

# Regional Oversight Committee

## Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, April 9, 2025

1:00pm – 3:30pm

LA County Public Works Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor (Courtyard) Conference Rooms B

900 S. Fremont Ave, Alhambra, CA 91803

Zoom Meeting

### Committee Members Present:

Maria Mehranian, Cordoba/Former LA Regional Water Quality Control Board Chair

Kristine Guerrero, League of Cities

Diana Tang, Long Beach Water Department, Vice-Chair

Belinda Faustinos, Retired NGO & State Agency Executive, Chair

Lauren Ahkiam, LAANE

Charles Trevino, Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District

Mark Gold, Natural Resources Defense Council

Diana Mahmud, Former City Councilmember, City of South Pasadena

Carl Blum, LA County Flood Control District (non-voting member)

Norma Camacho, LA Regional Water Quality Control Board (non-voting member)

### Committee Members Not Present:

Barbara Romero, City of Los Angeles

### **Meeting Summary:**

At the April 9, 2025 Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting, Committee Members received a detailed recap of currently available data, produced by activities such as Adaptive Management, Programs, and Audits, that may be relevant for the development of the biennial 2025 Safe, Clean Water Program Progress Report (2025 Biennial Report). ROC Members provided staff guidance to initiate the draft 2025 Biennial Report using all data and inputs to date.

### **Key Action Items:**

- Public Works will convene a 2025 Biennial Progress Report Working Group consisting of Chair Faustinos, Vice-Chair Tang, and Members Mahmud, Camacho, and Blum.
- Public Works will include new sections in the 2025 Biennial Report to contextualize how the SCW Program is impacted and responding to the January 2025 Los Angeles Area fires, and to review and share progress made on the 2023 Biennial Report recommendations.
- Public Works will inventory and report back about the status of SCW Program funded projects that included leverage funding from Federal sources.
- Public Works will direct ROC Members to the online Stormwater Investment Plans (SIP) Tool for individual members to review recommended FY 2025-26 SIP in advance of the SIP Transmittals being agendized for review at future ROC meetings.

## **1. Welcome and Attendee Instructions**

Belinda Faustinos, Chair of the Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program ROC, welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

## **2. Roll Call**

The Executive Clerk conducted a roll call and confirmed that a quorum was present.

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### 3. Agenda Review and Meeting Purpose

Chair Faustinos reviewed the agenda and noted the focus on the 2025 Biennial Progress Report, which will be submitted to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) at the end of the 2025 calendar year. The ROC will receive presentations from Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) which will provide insight into Municipal & Regional Program Reporting, and review audits conducted to date. This currently available data may be relevant for the development of the 2025 Biennial Progress Report.

### 4. *Ex Parte* Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

### 5. Approval of March 12, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Chair Faustinos presented meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Member Diana Mahmud requested the ARLA acronym be spelled out as Accelerate Resilience Los Angeles on page 5 of the meeting minutes.

Member Charles Trevino motioned to approve the meeting minutes with the revision, seconded by Member Mahmud. The Committee voted to approve the March 12, 2025, meeting minutes with 7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 in abstention and 1 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

### 6. Public Comment Period

There were no public comment cards received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting. Participants on the Spanish translation line and call-in users were also invited to provide public comment.

Maggie Gardner (Our Water Los Angeles Coalition) expressed support for ongoing watershed planning and adaptive management efforts. Gardner urged clearer goals be defined for Community Investment Benefits, Nature-Based Solutions, and Disadvantaged Community Benefits. Gardner additionally advocated that smaller projects have better access to the SCW Program. Gardner expressed the importance that progress be made on the K-12 Education and Workforce Development Programs. Gardner also called for audits to ensure the SCW Program funds supplement, not replace, existing municipal funds and recommend reviewing rising project costs against industry norms.

### 7. Discussion Items

#### a. Part 1: Biennial Report Session 2 – Recap of available data from Adaptive Management, Programs, and Audits.

Public Works staff presented on the structure, goals, and timeline of the 2025 Biennial Progress Report. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). Public Works staff shared the proposed outline for the 2025 Biennial Progress Report, which follows a similar structure to the 2023 Biennial Progress Report. The outline includes the following sections: Introductions; Observations/Findings; Recommendations; Appendices (A. SCW Program Overview, B. Regional Program, C. Municipal Program, D. District Program, E. Adaptive Management, F. Project Highlights, G. Summary of Input Meetings).

Public Works staff noted that an input session with Watershed Coordinators will be held in May to further help inform the development of the Biennial Progress Report.

Multiple ongoing efforts at strengthening reporting processes, and review of reported material, together are intended to strengthen data quality and help track the performance and trajectory of SCW Program goals. Public Works staff noted that new performance measures, quantifiable indicators, and updated guidance have been developed to support Project Developers and inform future planning.

Member Mahmud recommended the addition of a new section in the 2025 Biennial Report outline that summarizes changes and progress that has been made as a result of recommendations outlined in the

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2023 Biennial Report. Member Mahmud commented that this addition would enhance the Report's effectiveness to readers by showing how recommendations have informed implementation.

Member Carl Blum inquired about the availability of Fiscal Year (FY) 23–24 Municipal Program Reports. Public Works staff clarified that Municipal Annual Reports are due annually on December 31 and FY 23-24 reports are currently available online, data from which will be included in the Biennial Report.

Multiple ROC Members emphasized the importance of including clearly reported Water Supply and Water Quality outcomes in the 2025 Biennial Report. Member Blum commented on the need to summarize how much water was captured and treated during the reporting period.

Member Mark Gold underscored the importance of providing context around Water Quality metrics, recommending the inclusion of both regional and watershed-specific baseline data. Member Gold also recommended that the impact of recent wildfire events on Water Quality and Supply be included in the Biennial Report. Member Gold suggested that the proposed section on recent wildfire events be a narrative, as quantitative data may be limited due to the non-linear nature of post-disaster recovery.

Chair Faustinos concurred with Member Mahmud's recommendation and encouraged the inclusion of a timeline and prioritization framework for ROC recommendations that have yet to be addressed. Member Gold suggested that the ROC Water Quality Working Group, which is scheduled to present at the ROC meeting next month, could help inform the prioritization of targets.

Member Maria Mehranian stressed the importance of year-over-year tracking, including where the SCW Program started, current status, and future trajectory regarding Water Quality and Water Supply. Member Mehranian asked whether adaptive management discussions include financial indicators related to dollars spent per benefit achieved. Public Works staff explained that Watershed Planning efforts include both aspirational goal setting and projected trajectories and that these efforts will be reflected on an online dashboard scheduled to launch in early 2026.

Member Mehranian asked for clarification on how Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) are integrating adaptive management. Public Works staff confirmed that interested party discussions are ongoing at WASC meetings and will be reflected in Watershed Planning materials.

Member Lauren Ahkiam thanked Public Works for quantifying project benefits and requested that workforce-related outcomes, such as local hire goals and Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), be captured within the updated Reporting Module. Public Works staff noted that efforts are underway to present data in more accessible and searchable formats. Member Ahkiam also requested an update on the status of developing separate project applications per project phase, and requested this topic be discussed at a future ROC meeting. Public Works staff shared that refinements are still underway to have one application for planning and design projects and a separate application for construction and Operations and Maintenance (O&M) projects.

Member Norma Camacho recommended breaking the 2025 Biennial Report into two phases, if necessary, to allow feedback about forward-looking recommendations to reach the Board earlier. Member Camacho also asked how Scientific Studies are being incorporated into ongoing and future project decisions, and how WASCs are using those findings. Public Works acknowledged the question and is evaluating the best way to add this content in the Report.

Member Kristine Guerrero emphasized the need for a continuous documentation process, so future ROC members can clearly reference the rationale behind changes across reporting cycles. Member Guerrero recommended a dedicated appendix to cover wildfire impacts, due to their long-term implications.

Member Blum advocated for simplifying and summarizing Municipal Program reports. Member Blum suggested a matrix could help the ROC identify critical elements to prioritize. Member Blum suggested referencing the Prioritization Matrix developed during the Metrics and Monitoring Study (MMS).

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Member Mahmud requested clarification on metric incorporation, asking whether previously developed metrics from the MMS are being actively used. Public Works staff stated that preliminary strategy sessions have wrapped up and results are being integrated into current Watershed Planning efforts and adjustments to the Reporting Module. Chair Faustinos asked that the Biennial Report include a status update on Regional Program Scoring Criteria—specifically, how Nature-Based Solutions, Community Investment Benefits, and related factors are being evaluated.

Vice-Chair Diana Tang acknowledged that many of the recommendations from the previous 2023 Biennial Report have resulted in meaningful progress. Vice-Chair Tang encouraged organizing Water Quality data by watershed, which would be more beneficial to cities, and requested clarity on where captured water is directed (e.g., infiltration versus sewer diversion versus on-site reuse). Vice-Chair Tang also supported Member Ahkaim's earlier comments regarding workforce tracking.

Member Gold expressed concern about the lack of available quantitative data for Water Quality and Water Supply and recommended that future reporting processes distinguish between modeled projections and actual monitoring results. Member Gold emphasized the need to include clear data in the FY23–24 section of the 2025 Biennial Report to track outcomes to date.

### **b. Part 2: Biennial Report Session 2 – Recap of available data from Adaptive Management, Programs, and Audits.**

Public Works staff presented an Adaptive Management Overview to support the development of the 2025 Biennial Report. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Public Works staff noted the various reporting that will be captured in the 2025 Biennial Report period. Regional Program reporting from FY22-23 and FY23-24 will include Quarterly Reports, Annual Reports, Watershed Area Regional Program Progress (WARPP) Reports, and Transfer Agreements for projects and studies. Municipal Program and District Program reporting will include Municipal Annual Reports and District Annual Reports from both FY22-23 and FY23-24. Public Works staff additionally noted that audit reviews for the Municipal Program are being conducted and a process for reviewing Regional Program audit reports is being established. An initial audit was conducted for the District Program, and no material findings were identified.

Upon inquiry, Public Works staff clarified that certain measurements, such as verifying if a project is achieving benefits initially claimed in the SCW Program application, would be observed during postconstruction monitoring.

Member Mahmud asked if the SCW Program has received any reporting regarding projects that were anticipating leveraging federal funding awards that may have since been withdrawn. Member Mahmud noted that this information could help the WASCs in Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) deliberations. Public Works staff shared that Watershed Coordinators have been working to better understand potential impacts. Member Mahmud suggested reaching out directly to Project Developers who identified federal funding in SCW Program applications and request an update.

Member Mahmud asked for clarification on slide 46, which provides a summary of metrics from Infrastructure Program projects from FY20-21 to FY24-25. Public Works staff clarified that the 60,364 -acre-foot increase in annual average stormwater capture and 276,262 acres of stormwater capture area is the amount anticipated to be captured by the projects funded once they are constructed and in operation.

Member Mahmud expressed concern that four project concepts have withdrawn from the SCW Program Technical Resources Program (TRP) between FY20-21 to FY24-25. Member Mahmud commented about experiences municipalities have had with the TRP process, such as delayed timelines and challenges working with consultants assigned as Technical Assistance Teams.

Member Mahmud requested more information about the breadth of responsibilities of SCW Program staff, including the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Public Works staff and contract employees that support the SCW Program. Member Mahmud expressed interest in learning more about staffing capacities and if

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more funding and resources need to be allocated from the Board to support the Program's various ongoing efforts.

Member Mahmud recommended that the SCW Program explore what recourse is available to the Program when Municipalities or Project Developers fail to submit reports and audits on time.

Member Camacho requested more information be provided about Municipal Program rollover funds, to better understand municipal funding decisions and the cause behind a large cumulative balance. Public Works staff clarified that the rollover funds are calculated based on the difference between total disbursements to municipalities and municipal expenditures reported to-date.

Member Camacho noted that tracking the percentage of municipalities implementing an activity towards SCW Program goals is a self-reported metric and may not provide meaningful information. This analysis could be revised for future rounds to potentially corroborate the self-identified activities.

Member Camacho requested clarification on the audit period and how to incorporate audit findings into the Biennial Progress Report. Public Works staff shared that audit findings will be available in the fall and findings can be incorporated into the 2025 Biennial Report.

Member Ahkiam clarified that the \$10.3 million spent within the District Program Education Program from FY19-20 through FY23-24 was allocated towards the Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program, along with expenditures related to developing local workforce development and job training and schools education and curriculum programs.

Member Gold echoed Member Camacho's concern over the Municipal Program funding rollover and recommended an analysis of funds used for new SCW Program projects versus existing programming. Member Gold additionally suggested that it would be helpful to categorically include the types of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to better understand the types of BMPs that are funded by SIPs. Member Gold commented that this information would also be beneficial to include in the Biennial Report.

Member Mahmud commented on previous experience representing the City of South Pasadena, which received approximately \$250,000 annually from SCW Program Municipal Program Funds. Member Mahmud noted that the City had to rollover money through multiple years to save to fund capital projects.

Public Works staff asked if Committee Members were interested in forming a ROC working group to focus on the development of the 2025 Biennial Report, similar to one that was formed during the development of the 2023 Biennial Report.

Upon inquiry, Public Works staff noted that the working group would have approximately three to four ROC Members, not including non-voting members, to ensure the group is below quorum as required by the Brown Act. Working Group members will include Chair Faustinos, Vice-Chair Tang, and Members Mahmud, Camacho, Blum.

### **8. Voting Items:**

There were no voting items.

### **9. ROC Member Updates**

Member Gold shared that the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Wildfire Response is finalizing its recommendations, with a report expected to be released within the next two weeks. Member Gold chairs the Commission's water subgroup and noted that the report has been shared with Public Works, County of Los Angeles, and Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). The Commission's recommendations will address issues related to community-wide resilience, wildland-urban interface development, and infrastructure.

Member Gold also highlighted that MWD has approved its Climate Action and Management Plan for Water (CAMP4W) and described it as one of the most far-reaching climate action plans adopted by a U.S. water utility.

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Member Gold also shared an update on Assembly Bill 638 (Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez), which promotes stormwater capture and the use of cisterns for irrigation on public lands.

Member Mahmud requested that Public Works staff consider spacing out SIP submissions to the ROC as they are approved by the WASCs. Chair Faustinos agreed that it would be helpful for SIPs to be made available to the ROC upon WASC approval, rather than waiting for a formal agenda item.

Public Works staff responded that seven of nine SIPs have been approved by WASCs. Although the SIPs are not agendized for the May ROC meeting, Public Works staff are working to prepare the transmittal packages and will distribute them as they are completed.

Member Camacho has stepped down as Chair of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. David Nahai is now serving as the Chair along with Sabrina Ashjian as Vice-Chair. Member Camacho will continue serving on the ROC through the 2025 Biennial Report development process and then reassess the appropriate representative to serve on the ROC.

### **10. Program Administration Update**

Public Works staff provided program updates, including:

- The next Watershed Planning workshops with the WASCs will begin next week. Draft Initial Watershed Plans are expected to be available for review in late summer.
- Call for Projects information sessions will be held on May 21 and 22. Project Developers are required to view one session in order to submit a project application.
  - Any project that involves LA County Flood Control District right-of-way or facilities should request a Letter of Conceptual Approval from the District by May 31.
- Watershed Coordinator Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFSQs) are being evaluated, and notifications have been sent out. Interviews with qualifying candidates will be conducted at WASCs.
- The Credit Trading Program is expected to launch in the summer. Applications to generate credits for sale for the SCW Program must be submitted by the September 30 deadline.
- The deadline for Low-Income Senior-Owned Exemptions and General Income-Based Tax Reductions for FY25-26 is May 1.
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health recently lifted the ocean water closures after rigorous water quality testing.

Chair Faustinos suggested that outreach about the General Income-Based Tax Reductions be shared with those impacted by recent fires.

### **11. Items for Next Agenda / 6-Month Look Ahead**

The Executive Clerk shared a look ahead of 2025 ROC meetings which can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Items for the next agenda include updates from the ROC Watershed Planning Working Groups and an update from the Watershed Coordinators.

### **12. Meeting Adjourned**

Chair Faustinos thanked ROC Members and the public and adjourned the meeting at 3:11 PM.