

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



Thursday, August 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)
*Jennifer Aguilar, Upper San Gabriel District (Agency)
Kelly Gardner, Main San Gabriel Basin (Agency)
*Christopher Lapaz, LA County Sanitation District (Agency)
*Andrea Vona, Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation (Agency)
Drew Ready, Council for Watershed Health (Community)
*David Marquez, Urban Semillas (Community)
David Diaz, Active SGV (Community)
*Joseph Venzon, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Paul Fisher, Glendora (Municipal)
*Nicholas Delgado, Pomona (Municipal)
Romany Basilyous, Baldwin Park (Municipal)
Roberto Ortega, West Covina (Municipal)
James Cortes, Day One (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Matthew Hudson, Industry (Municipal)
Stephanie Sandoval, Duarte (Municipal)
See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees.

1) Welcome and Introductions

Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) staff welcomed Members of the Upper San Gabriel River (USGR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) and called the meeting to order. The Committee Chair and Vice-Chair were absent from the meeting. Public Works staff facilitated Committee Member introductions. A quorum was established. Public Works staff provided a brief WebEx tutorial.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 25, 2024

Public Works staff presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Member David Diaz motioned to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Member Romany Basilyous. The WASC voted to approve the meeting minutes with 7 votes in favor, 3 vote in abstention, 0 votes opposed (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3) Committee Member and Program Updates

There were no updates from Committee Members.

Public Works staff provided an update, noting:

Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program Watershed Planning staff within Public Works provided an update on Watershed Planning and shared that the first Watershed Planning workshops were held at eight of the

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nine WASCs. The Watershed Planning Team, consisting of SCW Program Watershed Planning staff within Public Works and consultants, will return to WASCs in October for an additional engagement session. In November, SCW Program Watershed Planning staff will share the initial Watershed Plan framework so that plans can be concluded by mid-2025.

Feedback has been received from Committee Members on existing data, including from previously funded projects and the Metrics and Monitoring Study (MMS), in addition to local and regional plans. This data will be compiled and synthesized to begin identifying Watershed Area Needs and Opportunity Areas. SCW Program Watershed Planning staff clarified that these Watershed Plans are not project-specific, and Watershed Plans are intended to guide applicants, WASCs, and other interested parties through Population Indicators and Opportunity Areas. SCW Program Watershed Planning staff shared that the Watershed Plans are being developed alongside the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, which will gather feedback from the community-at-large across the SCW Program area.

SCW Program Watershed Planning staff added that there will be engagement with other organizations, such as Our Water LA (OWLA), Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, Rebuild SoCal Partnership, and municipalities. The Watershed Planning Team is also soliciting feedback from the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) and the Scoring Committee to refine definitions and common language used by the SCW Program. SCW Program Watershed Planning staff will be back in October with a second workshop for the USGR WASC.

Upon inquiry, Public Works staff clarified that WASCs have five Community Stakeholder seats. Member Drew Ready requested an update about two vacant Community Stakeholder seats. Public Works staff mentioned that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) will soon appoint Community Stakeholder seat Members to the USGR WASC, and an update will be provided. Member Ready emphasized that there is a need for more community voices in the USGR WASC, and that having only three Community Stakeholder seat Members makes it difficult to achieve quorum even with the option of alternates.

4) Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator James Cortes gave presented on recent community engagement, activities and events, and feedback. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Watershed Coordinator Cortes shared about recent efforts to conduct site identification and working with community members in Avocado Heights Park, which is an area vulnerable to significant flooding and requires maintenance. Watershed Coordinator Cortes is currently working on the Year Three Quarterly Report and remains connected with major agencies in the region that could support broader watershed area planning through project coordination, and support for outreach and engagement materials.

Watershed Coordinator Cortes shared feedback received related to the use of the term “Disadvantaged Communities” and shared that some community members expressed the importance of also considering “Disadvantaged Community Use,” to not only look at where projects are located, but also who uses a given site.

Member Ready asked if Watershed Coordinators are identifying education needs and interfacing with organizations that might be applying for educational funding through the SCW Program Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program. Watershed Coordinator Cortes shared that one of the goals of doing educational events in the community is to connect with other organizations, with a future potential to collaborate. Watershed Coordinator Cortes added that Watershed Coordinators are in touch with organizations that will apply to the SCW Program Public Education and Community Engagement

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Grants Program, but it is not clear if agencies represented by Watershed Coordinators can apply for that program. More information on the grant program is expected in September.

5) Ex Parte Communication Disclosure

Member Kelly Gardner disclosed being contacted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with concerns about approved SCW Program infiltration projects which may have the potential to move contamination plumes. Member Gardner added that this information has been shared with Public Works staff and has been discussed with two of the ROC Members. Member Gardner will be providing a comment on this item at the upcoming ROC Meeting.

6) Presentation and Discussion Items

a. WASC Roles and Responsibilities

Emily Ng (Stantec, Regional Coordination) provided an overview of the SCW Program structure, timeline, and WASC roles and responsibilities. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Upon inquiry, Ng and Public Works staff clarified that Public Works staff enforces the attendance requirement. Member Ready emphasized the importance for various organizations to be represented during WASC meetings and encouraged Public Works staff to provide reminders to Committee Members that two consecutive meetings could jeopardize membership eligibility.

Upon inquiry by Member Diaz, Ng clarified that the Scoring Committee is not currently involved in the Project Modification Request (PMR) process.

Member Diaz inquired about the scope of action available for Committee Members to take if projects are no longer in line with the project schedule. Ng mentioned that projects out of compliance are flagged in the Quarterly Reports and the WASC should engage with the project developers and ask clarifying questions. Member Diaz further asked whether funding can be rescinded as a result of significant delays and whether Progress Reports can be approved without requiring that specific actions be taken. Public Works staff clarified that if there is a lack of progress, Public Works staff will bring it to WASC's attention. Significant timeline delays can also be raised to the WASC through the PMR process, which gives the WASC discretion to delay funding until the project is back in alignment with the schedule. Public Works staff is working on sharing more specific guidelines regarding projects that lack reporting or experience delayed timelines.

Member Ready inquired about caps on additional funding requests. Public Works staff clarified that there are currently no caps and that the WASC has discretion over whether to approve a PMR with an additional funding request. Public Works staff added that the WASC can decide to approve some, all, or none of the PMR. Public Works staff also shared that if a project continues to demonstrate no progress over a five-year timeframe, the funds are considered lapsed and may result in disbursement delays or defaulting on Fund Transfer Agreement terms. More information can be found in the Regional Program Funding Process Handbook.

Member Ready inquired about opportunities for the WASC to contribute feedback on the roll out of various SCW Program related efforts. Ng shared that the current Watershed Planning approach is intended to better capture priorities of the SCW Program. The funding opportunities for workforce development might extend beyond the SCW Program, limiting the WASC's influence.

b. Selection of Chair, Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs

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Public Works staff outlined the process to select the next Chair, Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs for the USGR WASC for the term spanning between August 2024 and July 2025. Public Works staff explained that Committee Members can nominate Committee Members during the meeting. Public Works staff described the responsibilities of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Co-Chairs.

Upon inquiry, Public Works staff clarified that in the absence of a Chair or Vice-Chair, Public Works staff can temporarily fill these roles, but Committee Members should fill both of those roles on a permanent basis.

No nominations were shared. This agenda item has been tabled for the next meeting.

c. FY24-25 Strategic Outreach & Engagement Plan (SOEP) Presentation

Watershed Coordinator Cortes provided an overview of the FY2024-25 USGR SOEP. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). Watershed Coordinator Cortes shared that one comment was received earlier that morning, but the feedback is minor and does not impact the SOEP structure.

Watershed Coordinator Cortes shared that in response to discussions a few months ago, regarding the need for more engagement with Tribal members and Tribes, the Watershed Coordinators established a Tribal Allyship group that meets monthly to prioritize engagement with Tribes and Tribal organizations and share educational resources.

Upon inquiry, Watershed Coordinator Cortes clarified that community engagement events are typically focused on raising awareness about the SCW Program and educating the community about the program goals. Examples of outreach include project showcases, meetings, tabling events, or any other event that provides information and seeks feedback to share with the WASC.

Member Ready inquired as to whether any aspects of the SOEP support the solicitation and development of Feasibility Studies to identify project and community needs and solutions. Watershed Coordinator Cortes added that this is a central focus of the community engagement efforts carried out by the Watershed Coordinators. Watershed Coordinator Cortes receives regular emails from community members about project ideas and meets with them or attends community events that seek to discuss solutions.

Member Roberto Ortega mentioned the City of West Covina is developing a Parks Master Plan and is curious about how the Watershed Coordinator can get involved to identify opportunities that support the plan. Watershed Coordinator Cortes shared an interest in conveying opportunities for the SCW Program to support various projects within the community, and plans to engage one or two cities monthly to remain connected with such opportunities for coordination.

Public Works staff shared that City of West Covina received funding for a Technical Resources Program (TRP) project concept that will now be developed into a feasibility study. The Watershed Coordinator is included in the Technical Assistance Team for that project and will support the identification of potential sites that fit under the scope of the project. The feasibility study was focused on identifying sites for future projects so there is an opportunity to leverage funding initially intended for the TRP concept.

d. SS Presentation: Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation

Kayla Kelly-Slatten (WSP) and Gabriela Gonzalez (Los Angeles Community Garden Council (LACGC)) provided an overview of the Scientific Study (SS) on Stormwater Capture Gardens. This SS encompasses three Watershed Areas, including USGR. The presentation summarized the structure of the SS, progress, learnings and recommendations. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

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Kelly-Slatten and Gonzalez noted that Disadvantaged Communities were not used as a filter in narrowing down the garden sites scoped because some gardens did not necessarily fall in these communities but are close by or adjacent.

Kelly-Slatten and Gonzalez shared that engagement was low for the SS despite direct outreach and attempts to meet one-on-one with garden owners. LACGC is working with other organizations to spark interest. As a result of low participation, only one garden site was identified for the USGR, Azusa's Memorial Park Community Garden (Azusa Memorial Park Garden), which is located within a larger public park.

Member Ready inquired about the number of gardens that the SS engaged in other WASCs and whether the Azusa Memorial Park Garden is interested in the Technical Resource Program (TRP). Kelly-Slatten and Gonzalez shared that engagement was more successful in the other two Watershed Areas, Central Santa Monica Bay (CSMB) and Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR). CSMB and ULAR underwent more robust filtering parameters for garden sites since there are more gardens in those watershed areas. USGR has less gardens due to the more rural and unincorporated nature of this Watershed Area. Azusa Memorial Park Garden has been very engaged and remains open to conversations about future opportunities.

7) Public Comment Period

Clare Matinent (community member, City of Whittier) provided public comment about the Whittier City Council's decision to remove 130 mature trees along Greenland Avenue. The removal of these trees is part of a redevelopment project in those areas. Matinent shared that some community members are doing outreach and have found that many members of the public want to keep the trees. Matinent asked the WASC to offer ideas or information that could support this cause. Public Works staff suggested that sharing comments at the City Council meeting would be the most appropriate venue. Public Works staff also added that the City of Whittier is part of the Lower San Gabriel River Watershed Area.

Magdalena Moe (community member, City of Whittier) expressed gratitude for an informative WASC meeting. Moe is looking forward to seeing efforts that support the community and address water issues. Magdalena also made a call for meeting attendees to send letters to local representatives to prevent the removal of 130 trees given they offer shading and cooling benefits.

8) Voting Item

a. Approve FY24-25 Upper San Gabriel River Strategic Outreach & Engagement Plan (SOEP)

Member Diaz motioned to approve the updated FY2024-25 USGR SOEP, seconded by Member Julian Juarez. The WASC voted to approve the updated FY2024-25 USGR SOEP with 13 votes in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 in abstention (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

The Committee noted that the feedback submitted to Watershed Coordinator Cortes was minor, referencing a misspelling error, wording suggestions, and a clarification regarding the inclusion of the County's Supervisorial District 4 in the USGR Watershed Area. Watershed Coordinator Cortes added that the SOEP is a living document and that these minor revisions will be updated.

b. Selection of Chair, Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs

This voting item was tabled to the next meeting.

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9) Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 26, 2024 from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm. Items to be discussed at the next meeting include:

- a. Regional Program Quarterly Report Summary for FY23-24 Q1 and Q2
- b. Selection of Chair, Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs

10) Adjournment

Public Works staff thanked the WASC Members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

Attendance

USGR WASC - August 22nd, 2024

Adam T. LARWQCB	JonPaul Sarro SCW WP
Ali Rahmani LA Water Board	Kayla Kelly-Slatten
Amy Wolkins	Kerry Quinlan
Andrew Kim	LACSD Conference Room
Angie Hernandez	Larry Tran - LACPW
Anthony Ortega	Mark Hall GLAmosquito
Austine Racelis	Melanie Hu
Daria Antonova - LACPW	Note Taker
Don Moss	Oliver Galang Craftwater
Donna T	Pablo Forni
Emily Ng	Sofia Cardenas
Eric Bonilla - LACPW	Imarshall
Gabriela G.	JENNIFER ABORIDA
Gurjot Kohli Stantec	Jenny Chau
	John Mendoza

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 COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN



Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address		Signature
Julian Juarez	FCD		P	
Jennifer Aborida	FCD		A	
Tom Love	Upper San Gabriel District		P	
Jennifer Aguilar	Upper San Gabriel District		A	
Kelly Gardner	Main San Gabriel Basin		P	
Tony Zampiello	Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster		A	
Francisco Guerrero	Sanitation Districts		P	
Christopher Lapaz	Sanitation Districts		A	
Sean Woods	Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation		P	
Andrea Vona	Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation		A	
Drew Ready	Council for Watershed Health		P	
Jason Casanova	Council for Watershed Health		A	
Miguel Luna	Urban Semillas		P	
David Marquez	California Consulting, INC		A	
David Diaz	Active SGV		P	


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Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address		Signature
Wesley Reutimann	Active SGV		A	
Fernando Villaluna	Los Angeles County		P	
Joseph Venzon	Los Angeles County		A	
Paul Fisher	City of Glendora		P	
Sandy Costandi	Covina		A	
Julie Carver	Pomona		P	
Nicholas Delgado	City of Diamond Bar		A	
Matthew Hudson	Industry		P	
Don Nguyen	El Monte		A	
Romany Basilyous	Baldwin Park		P	
Shari Garwick	San Dimas		A	
Stephanie Sandoval	Duarte		P	
Mario Flores	Bradbury		A	
Roberto Ortega	West Covina		P	
Gerardo Lopez	West Covina		A	

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COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN



Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Email Address		Signature
James Cortes Rivera	Day One			

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PUBLIC SIGN-IN



First Name	Last Name	Municipality/Organization	Email Address
David	Warren	Whittier CA	
Clare	Martinet	Whittier	
Margdalena Roe	Moe	Whittier	

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