

# Upper Los Angeles River

## Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)

### Meeting Minutes

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Wednesday, February 5, 2025

2:00pm - 4:00pm

LA County Public Works Headquarters, 1st Floor (Courtyard), Conference Room C

900 S Fremont Ave, Alhambra, CA 91803

WebEx Meeting

#### Committee Members Present:

\*Seta Marjanian, Los Angeles Flood Control District (Agency)

\*Conor Mossavi, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (Agency)

Cathie Santo Domingo, Los Angeles Recreation & Parks (Agency)

\*Cara Campbell, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (Agency)

Ida Meisami-Fard, Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment (Agency)

Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)

Jill Sohm, University of Southern California (Community)

Edith de Guzman, University of California, Los Angeles (Community)

\*Roxy Rivas, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)

\*Dawn Petschauer, Pasadena (Municipal)

Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair

Thuan Nguyen, Los Angeles County (Municipal)

Ted Gerber, South Pasadena (Municipal)

Adi Liberman, Environmental Outreach Strategies (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

Kristina Kreter, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

Alonso Garcia, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

#### Committee Members Absent:

Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)

Karo Torossian, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice Chair

Rafael Prieto, Los Angeles (Municipal)

\*Committee Member Alternate

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

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### **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Teresa Villegas, Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) staff provided a brief WebEx tutorial in both English and Spanish and announced that any public comment made in Spanish will be translated to English. Public Works staff facilitated the roll call of Committee Members, and a quorum was established.

### **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 16, 2025**

Public Works' Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) staff presented the meeting minutes from January 16, 2025. Member Ida Meisami-Fard motioned to approve the minutes from January 16, 2025, seconded by Member Ernesto Pantoja. The WASC voted to approve the January 16, 2025 meeting minutes with 9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 2 in abstention, and 2 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

### **3) Ex Parte Communication Disclosures**

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There were no ex-parte communication disclosures.

#### 4) Committee Member and Program Updates

SCWP staff provided updates, noting:

- The Mid-Year Report, covering July to December 2024, was launched on January 17 and is due on February 15. There will be a 2-week extension for submittals for an alternate deadline of February 28. Additionally, Project Developers must fill out a new Metrics & Measures section by February 28.
- The 2025 Quarter Three (Q3) Quarterly Funding Report & Matrix is available on the SCW Program website under the [Resources tab](#). Prepared by the Regional Coordination team, the Quarterly Funding Report includes a high-level overview of recent funding policy highlights, and the funding matrix shares currently active and upcoming funding opportunities that may be relevant to SCW Program projects. The Regional Coordination team is monitoring ongoing activity related to Federal funding opportunities.
- The Fiscal Year 2024 – 2025 (FY24-25) Transfer Agreement and Addendum distribution began in December. An email was sent to new and continuing Project Developers with instructions on how to use the Transfer Agreement functionality within the Reporting Module. Project Developers are advised to start uploading their supporting documents to execute agreements.
- A Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting is scheduled for February 12. The ROC has invited WASC and Scoring Committee Chairs to provide updates and recommendations relating to each Committee. The ROC will also discuss updates on SCW Program Adaptive Management. To view meeting details and materials, please visit the [ROC events webpage](#).
- The 2024 Municipal Transfer Agreements are currently being processed and executed by the SCW Program team. Disbursements were scheduled for end of December. Cities will need to comply with all reporting requirement to receive the fifth disbursement.
- The Los Angeles County Flood Control District has partnered with the Water Foundation to administer the Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program. The Program will support education and community engagement efforts related to stormwater and urban runoff capture within the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. Applicants may submit proposals from now until May 31, 2025, on the [Water Foundation's website](#). Proposals will be evaluated and awarded on a rolling basis.

Public Works' Watershed Planning staff provided updates, noting that the Watershed Planning team is making progress on the Initial Watershed Plans and the Watershed Planning tool. The Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA) survey is available on the on the [SCW Program website](#), and the Dashboard will be launched soon. The Watershed Planning Tool, including a GIS map and dashboard, will also be launched to identify Opportunity Areas. For more information, Watershed Planning staff can be reached at [watershedplanning@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:watershedplanning@pw.lacounty.gov).

Watershed Coordinator Adi Liberman inquired if Public Works plans to publicly announce grant recipients from the Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program. Watershed Coordinator Liberman noted that it would be helpful for Watershed Coordinators to track grant recipients. Watershed Coordinator Kristina Kreter confirmed that the Watershed Foundation will release communications about grant recipients.

Member Dawn Petschauer inquired if the Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program will be extended beyond May 2025. Additionally, Chair Villegas inquired what role does SCWP staff have selecting grant recipients and underscored the importance of Public Works having a strong partnership with

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the Water Foundation. SCWP staff will follow up on these questions and update the WASC at the next meeting.

Chair Villegas requested that a separate discussion section be added to future agendas for Watershed Planning updates. Chair Villegas also suggested the Watershed Planning team to share a report with substantive updates to the WASC, given the iterative nature of the Watershed Planning process.

#### 5) Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinators Kreter and Alonso Garcia provided updates on Watershed Coordinator activities, noting that:

- Watershed Coordinators provided guidance and support to parties applying to the Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program, including Clockshop and Test Plot, in Round Two of proposal evaluation, which closed January 31. Watershed Coordinators will continue to meet with potential grant applicants, including Anawakalmekak Indigenous School, Color of Cultures, and school greening teams, before Round Three proposal evaluation ends on April 4.
- Watershed Coordinators met with cities to assess priorities on current and potential projects that may be submitted for Round Seven SCW Program applications.
- Watershed Coordinator Garcia tabled at the Friends of the Los Angeles River Habitat Restoration Day on January 25 to provide watershed and stormwater education to volunteers at the event.
- The Council for Watershed Health's Watershed Coordination team is hosting a tour of Nogales and Franklin D. Roosevelt Park on February 20 from 10:00am to 12:00pm. Committee Members are encouraged to RSVP to the Watershed Coordinators. More information is available on the [SCW Program website](#).

Watershed Coordinator Liberman asked Committee Members for recommendations organizations that should participate in the SCW Program and projects to tour in the west San Fernando Valley. Member Roxy Rivas suggested the City of San Fernando's Regional Park Infiltration Project as a potential project tour.

#### 6) Presentations and Discussion Items

##### a) Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation Findings

Gabriela Gonzalez (WSP) presented on the findings from the Scientific Study Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation. The Scientific Study was funded by the SCW Program in three Watershed Areas, including ULAR, to identify opportunities for stormwater capture at gardens. Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#).

Upon inquiry, Gonzalez clarified that WSP initially identified over 400 gardens as potential sites. Amongst them, 42 gardens were within the Community Garden Council, and 15 gardens per Watershed Area were selected for further analysis using the screening criteria mentioned in the presentation slides.

Chair Villegas expressed surprise that only two of the 15 gardens selected for further analysis are in disadvantaged communities. Gonzalez explained that location within disadvantaged communities was not used as a screening criterion, since many gardens are adjacent to disadvantaged communities yet still have potential to benefit disadvantaged communities.

Upon inquiry, Gonzalez clarified that Granada Hills Salad Bowl Garden and El Cariso Park Community Garden were selected as case studies based on the space available for best management practices (BMPs), garden leadership's interest in future construction, and resources to pursue a SCW Program Infrastructure Project application.

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Gonzalez also clarified that WSP evaluated BMPs for both infiltration and beneficial reuse, and the investigation recommended that gardens implement smart irrigation systems linked to selected BMPs. Gonzalez noted that the investigation only evaluated existing gardens and did not consider potential sites for future development into a community garden.

Member Rivas expressed appreciation that the Project Developer highlighted project sites located in the northeastern San Fernando Valley.

Watershed Coordinator Liberman confirmed with Gonzalez that many garden members were interested in participating in the study and that WSP offered to assist with pursuing additional SCW Program funding. Gonzalez noted that some of the non-profit organizations in charge of managing gardens struggled with meeting all the SCW Program requirements and did not realize the extent of required collaboration and communication with property owners. Additionally, Gonzalez mentioned that many gardens are located on publicly owned land where there are opportunities to implement larger BMPs beyond the garden boundaries. Watershed Coordinator Liberman suggested that the Watershed Coordinators assist community garden non-profit organizations to advance potential projects.

Upon inquiry, Gonzalez clarified that a full list of sites initially evaluated in this investigation is included in one of the project reports uploaded to the SCW Project Portal. Gonzalez offered to share garden leaders' contact information with Watershed Coordinators to discuss potential project opportunities.

Member Conor Mossavi inquired if concept reports were submitted to the SCW Program, and if WSP analyzed the water volume that could be captured at community garden sites. Gonzalez clarified that the concept reports are included in one of the reports submitted to SCW Program since June 2024 and confirmed that a high-level water supply analysis was conducted to evaluate site-specific infiltration rates.

Upon inquiry, Gonzalez confirmed that the University of California Master Gardeners program was not involved in this study. Member Edith de Guzman recommended that if this project proceeds to the next phase, Watershed Coordinators should reach out to University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, which runs a Master Gardeners program, for collaboration.

#### **b) Project Modification Requests Overview for WASC**

Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) presented an overview of Project Modification Requests (PMRs). Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#). PMR forms for the two projects deemed inconsistent are available on the [SCW Program website](#).

SCWP staff announced that staff reviewed the four PMRs submitted for consistency with the current Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP), noting:

- Rory M. Shaw Wetlands Park Project was deemed consistent. The modifications include schedule change and minor scope/benefit changes with no impact to future funding allocations.
- The Los Angeles Pierce College Northeast Campus Stormwater Capture & Use and Biofiltration Project was deemed inconsistent. The modifications include an increase in funding request and functionally equivalent BMP changes.
- The Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Garden Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project was deemed inconsistent. The modifications include functionally equivalent BMP modifications, change in methodology, minor modifications to budget/schedule, change in leverage funding amount and increase in funding request.

#### **c) Project Modification Requests for WASC Discussion**

- i. Los Angeles Pierce College Northeast Campus Stormwater Capture & Use and Biofiltration Project**

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Daniel Apt (Olaunu) provided an overview of the PMR for the Los Angeles Pierce College Northeast Campus Stormwater Capture & Use and Biofiltration Project. Apt noted that the project initially applied for SCW Program funding in 2020 as a capture and reuse project, since the initial geotechnical investigation suggested that infiltration is not feasible due to poor soil quality. As design progressed, the Project Proponent determined that capture and reuse was not feasible, so the project pivoted to use a new technology called Groundwater Energy Passive Systems (GEPS) that allows for infiltration in poor quality soils. GEPS is projected to meet that same design capture volume and pollutant reduction as the initial capture and reuse project design. The estimated project cost has approximately doubled due to increase in material prices, and Apt noted that GEPS is not expected to increase project cost. The design is now almost complete. Apt shared that the project's community benefits are not expected to be impacted by the PMR.

Member Meisami-Fard clarified with Apt that the project initially planned to reuse captured water in a subsurface irrigation system since other reuse options requiring treatment were too costly for the project's budget. However, it was determined that on-site irrigation demand was not sufficient to utilize enough of the captured water to maintain storage capacity for subsequent storm events. Member de Guzman clarified with Apt that transporting captured water to other parts of Pierce College's 400-acre campus or adjacent properties was cost prohibitive. Upon inquiry, Apt shared that water captured by GEPS is not expected to infiltrate into the aquifer.

Member Mossavi clarified with Apt the mechanics of the GEPS technology and Apt noted that GEPS has been used in Europe and the United States. Upon inquiry from Member Petschauer, Apt clarified that GEPS has no maintenance requirements and added that this project plans to use hydrodynamic separators for pretreatment. Member Thuan Nguyen inquired where GEPS technology has been implemented in the United States, the expected capture volume, and GEPS sizing calculations. Apt will provide this information with the WASC via SCWP staff.

Upon inquiry, Apt explained that the project's geotechnical engineer was initially concerned that GEPS technology would not be suitable for the project site, but that those concerns were alleviated after discussion with the GEPS manufacturer. Apt also added that the estimated project cost increased because materials associated with the subsurface tanks and biofiltration systems, such as concrete, engineered soil, and plants, have significantly increased in cost.

Watershed Coordinator Garcia clarified with Apt that the soil at the project site does not currently have PFAS contamination, but more research is needed on how groundwater infiltration in general impacts PFAS mobilization. Member de Guzman clarified with Apt that crops are no longer grown on the historically agriculturally focused campus; however, some animals are still raised there, so the main contaminant of concern is bacteria.

Upon inquiry, Apt explained that the project has evaluated other funding sources, including California Department of Transportation, Urban Greening Grant Program from California Natural Resources Agency, and US Bureau of Reclamation, but disclosed that the project does not meet those funding sources' specific requirements.

#### **ii. Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project**

Philip Reidy (Geosyntec) provided an overview of the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project's PMR, deemed inconsistent. Reidy noted that this project intends to divert water from Winery Canyon channel to an underground pre-treatment and storage system. Captured water will be conveyed to a manmade lake at Descanso Gardens and approximately 60 acre-feet per year of water will be used for irrigation at Descanso Gardens.

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The project originally planned to infiltrate stormwater runoff at the east parking lot in a vertical dry well. However, it was discovered that the soils in the parking lot are unfavorable for infiltration at the depths required for a vertical dry well. This PMR proposed to replace the vertical dry well at the east parking lot with porous pavement and an underlayer that would capture the same volume of water, since the upper layer of soil is more suitable for infiltration.

Another site of the project initially planned to infiltrate stormwater at the auxiliary parking lot in a vertical dry well, but soil was found to not be as favorable for infiltration as originally believed. This PMR proposed to eliminate the vertical dry well at the auxiliary parking lot and instead install catch basins and a pretreatment system to divert stormwater runoff to the storage cistern.

Upon inquiry, Antos clarified that SCWP staff combined the two inconsistent PMRs submitted by the Project Developer into one project modification request to streamline the discussion. Chair Villegas commented that it would be helpful for SCWP staff to share more context on the PMRs in the future. Member Petschauer suggested that SCWP staff should allow Project Developers to present slides when discussing PMRs. SCWP staff clarified that PMRs discussions have been limited to verbal discussions to ensure fairness among all projects submitting PMR forms and that discussions can reference items submitted before the 10/31 PMR deadline.

Upon inquiry, Reidy noted that the PMR should not change the project's Water Quality benefits because the same volume of water will be captured as originally proposed.

Reidy addressed flooding concerns by clarifying that the project is designed for the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile 24-hour storm event and explained that volume beyond the design capacity would runoff to a nearby channel. Reidy shared that this project would install a trench at the channel to mitigate nuisance flooding during events larger than the design storm.

Member Petschauer inquired if Geosyntec is concerned about pollutants generated by recent wildfires in the project vicinity getting collected in stormwater that will be treated by this project, and if Geosyntec has considered conducting pre-construction monitoring. Reidy noted that by the time this project is built, pollutants from fire would likely have run-off from the area already.

Upon inquiry, Somer Sherwood-White and Juliann Rooke (Descanso Gardens Foundation) shared that the Descanso Gardens Foundation is seeking additional funding from other foundations that have historically supported the Descanso Gardens Foundation. Additionally, Sherwood-White and Rooke mentioned that some of the project costs will be covered by the Descanso Gardens Foundation's existing budget. Reidy added that construction on the project could start in spring 2025 and would continue for over a year, but the construction schedule depends on when funding commitments are received for cash flow purposes.

#### **7) Public Comment**

Tiffany Tran (Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger's Office) expressed support for granting additional funding to the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project. Tran shared that the Descanso Gardens is a community asset and partner of Los Angeles County Parks & Recreation in promoting equitable access to open space, recreation, and education. Tran commented that the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project would enhance Water Quality, Water Supply, and sustainability in alignment with the goals of the SCW Program.

#### **8) Items for Next Agenda**

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The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, March 5, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at Public Works Headquarters. Items for the next agenda may include:

- a) Scientific Study Peer Reviews
- b) FY23-24 Q3 & Q4 Reporting Presentation and Summary
- c) ULAR Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the FY25-26 SIP

Chair Villegas requested feedback from WASC Members on extending the March 5 meeting by 30 minutes to accommodate SIP deliberation discussion. SCWP staff will send a survey to WASC Members to collect responses.

#### **9) Adjournment**

Chair Villegas thanked Committee Members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

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 COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN



Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Member Type	Role	Signature
Adi Liberman	Environmental Outreach Strategies	Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)		<i>Adi Liberman</i>
Alonso Garcia	Council for Watershed Health	Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)		<i>Alonso Garcia</i>
Anteneh Tesfaye	City of South Pasadena	Municipal	Alternate	
Arlene Guzman	Environmental Outreach Strategies	Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)		
Art Castro	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power	Agency	Primary	
Blayne Sutton-Wills	City of Los Angeles	Municipal	Alternate	
Brent Maue	City of Pasadena	Municipal	Alternate	
Cara Campbell	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power	Agency	Alternate	<i>Cara Campbell</i>
Cathie Santo Domingo	Los Angeles Recreation & Parks	Agency	Primary	<i>C Santo Domingo</i>
Conor Mossavi	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power	Agency	Alternate	<i>Conor Mossavi</i>
Dawn Petschauer	Pasadena	Municipal	Alternate	<i>Dawn Petschauer</i>
Edith de Guzman	University of California, Los Angeles	Community Stakeholder	Primary	<i>Edith de Guzman</i>



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 COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ALTERNATE SIGN-IN



Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Member Type	Role	Signature
Ernesto Pantoja	Laborers Local 300	Community Stakeholder	Primary	
Ernesto Rivera	LA County Flood Control District	Agency	Primary	
Gary Lam	Los Angeles Recreation & Parks	Agency	Alternate	
Gregory Pierce	University of California, Los Angeles	Community Stakeholder	Alternate	
Ida Meisami-Fard	LA Sanitation and Environment	Agency	Primary	
Jason Casanova	Council for Watershed Health	Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)		
Jill Sohm	University of Southern California	Community Stakeholder	Primary	
John Huynh	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power	Agency	Primary	
Kara Plourde	Los Angeles County	Municipal	Alternate	
Karo Torossian	City of Los Angeles	Municipal	Primary	
Kristina Kreter	Council for Watershed Health	Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)		
Miguel Luna	Urban Semillas	Community Stakeholder	Primary	

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Member Name	Municipality/ Organization	Member Type	Role	Signature
Rafael Prieto	City of Los Angeles	Municipal	Primary	
Roxy Rivas	Pacoima Beautiful	Community Stakeholder	Alternate	<i>[Handwritten Signature]</i>
Satenig Marjanian	LA County Flood Control District	Agency	Alternate	<i>[Handwritten Signature]</i>
Sergio Rascon	Laborers Local 300	Community Stakeholder	Alternate	
Ted Gerber	City of South Pasadena	Municipal	Primary	<i>[Handwritten Signature]</i>
Teresa Villegas	City of Los Angeles	Municipal	Primary	
Thuan Nguyen	Los Angeles County	Municipal	Primary	<i>[Handwritten Signature]</i>
Veronica Padilla- Campos	Pacoima Beautiful	Community Stakeholder	Primary	

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PUBLIC SIGN-IN



First Name	Last Name	Municipality/Organization	Email Address
Daniel	Apt	Olayun	dapt@olayun.com

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

WebEx Webinar Attendees  
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Amy Scop  
Anabelle Del Valle  
Angineh Shahnazarian  
Brian Baldauf  
Carla Dillon  
Chris Lee  
Christopher Vong  
Clara Dahl  
Gabriela G.  
Giselle Franco/ SPA INT  
Jason Casanova, CWH  
Jennifer Amarant

Jenny Chau  
JonPaul Sarro  
Jose A | Geosyntec  
Jose Castro - LACPW  
Joyce Amaro  
Juliann Rooke  
Kara Plourde  
M. Scaduto  
Mark Hall GLAmosquito  
Michael Scaduto  
Mike Rudd  
Nayda

Pearl Azizian  
Phil Reidy | Geosyntec  
Philip C Reidy  
Ryanna Fossum  
SCWP - Larry Tran  
Safe Clean Water - Host  
Safe Clean Water - ULAR WASC  
Serena Zhu  
Somerset Sherwood-White  
Susie Santilena  
Tiffany Tran  
Uriel Cobian

Vicki Friesen  
ViewSonic Monitor  
Brett Perry  
Johanna Chang  
Steve Wallock  
Valeria