Edward C. Little Water Recycling Center, attending the South Bay Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan (IRWMP) meeting, and touring Environmental Charter High School in Lawndale. Watershed Coordinator Shrodes also shared an upcoming opportunity to attend the Heal the Bay SCW Program BioBlitz on April 27. Interested individuals can find more information on [the registration page](#).

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosure

There were no ex-parte communications disclosures.

6. Public Comment Period

District Staff compiled all public comment cards received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting, uploaded them to the SCW Program website, and displayed them on-screen. In-person, virtual and call-in users were invited to provide public comments.

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Ali Sharbat (Cal Poly Pomona) provided public comment on the proposed Scientific Study (SS), Identifying Best Practices for Maintaining Stormwater Drywell Capacity. Sharbat shared that the study aims to contribute to scientific knowledge and workforce development. The SS requests less than 0.5% of the SSMB WASC budget and seeks consideration during deliberations for the FY24-25 SSMB Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP).

7. Discussion Items

a) Disadvantaged Community Benefits Classification Presentation

Watershed Coordinator Shrodes presented on Disadvantaged Community Benefits. Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#). Key points include defining disadvantaged community populations within the SCW Program and how projects can provide direct benefits to disadvantaged communities.

Currently, a minimum of 30% of the SSMB funds must be allocated to projects that benefit disadvantaged communities, and the current SSMB SIP meets and exceeds this requirement. One project currently claims Disadvantaged Community Benefits: the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project. Additionally, 10 IP projects funded by the SSMB WASC claim Disadvantaged Community Benefits.

Member Krauss asked if there are any guidelines to assist the SSMB WASC in determining if projects meet the threshold of the Disadvantaged Community Benefit. Watershed Coordinator Shrodes shared that the 2022 Interim Guidance provides additional direction for Committee Members to use. The WASC is responsible for validating whether each project provides direct benefits to disadvantaged communities aligned with the SCW Programs goals.

Member Susie Santilena shared that last year, the ROC questioned one of the SIPs because it designated a project as providing a Disadvantaged Community Benefit, which the ROC did not believe was warranted, which risked a delay in approving all nine WASC SIPs.

b) Project Updates for Previously Funded Projects

i) Project Updates and Budget Confirmations for Projects with Continued Funding Requests

District staff shared that this agenda item is to receive updates and confirm funding allocations from continuing projects that have been earmarked to receive Round 5 SCW Program funding.

Member Roland Jen shared an update from the City of Carson Stormwater and Runoff Capture Project at Carriage Crest Park and noted that there are currently some issues that are making it difficult to proceed with construction. The City is hoping to move forward with construction by the end of the FY or no later than the calendar year.

Katie Harrel (CWE) provided an update on the South Santa Monica Bay Water Quality Enhancement: 28th Street Storm Drain Infiltration Project. Harrel confirmed the disbursement amounts were accurate, and the project recently completed the CEQA public review period, with design now 90% complete. CWE expects design and the CEQA process to conclude in the next few months.

Member Santilena inquired why the South Santa Monica Bay Water Quality Enhancement: 28th Street Storm Drain Infiltration Project did not submit a Project Modification Request (PMR) form. District staff

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clarified that the 28th Street Storm Drain Infiltration Project funding allocation adjustments were made during prior SIP deliberations rather than through a PMR. The SIP tool does not yet differentiate between adjustments due to PMRs and other allocation adjustments from previously funded projects.

Curtis Fang (Geosyntec) provided an update on the Fulton Playfield Multi-Benefit Infiltration Project. The project's design is currently 75% complete and has been submitted to the City of Redondo Beach for review. There are currently no deviations from the approved SIP, and the funding of \$1,683,000 for FY24-25 was confirmed. The City of Manhattan Beach is currently collaborating with the SCW Program to finalize the Year 2 funding transfer addendum.

Mike Scaduto (City of Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN)) provided an update on the Machado Lake Ecosystem Rehabilitation (MLER) Operation and Maintenance project. LASAN continues to utilize the funds as planned, and there have been no changes to the project.

Ashwini Bhide (City of Redondo Beach) provided an update on the Glen Anderson Park Regional Stormwater Capture Green Streets project. Ashwini mentioned that the project is commencing technical explorations. Documents were submitted to the SCW Program to receive Year 1 funding, and the City is currently awaiting a response.

Andrew Gray (University of California, Riverside) provided an update on the Microplastics in LA County Stormwater SS. The SS received funding for Year 1 and 2. The SS collected the first year of stormwater samples and the proponent is building lab capacity with 10 undergraduate students to conduct future sampling.

Regional Pathogen Reduction SS representatives were not present to provide an update. District staff will confirm funding separately.

Member Santilena suggested earlier confirmation of funding and project updates for sufficient deliberation of SSMB SIPs.

c) Project Modification Requests for WASC Discussion South Santa Monica Bay Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for Populating the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Stormwater Investment Plan ([SCW Portal](#) & [Summary of Resources](#))

District staff shared that the Committee can continue discussions and finalize a SIP during the April SSMB WASC meeting. The SSMB WASC has approximately \$17.3 million available annually to fund projects. In the scenario to fund all previous projects, the six new proposed projects, and no PMRs, the SSMB WASC would be overallocated by \$6.5 million, representing 138% of the available budget.

Member Dave Pierce requested an explanation of the SIP tool and the available scenarios. District staff explained that the goal is to discuss what the WASC can fund within the budget constraints. To aid in the SIP deliberation, District staff had sent out a survey prior to the meeting asking the WASC to preliminarily rank the projects. The results are as follows:

Infrastructure Program (IP)

1. Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project
2. Dominguez Channel Parkway BMPs Prioritization Project
3. PMR - Wilmington Neighborhood Greening Project
4. PMR - Wilmington Q Street Local Urban Area Flow Management Project

Scientific Studies Program (SS)

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1. Identifying Best Practices for Maintaining Stormwater Drywell Capacity (Cal Poly University, Pomona)
2. Street Sweeping Study (Los Angeles)
3. Pollutant Source Characterization Study (Los Angeles)

Technical Resources Program (TRP)

1. Gardena Willows Wetlands Stormwater Enhancement Project (City of Gardena, The Friends of the Gardena Willows Wetland Preserve)

District staff presented a scenario that included funding for the two top IP projects, due to high WASC Member support as indicated in the survey. Member Santilena noted that a correction should be made as the Gardena Willows Wetland Stormwater Enhancement TRP Project is the total highest-ranking project. Member Santilena expressed support for funding for the Gardena Willows Wetland Stormwater Enhancement TRP Project and noted its rarity in proposals to the SCW Program.

Member Marcela Benavides-Aguilar asked District staff to explain how scores were calculated on the Project Rankings Survey. Each Committee Member ranked projects in order of preference and point values were assigned based on ranking and aggregated. District staff noted that not all WASC Members participated in the survey or ranked each project.

Fossum clarified that projected construction costs shown on the SIP tool for future years are estimated based on potential construction costs of previously funded design projects, rather than an actual funding request submitted by applicants.

Member Daryl Ford inquired about a SIP scenario in which the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project was funded in full. District staff shared a scenario for reallocating funding across the first three years with concurrence from the applicant.

David Wahba (City of Rolling Hills Estates) shared that the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project cannot accept partial funding or adjust funding allocations beyond three years due to the City's funding requirements and limitations. The City has secured leverage funding from a Caltrans grant, which cannot extend beyond FY27-28.

Member Santilena asked the City of Torrance about funding prioritization preferences between the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project and the Dominguez Channel BMPs Prioritization Project. Wahba expressed a desire to prioritize funding the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project.

The Committee asked about the possibility of an additional online meeting before the next scheduled SSMB WASC meeting. District staff informed the Committee that any such meeting would be subject to Brown Act compliance, making it difficult to facilitate. Chair Cadwallader suggested extending the April WASC meeting by an additional hour to ensure there is enough time to adequately discuss the FY 24-25 SIP.

District staff mentioned that the SIP tool can be used online by WASC Members prior to April's meeting. Committee Members who wish to add an additional scenario to the SIP tool can reach out to District staff.

Member Santilena requested that the Disadvantaged Community Benefit designation be removed from the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project.

Member Krauss requested that the ranking survey be resent to the Committee Members, with results to be included in April's discussion. Watershed Coordinator Shrodes suggested asking for the project proponent's

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priorities and noted that both the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin Project and the Dominguez Channel Parkway BMPs Prioritization projects were previously funded by the SSMB WASC.

8. Public Comment Period

Allan Rigg (City of Gardena) provided public comment and suggested that those awarded TRP funding also be guaranteed funding for design and construction of the project.

Scaduto expressed hope that the SSMB WASC would consider the projects presented by LASAN. Scaduto recommended the City of Los Angeles' PMRs as highest priority due to leverage funding invested by the City. Scaduto mentioned that due to funding limitations of the WASC, LASAN did not submit any projects for Round 5 and intends to do the same for the Round 6 Call for Projects.

Kathleen McGowan (McGowan Consulting) clarified that while the Torrance Airport Stormwater Basin project provides Water Quality Benefits to nearby disadvantaged communities, the proponent is comfortable removing the project's designation as a Disadvantaged Community Benefit project.

9. Items for Next Agenda

The next SSMB WASC meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, April 17 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm. The meeting will be extended by an additional hour. Items on the agenda include:

- a) South Santa Monica Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Stormwater Investment Plan.

10. Adjournment

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