

Upper Los Angeles River

Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)

Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, April 2, 2025

1:30pm - 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)

John Huynh, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (Agency)

Cathie Santo Domingo, Los Angeles Recreation & Parks (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)

Karo Torossian, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice-Chair

Ted Gerber, South Pasadena (Municipal)

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

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

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

Committee Members Absent:

Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)

Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair

Rafael Prieto, Los Angeles (Municipal)

Thuan Nguyen, Los Angeles County (Municipal)

*Committee Member Alternate

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

1) Welcome and Introductions

Karo Torossian, Vice-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 English 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 March 5, 2025

Public Works staff presented the meeting minutes from March 5, 2025. Member Dawn Petschauer motioned to approve the meeting minutes from March 5, 2025, seconded by Vice-Chair Torossian. The WASC voted to approve the March 5, 2025 meeting minutes with 7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 2 in abstention, and 3 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

Member Petschauer announced that the City of Pasadena is hosting the first public outreach event for the Brookside Park Stormwater Capture Project on April 2, 2025, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm, at Brookside Park in Pasadena.

Public Works staff provided updates, noting:

- 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 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 2024 Municipal Transfer Agreements are currently being processed and executed by the SCW Program team. Cities will need to comply with all reporting requirements to receive the fifth disbursement. The first batch has been executed, and the second batch is in progress.
- The Fiscal Year 2025 – 2026 (FY25-26) Annual Plans are due on April 1, 2025.
- 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 April 4, 2025, on the [Water Foundation's website](#). The first-come-first-serve application period has been eliminated due to the level of interest in this program and the amount of funding currently available.

5) SCW Program Watershed Planning Updates

Public Work's Watershed Planning staff provided updates, noting that the Watershed Planning team continues to evaluate the impacts of wildfires, and how to incorporate impacts into Initial Watershed Plans. 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 and dashboard are available on the [SCW Program website](#). The Watershed Planning Tool, including a GIS map and dashboard, will also be launched to identify Opportunity Areas. The draft Initial Watershed Plans will be available this summer with a 30-day public comment period and will be presented to WASCs and the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) in fall 2025. Initial Watershed Plans will be published in early 2026. Adaptive Planning will continue in 2026 and beyond. For more information, Watershed Planning staff can be reached at watershedplanning@pw.lacounty.gov.

6) Watershed Coordinator Updates

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

- Met with Amigos de los Rios to offer support in completing overdue FY23-24 Q3 and Q4 reports and scheduled a meeting with Public Works staff and Amigos de los Rios to finalize.
- Hosted a tour of Oros Green Street and nearby pocket parks, with over 60 people in attendance.
- Supported applicants to Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program and coordinated with grant recipients who were awarded in the first round of grant applications.

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- Created an Earth Month guide for the April monthly newsletter, highlighting events across Los Angeles County during Earth Month.
- Tabled at numerous community events, including the City of Alhambra's community engagement workshop for the SCW Program-funded Green Street Demonstration Project on Main Street Project.

The Watershed Coordinators plan to table at upcoming community events, including the Brookside Park Stormwater Capture Project public outreach kickoff, Elephant Hill Open Space Community Nature Connection Celebration, Alhambra Eco Fair, City of Calabasas Arbor Day Celebration, Chatsworth Neighborhood Council, Woodland Hills Farmers Market, Woodland Hills Recreation Center, City of Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment, (LASAN) Open House, Tarzana Earth Day Celebration, LA County Sanitation District Earth Day, City of Calabasas Earth Day Green Expo, LASAN Earth Day, and Echo Park Earth Day.

The Watershed Coordinators are also coordinating with the Project Developers of the Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation Scientific Study (SS) to host a public workshop and are following up on potential projects identified as a result of the study.

The Watershed Coordinators are also planning a tour for the SCW Program-funded City of San Fernando Regional Park Infiltration Project this summer.

7) Public Comment Period

Paulina Mejia (San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG)) provided an update that the FY23-24 Q3 and Q4 Reports for the Fire Effects Study in ULAR Watershed Management Area were submitted in March 2025.

Michael Scaduto (Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN)) highlighted that the City of Los Angeles, LASAN agreed to reprogram funding for some of their projects in the ULAR Watershed Area to free additional funds for FY25-26 in the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP). Scaduto encouraged WASC Members to consider future funding requests for Operations & Maintenance (O&M) when recommending a SIP.

Carla Dillon (Crescenta Valley Water District) expressed support for La Cañada Town Center Stormwater Infiltration Galleries Technical Resource Project (TRP), commenting that the project would recharge over-drafted groundwater basins. Dillon commented on the project's benefits, including creating a sustainable water supply, reducing heat island effect, increasing green infrastructure, and contributing to municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4) permit compliance. Additionally, Dillon commented that the Crescenta Valley Park Stormwater Capture TRP is predicted to address contaminants, including arsenic, chromium, copper, lead, selenium, and zinc, in dry weather and wet weather flows.

Richard Watson (Los Cerritos Channel Watershed Management Group) provided an update on the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, commenting that the Project Developer, Gateway Water Management Authority, issued a request for proposals for a Project Manager last week. The SS is scheduled to begin this summer.

Maggie Gardner (Our Water Los Angeles Coalition) supported continued funding for projects developed by Amigos de los Rios and expressed alarm that the ULAR WASC would consider reducing their funding. Gardner noted that Amigos de los Rios is committed to environmental justice and was one of the few nonprofit organizations to receive funding from the SCW Program and commented that recent wildfires in Los Angeles County have affected the organization's operations.

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Claire Robinson (Amigos de los Rios) expressed gratitude to Watershed Coordinator Kreter for assisting Amigos de los Rios on reporting for their three SCW Program projects: Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Project, Altadena Mariposa Green Street Demonstration Project, and Emerald Necklace John Muir High School Campus Natural Infrastructure Improvement Project. Robinson shared that Amigos de los Rios is committed to meeting Reporting deadlines and suggested that the SCW Program host an orientation for Project Developers to review Reporting requirements. Robinson commented that Amigos de los Rios is dedicated to completing their SCW Program-funded projects and has spent years building stakeholder support.

Kelsey Jessup (The Nature Conservancy) expressed support for projects developed by Amigos de los Rios and thanked Public Works staff and Watershed Coordinators for their help with executing Transfer Agreements for the Bowtie Demonstration Project. Jessup also commented that being able to request O&M funding from the SCW Program is critical for supporting projects.

Benjamin Harris (Los Angeles Waterkeeper) expressed support for the Quantifying Community Flood Management Benefits of Watershed-Scale Stormwater Capture SS, because the SS intends to advance the understanding of flood mitigation benefits of SCW Program-funded projects. Harris noted that it is a critical time to fund this SS considering the ongoing Watershed Planning process.

Devon Provo (Accelerate Resilience Los Angeles) expressed support for projects developed by Amigos de los Rios and encouraged the SCW Program to extend flexibility to Project Developers impacted by recent wildfires as much as possible. Additionally, Provo expressed support for the Quantifying Community Flood Management Benefits of Watershed-Scale Stormwater Capture SS, since the SS intends to help ensure flood management strategies address changing conditions and support more resilient investment in the future.

8) Presentations and Discussion Items

a) ULAR Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the FY25-26 Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP)

Public Works staff provided an overview of the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) Tool on the [SCW Program website](#). Additionally, Public Works staff reminded WASC Members that the SIP must allocate funding for projects that provide Disadvantaged Community Benefits not less than 110 percent of the ratio of the disadvantaged community population to the total population in the ULAR Watershed Area. Furthermore, the Regional Program Distribution requires that at least 85 percent of available funding is allocated to Infrastructure Projects (IPs), less than 5 percent is allocated to SSs, and less than 10 percent is allocated to TRPs.

Public Works staff explained the five potential funding scenarios that had been established to support the WASC deliberations on the FY25-26 SIP. On behalf of the WASC, Public Works staff reached out to continuing Project Developers for potential adjustments to future funding requests to alleviate budget constraints for the FY25-26 SIP. The impact of deferred funding was accounted for in the “Baseline + Adjusted Earmarked Funding” funding scenario on the SIP tool.

Upon inquiry, Public Works staff explained that the “Baseline” funding scenario describes funding allocated in previous ULAR WASCs’ SIPs and excludes funding for any new projects and Project Modification Requests (PMR) in FY25-26 and does not express the option to defer funding for ongoing projects. Additionally, the “Baseline” funding scenario does not account for Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority returning unspent funds for the Metro Orange Line Water Infiltration and Quality

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Project, which was removed in the FY24-25 SIP. In the “Baseline” funding scenario, 86% of available funds is allocated for FY25-26 and 99% is allocated for FY26-27.

Public Works staff reiterated the guidance provided to the WASC to reserve 20% of each fiscal year as a buffer against future uncertainties, such as for new projects, O&M support for completed projects, and PMR. Upon inquiry, Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) clarified that the guidance to hold funds in reserve was only guidance, it was not a directive that the WASC must follow, as the WASC has the authority to recommend a SIP that uses up to 100% of the available funding.

WASC Members discussed Public Works staff’s recommendation to limit funding allocations to 80% each fiscal year. Members Ida Meisami-Fard, Petschauer, Cathie Santo Domingo, and Vice-Chair Torossian supported the guidance to stay within the 80% threshold. WASC Members emphasized the importance of reserving funding for potential increases in costs of ongoing projects and for new projects from Project Applicants with limited resources. Vice-Chair Torossian noted that if the funding scenario of “Baseline with 2 full PMRs, 3 TRPs, and 3 SSs” is recommended, the 80% funding allocation threshold would be exceeded in the FY27-28.

Project Developers were present to answer questions from the WASC. Vice-Chair Torossian suggested funding half of the amount requested by the two PMRs and asked the Project Developers who submitted a PMR to explain the impact this would have on their respective projects.

Phil Reidy (Geosyntec, Project Developer) and Juliann Rooke (Descanso Gardens, Project Developer) shared that construction on the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project would be delayed if this WASC did not fund the full PMR of \$3 million. Upon inquiry, Rooke explained that the Project Developer has sought leveraged funding for the increased project cost and currently has verbal commitments for an additional \$4.5 million in grants to cover part of the increased cost. However, Rooke explained that an additional \$3 million from the SCW Program will be needed to begin construction in June as currently scheduled. Antos added that the project costs increased by \$8.9 million to a total project cost of \$20.9 million. Upon inquiry, Rooke shared that the ULAR WASC previously allocated funding for three years of O&M for this project in past SIPs.

Daniel Apt (Oluanu, Project Developer) shared that the Los Angeles Pierce College Northeast Campus Stormwater Capture & Use and Biofiltration Project would not be undertaken if the WASC does not fund the full PMR of \$3.8 million. Apt explained that the cost of the project increased by \$9.7 million to a total project cost of \$19.2 million. The Project Developer is contributing \$5.9 million to cover part of the increased project costs. Apt noted that the project will be ready to begin construction in a few months. Upon inquiry, Apt shared that the Project Developer does not plan to request O&M funding from the SCW Program.

Upon inquiry, Apt confirmed that the project falls under the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Project Labor Agreement, and LACCD students would be hired for the construction phase.

Public Works staff provided updates on projects that had overdue Quarterly Reports from FY23-24, as identified during the last ULAR WASC meeting. Public Works staff noted that the FY23-24 Q3 and Q4 Reports and the FY24-25 Mid-Year Reports have now been submitted for the Fire Effects Study in the ULAR Watershed Management Area and the Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Project.

Public Works staff noted that the FY23-24 Q3 and Q4 Reports have been submitted for the California Avenue and Adjacent Streets Stormwater Capture Project and the Distributed Drywell System Project, and the FY24-25 Mid-Year Reports are in progress. Public attendee Armen Avazian (City of Glendale, Project

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Developer) explained that Reporting for the California Avenue and Adjacent Streets Stormwater Capture Project was delayed because of staffing issues.

Public Works staff shared that the FY23-24 Q3 and Q4 Reports are overdue for the Emerald Necklace John Muir High School Campus Natural Infrastructure Improvement Project. Public Works staff will meet with the Project Developer and the ULAR Watershed Coordinators, who are assisting Amigos de los Rios with reporting, on April 3 to review reporting requirements.

Member Petschauer inquired if any Project Developers expect to be able to defer funding for their projects in future fiscal years. Peter Tonthat (LADWP) shared that the David M. Gonzales Recreation Center Stormwater Capture Project, Fernangeles Park Stormwater Capture Project, Strathern Park North Stormwater Capture Project, and Valley Village Park Stormwater Capture Project have all received California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) approval and are scheduled to begin construction at the end of 2025, so it is unlikely that funding for these projects could be deferred another fiscal year.

Upon inquiry, Tonthat clarified that the schedule for the David M. Gonzales Recreation Center Stormwater Capture Project was revised due to a delay in acquiring right-of-way permits. The project is now scheduled to start the bid and award process in September 2025 and start construction at the end of 2025. Tonthat explained that all four of LADWP's projects involve robust and comprehensive public outreach continuing to the end of construction.

Prior to this meeting, Public Works staff asked WASC Members to rank the three SSs and three TRPs that applied for the FY25-26 Call for Projects. Public Works staff shared the summary of responses.

WASC Members discussed numerous funding scenarios for the FY25-26 SIP and used the SIP tool to evaluate the impact of funding various combinations of SSs, TRPs and PMRs on the percentage of funding allocated for the next five fiscal years. Members Petschauer, Jill Sohm, John Huynh, and Roxy Rivas supported funding the PMRs in full so that project benefits are realized.

Member Ted Gerber supported funding the three TRPs to identify feasible IP project concepts. Member Rivas also expressed support for the Cindy Montañez Natural Park Feasibility Study TRP.

Member Sohm supported funding the three SSs because the amount of funding requested by SSs is relatively modest compared to IPs. However, Member Petschauer voiced concern over funding SSs, since funding allocations would exceed 80% for FY27-28. SS Project Developers were invited to answer questions from WASC Members.

Natalie Ouwersloot (Foothill Municipal Water District, Project Applicant) and Christopher Tull (California Data Collaborative, Project Applicant) shared that of the six WASCs that have recommended a SIP, three decided to fund the Data-Driven Resource Optimization and Planning System (DROPS) for Los Angeles County SS. Tull explained that since the DROPS SS has not received all requested funding from the SCW Program, the Project Developer would focus on including input from stakeholders in Watershed Areas that have chosen to fund the project. With reduced funding, the DROPS tool would be built to include the highest priority features and may not be able to include all lower priority features.

Jon Ball (City of Los Angeles, Project Applicant) shared that while the Street Sweeping Study was funded in two other WASCs, the SS is designed for a majority of the sampling to occur in the ULAR Watershed Area. If the ULAR WASC decided not to fund the SS, the study would likely evaluate fewer sampling sites and pollutants. Upon inquiry, Ball shared that the City of Los Angeles has allocated \$100,000 for this SS in leveraged funding.

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Member Sohm noted that most of the funding requested by the Street Sweeping Study is for FY27-28 and inquired if funding could be reallocated to FY25-26 in order to decrease the percent allocated in FY27-28. Ball agreed that funding could be reallocated to FY25-26 and noted that the SS could be completed sooner. Vice-Chair Torossian expects that the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority will return \$3.9 million in unspent funds to ULAR WASC from the removed Metro Orange Line Water Infiltration and Quality Project. Vice-Chair Torossian noted that once this \$3.9 million is returned, the funding allocation in FY27-28 would drop below 80%.

9) Public Comment

Michael Scaduto (City of Los Angeles) offered a public comment that the City of Los Angeles would be satisfied with the adjusted funding or the original funding allocations, reiterating the city's approach was to request an adjustment that would benefit the SIP.

Paulina Mejia (SGVCOG) expressed support for the Quantifying Community Flood Management Benefits of Watershed-Scale Stormwater Capture SS and highlighted that the SS was rated as excellent by the peer review panel.

10) Voting Items

Member Petschauer motioned to approve both PMRs with full additional funding for recommendation in the FY25-26 SIP, seconded by Member Ernesto Pantoja. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 12 votes in favor, 0 votes in abstention, 0 opposed, and 0 absent at the time of vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Member Meisami-Fard motioned to include DROPS SS and the Street Sweeping Study, with funding for the Street Sweeping Study front loaded to FY25-26, and all three TRPs in the final FY25-26 SIP recommendation. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 9 votes in favor, 0 votes in abstention, 3 opposed, and 0 absent at the time of vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Member Gerber motioned to include the Quantifying Community Flood Management SS for inclusion in the FY25-26 SIP Recommendation, seconded by Member Edith de Guzman. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 8 votes in favor, 0 votes in abstention, 3 opposed, and 1 absent at the time of vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Vice-Chair Torossian motioned to approve the 'Final' scenario as the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Stormwater Investment Plan for ULAR Watershed Area, including 3 Watershed Coordinators and funding for continuing projects, and approve submission to the ROC for review (funding scenario "Final"), seconded by Member Pantoja. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 11 votes in favor, 0 votes in abstention, 0 opposed, and 1 absent at the time of vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

11) Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 7, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at Public Works Headquarters. The Item for the next agenda may include Watershed Planning Workshop #3.

12) Adjournment

Vice-Chair Torossian thanked Committee Members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.