

Santa Clara River

Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)

Meeting Minutes



Thursday, July 18, 2024
1:00 PM - 3:00 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)
Francisco Guerrero, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Jerrid McKenna, City of Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services (Agency)
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)
Oliver Cramer, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Damon Letz, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Darin Seegmiller, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Amanda Begley, TreePeople (Watershed Coordinator, Non-voting member)

Committee Members Not Present:

Steve Cole, Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agency)
Hunt Braly, Poole & Shaffery (Community)
Councilmember Laurene Weste, Santa Clarita (Municipal)

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.

Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) staff gave a brief WebEx tutorial. Public Works staff facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established. SCW Program Watershed Planning staff made self-introductions.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 20, 2024.

Public Works staff presented the previous meeting minutes. Vice-Chair Sandra Cattell motioned to approve the meeting minutes from June 20, 2024. The motion was seconded by Member Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel. The Committee voted to approve the June 20, 2024, meeting minutes with 12 votes in favor, 3 votes in abstention, and 0 opposed (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Program Updates

Public Works staff provided an update, noting:

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- Round 6 Call for Projects for the Regional Program will defer Infrastructure Program (IP) project submissions until Summer 2025. Scientific Studies (SS) and Technical Resource Program (TRP) applications can be submitted by the July 31 Call for Projects deadline. This deferral is in alignment with the recent report by the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' (Board) subsequent motion on Progress and Adaptive Management of the Safe, Clean Water Program. The deferral will enable the SCW Program to prioritize critical efforts informed by all recent reports, recommendations, and discussions with the ROC and key interested parties, while also allowing prospective applicants the opportunity to refine and enhance their project proposals, leverage additional funding, and engage more deeply with the community.

Vice-Chair Cattell recently attended a public input session on the SCW Program Education and Community Engagement Grants Program. Vice-Chair Cattell invited WASC Members and interested individuals to attend the upcoming information session on July 24. More information and the registration page can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

4. Ex Parte Communication Disclosure

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

5. Public Comment Period

Public Works staff did not receive any comment cards by 5:00 pm the day before the meeting. There were no public comments.

6. Discussion Items

a. Watershed Planning Workshop

i. Introduction to Watershed Planning

SCW Program Watershed Planning (SCW WP) staff within Public Works presented an overview of the Watershed Planning process. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

SCW WP staff outlined key planning milestones, outputs, timelines for engagement, community input, and how Watershed Planning will be integrated with the SCW Program. The Initial Watershed Plans will serve as another resource during WASC Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) deliberations. SCW WP staff shared that the Initial Watershed Plans will be completed by mid-2025.

ii. WASC Feedback on existing plans and datasets for Watershed Planning

Prior to the meeting, SCW WP staff provided committee members a list of key planning efforts, such as existing plans and datasets, that are being considered to assist in the development of Initial Watershed Plans; a simplified list was also presented on screen. SCW Program Watershed Planning staff requested recommendations from Committee Members on other existing plans and datasets that should be explored for the Watershed Planning effort. Committee Members suggested the addition of the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians Tribal Climate Resiliency Plan, the Los Angeles County Climate Action Plan, the City of Santa Clarita's Climate Action Plan, the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency Urban Water Management Plan, the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, the Upper Santa Clara River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) studies. SCW WP staff added

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that additional input can be submitted following the meeting using the [Watershed Planning Post-Workshop Input Form](#).

SCW WP staff presented a summary of the SCR Watershed Area's funding capacity and project benefit metrics for Fiscal Years (FY) 2020-21 through FY 2023-24. .

SCW WP staff shared that Committee Members and the public may attend the Metrics and Monitoring Study (MMS) Information Session on July 25. More information can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

iii. SCW Program Goals & Strategies Workshop

Ryanna Fossum and Hayat Rasul (Stantec, Watershed Planning) conducted a facilitated workshop on SCW Program goals and solicited recommended strategies that are important to Committee Members and the Watershed Area. The Committee reviewed the 14 SCW Program Goals from the SCW Program Ordinance and Members reflected on which of the goals should have greater emphasis for the SCR Watershed Area.

Vice-Chair Cattell noted that prioritizing nature-based solutions has a significant impact on the projects in the watershed, considering that they cost less to create, less to maintain, and they are good for the environment.

Member Oliver Cramer emphasized the critical importance of water quality and commented that the tax revenue from the SCW Program is intended to provide funding to address both water quality and water supply issues. Member Cramer stressed obligations to meet regulatory limits set by regulatory permits and advocated for funding projects that are in line with the regulatory requirements. Member Cramer suggested adjusting the SCW Program Infrastructure Program Scoring Criteria to give equal weight to both Water Quality and Water Supply Benefits. Member Ali Elhassan acknowledged that there is difficulty in balancing various objectives to meet multiple requirements, advocating instead for prioritizing water quality as the primary goal.

Chair Seegmiller highlighted the importance of water quality in meeting stormwater compliance regulations and emphasized the need for projects to focus on these requirements. Committee members emphasized the importance in considering projects that align with regional efforts, while also allowing opportunities for smaller-scale local initiatives.

The Committee highlighted the importance of Community Investment Benefits and added that project goals should not just be about checking off minimum requirements, but also genuinely improving community life. Specifically, creating enjoyable spaces should be prioritized, and encouraging groundwater recharge through stormwater capture is crucial for many of these efforts. Chair Seegmiller added that while the watershed includes large amounts of open space, there is potential in enhancing parks and open space through investing in efforts to enhance existing spaces when scheduled maintenance and upgrades are needed.

Committee Members highlighted that public education plays a significant role in community improvement and agreed that having community members who are well-informed on best management practices (BMPs) is a larger WASC goal. Vice-Chair Cattell mentioned that there are areas within the SCR Watershed Area that are extremely park poor and should be a priority and focus for potential improvements.

Committee Members participated in a workshop activity to identify priority strategies that they would like to see implemented through future projects and studies in the SCR Watershed Area to better achieve SCW

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Program Goals over the next five years. Committee Members individually brainstormed proposed strategies, then discussed as a group and categorized the strategies into relevant groups.

Vice-Chair Cattell added to a strategy submitted regarding using existing County-owned property in upper watershed regions to create sports fields and nature-based infrastructure to add more community park space and mentioned that the suggestion, specifically highlighting new park space in the Upper Santa Clara River regions, is valuable, as the area is often not a focus area. Chair Seegmiller commented that the Upper Santa Clara River receives less focus in project development and proposals since it has not experienced the same level of development as the Lower Santa Clara River. Chair Seegmiller shared that stormwater quality is more impacted by runoff generated in developed areas.

The Committee highlighted invasive species removal, complete green streets, groundwater study, school improvements, river cleanups, and ponding as additional strategies. Committee Members discussed the strategies and compiled them into different groups based on common themes.

SCR WASC Members discussed the groupings created and identified the following action phrases to describe the groupings:

- a. Address the big three (water supply, water quality, community benefits) SCW Program Goals through infiltration
- b. Optimize existing space for water capture
- c. Support projects that remove invasive species
- d. Center stormwater compliance
- e. Deepen connections with local schools
- f. Identify river-adjacent locations for community improvement projects
- g. Support education and outreach projects

The Committee's discussion on each grouping is captured below.

a. Address the big three SCW Program goals through infiltration

The Committee discussed the three main goals of the SCW Program as water quality, water supply, and development of community/green space. The group includes strategies related to stormwater infiltration, highlighting three main objectives: enhancing infiltration, capturing runoff, and promoting recharge. Key strategy suggestions included improving overall stormwater infiltration, pinpointing specific areas for targeted infiltration efforts, directing runoff into aquifers, creating new parks equipped with underground capture systems, and collaborating with local entities to exchange ideas for recharge projects, thereby optimizing monitoring and research efforts. Vice-Chair Cattell specifically highlighted the strategy of improving water supply through recharge and infiltration. Chair Seegmiller stated that prioritizing infiltration across a spectrum of projects would be ideal.

b. Optimize existing space for water capture

The Committee discussed a multi-benefit approach to optimize existing spaces. Strategies included enhancing community recreation, refurbishing existing park sites, creating new infrastructure projects, and developing complete green streets. Committee Members noted that the City of Santa Clarita has beautifully landscaped roads, and a long-term strategy for those areas could be improvements to the landscaping to turn developed roadways into green streets with infiltration infrastructure. Member Bruce Hamamoto added that opportunities may exist to incorporate native plants into a project site when doing improvements and for construction of new projects.

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c. Support projects that remove invasive species

Strategies included removing invasive plant species, specifically arundo and tamarisk. Chair Seegmiller noted the importance of promoting projects that prioritize invasive plant removal. Committee Members discussed that projects which only focus on invasive species removal cannot be supported with available funding, but the strategy can be promoted internally within multi-benefit projects. Watershed Coordinator Amanda Begley stated that invasive species removal could become a larger effort and can be potentially leveraged by the County Plan.

d. Center stormwater compliance

The Committee discussed focusing on stormwater compliance, as it relates to MS4 permit compliance.

e. Deepen connections with local schools

Suggestions included reducing hardscape by introducing greenery and planting native trees to attract wildlife and creating curriculum centered around nature-based solutions. Vice-Chair Cattell stated there are various stages to achieve nature-based solutions for greening schools and communities. Committee Members cited asphalt removal and vegetable gardens as examples. The Committee discussed opportunities for collaboration with schools and acknowledged that this WASC does not have a Committee Member representing local schools or school partnerships.

f. Identify river-adjacent locations for community improvement projects

Strategies included creating more community park space near the Upper Santa Clara River reaches, slowing down the Santa Clara River using temporary bioswales, and using nature-based water cleaning solutions such as ponding.

g. Supporting education and outreach projects

Strategies included encouraging river cleanup, providing community education on usage of household chemicals that may be impacting their surrounding water systems, and utilizing educational programming grants. Chair Seegmiller mentioned that there are no requirements for projects to be education focused, but that it could be more of a consideration. Watershed Coordinator Begley added that The Water Foundation's SCW Program Education and Community Engagement Grants Program would be able to fund projects that focus on outreach aspects and could be considered for future projects.

Fossum and Rasul thanked the Committee for engaging in the workshop and discussion and reminded Committee Members to submit additional comments in the [Watershed Planning Post-Workshop Input Form](#).

SCW WP staff shared plans to return to this Committee for a second Watershed Planning Workshop in October. Committee Members expressed that it could be beneficial to have a public engagement meeting that is specifically for the SCR WASC rather than all nine WASCs together, because the issues raised may be unique to the Santa Clara River Watershed Area. SCW WP staff noted that Watershed Coordinators are a key resource for engagement during the Watershed Planning process and will help elevate watershed-specific perspectives.

7. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

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8. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 15 from 1:00 pm to 3:00pm and will be held in person at Santa Clarita City Hall. Items on the next agenda include:

- Presentation on WASC roles and responsibilities
- Selection of Chair, Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs
- Discussion on invasive species

9. Adjournment

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

Webex Attendees
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Allen Ma - LA Co Public Works
Alonso
Carlos Rodriguez
Charlie Wyatt
Chris Lapaz
Dan Duncan
Emily Ng
Eric Bonilla

Erum Razzak - LARWQCB
Genevieve Osmena
Haris Harouny
Hayat Rasul
Heather Turpin
Hunt Braly
JENNIFER ABORIDA
Jacqueline Stone LACPW

Jenny Chau
John Mendoza
Jose Castro - LACPW
Josephine Gutierrez
Justin Jones
Kristina Kreter
Larry Tran
Marisela Velasquez

Mayra Cabrera - LACPW
Melania G.
Paul Shadmani
Raina
Ryanna Fossum, Regional Coordination
Samantha Torres
lynne plambeck
mary kohav

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 COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN



Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address		Signature
Ali Elhassan	Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency	aelhassan@scvwa.org	P	
Allen Ma	LA County Public Works	ama@dpw.lacounty.gov	A	
Amanda Begley (non-voting)	TreePeople	abegley@treepeople.org	N/A	
Bruce Hamamoto	LA County Public Works	bhamamo@dpw.lacounty.gov	P	
Christopher Lapaz	LA County Sanitation Districts	christopherlapaz@lacsds.org	A	
Damon Letz	Santa Clarita	dletz@santa-clarita.com	P	
Dan Duncan	Santa Clarita	dduncan@santa-clarita.com	A	
Darin Seegmiller	Santa Clarita	dseegmiller@santa-clarita.com	P	
Diane Trautman	Santa Clarita Sierra Club	d.trautman@icloud.com	A	
Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation	zuliebear@aol.com	P	
Francisco Guerrero	LA County Sanitation Districts	fguerrero@lacsds.org	P	
Haley Lawton	Santa Clarita	<u>hlawton@santa-clarita.com</u>	A	
Heather Turpin (non-voting)	TreePeople	hturpin@treepeople.org	N/A	
Heidi Webber	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation	hwebber50@gmail.com	A	
Hunt Braly	Poole & Shaffery	hbraly@pooleshaffery.com	P	

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Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address		Signature
Ivan Volschenk	Evolve Business Strategies	ivan@evolvebizstrat.com	P	<i>Ivan Volschenk</i>
Jennifer Aborida	FCD	jaborida@dpw.lacounty.gov	A	
Jerrid McKenna	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services	jmckenna@santa-clarita.com	P	<i>Jerrid McKenna</i>
Julian Juarez	FCD	jjuarez@dpw.lacounty.gov	P	<i>Julian Juarez</i>
Laurene Weste, Councilmember	Santa Clarita	lweste@santa-clarita.com	P	<i>Laurene Weste</i>
Mary Johnson	Agua Dulce Town Council	maryjohnson767@gmail.com	P	<i>M. Johnson</i>
Oliver Cramer	Santa Clarita	ocramer@santa-clarita.com	P	<i>Oliver Cramer</i>
Rick Viergutz	Santa Clarita Valley GSA	rviergutz@scvwa.org	A	<i>Rick Viergutz</i>
Sandra Cattell	Santa Clarita Sierra Club	sumcatt@yahoo.com	P	<i>Sandra Cattell</i>
Steve Cole	Santa Clarita Valley GSA	scole@scvwa.org	P	
Susan Nelson	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services	snelson@santa-clarita.com	A	
Tyler Pledger	Santa Clarita	tpledger@santa-clarita.com	A	<i>Tyler Pledger</i>

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PUBLIC SIGN-IN



First Name	Last Name	Municipality/Organization	Email Address
Daria	Antonova	LACDPW	dantonova@dpw.lacounty.gov

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