



Community Investment Benefits And Benefit Ratio Working Group Engagement Compendium

May 14, 2025

Safe, Clean Water Program

Watershed Planning

WatershedPlanning@PW.LACounty.gov



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Meeting Summary 2

Date: 24 March 2025

From: Hayat Rasul, Mike Antos Stantec

To: SCW Program Watershed Planning Team

Re: Interested Party Engagement Meeting Summary

**Safe, Clean Water Program Watershed Planning
Regional Oversight Committee Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratios
Working Group Engagement**

Monday, March 24, 2025

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM (PST)

Attendees

Working Group Members

Belinda Faustinos, Safe, Clean Water Program Regional Oversight Committee

Rich Watson, Rio Hondo Watershed Coordinator, Rich Watson Associates

Santina Contreras, University of Southern California

Staff and Consultants Present:

Genevieve Osmena, Justin Jones, Jonpaul Sarro, Bryan Igboke, Jason Jade Pepito,
(SCWP Watershed Planning (WP), Los Angeles County Public Works)

Mike Antos, Hayat Rasul (Stantec)

Dustin Bambic (Paradigm)

Raina Dwivedi (California Natural Resources Group)

Thom Epps (Craftwater)

Paul Hartman (Larry Walker Associates)

Continued Discussion on Community Investment Benefits and Benefit Ratios as Part of Watershed Planning

Is there anything you would like to change from your previous recommendations?

Are there any specific community benefits to add that can address wildfire resilience?

The Watershed Planning team discussed several key points regarding the impact of recent fires and potential adjustments to action items. The working group emphasized the need to gauge what was missing in the review and summary of issues. The group highlighted the importance of distinguishing between creating new green spaces and enhancing existing ones, encouraging the program to pursue both. Members noted that the Program's interested parties have wanted updates on the evaluation process from the MMS recommendations on Community Investment Benefits (CIB) tracking in the Program.

Additionally, the working group discussed the effects of valuable community engagement. The working group discussed valuable community engagement in the context of success stories within the Program and among interested parties. The group compared the value of a letter of support from one agency versus the depth of community engagement that can possibly lead to community ownership.

With respect to recent fires, the group mentioned opportunities for land acquisition in fire-affected areas through donations, which could promote CIB as a restoration and water quality initiative. Fire response, according to the working group, in the context of the program could also exist as encouraging working with local groups and community-based organizations (CBOs), leveraging watershed coordinators, and focusing on smaller, affordable projects that offer local recreational and green space opportunities.

Watershed Planning teams suggested providing additional guidance for developers to create a better pathway for project implementation and discussed the importance of positioning projects to meet eligibility thresholds. The Group outlined the ideal scenario of continuous engagement from development to ownership, emphasizing that deep engagement and expertise in project development score highest. Finally, the Group raised considerations for selecting partners, including demonstrating qualifications, past positive community engagement, and documenting developers' track records in communities.

The Working Group added that they encourage Municipalities to engage with local groups and CBOs, leveraging Watershed Coordinators (WCs) for smaller, affordable projects that offer recreational and green space opportunities. The Group added that the effort should provide additional guidance to developers, offering a clear pathway to follow, ensuring projects meet eligibility criteria and positioning themselves to cross the threshold of eligibility. There should be a continuum from engagement to ownership (e.g. Interim Guidance 2022), development, implementation, and finally ownership. Deep engagement and expertise in project development score highest, rather than just letters of support. When considering partnership selection, specific implementation strategies, qualifications for the project, and evidence of positive past community engagement should be included. Additionally, documenting the track record of developers in the community is essential.

The Group highlighted efforts completed by MMS and Infrastructure Justice LA (IJLA) on community engagement aspects in scoring, breaking them down to consider implementation, outputs, and how IJLA organizes this information. Pieces of engagement happening can be shared with Watershed Planning.

The role of elected representatives in community engagement was also being considered by the Watershed Planning engagement teams, and brought up to the Group. The Group shared that Watershed Planning Targets should match desired outcomes, potentially requiring changes to applications. It was noted that some in the Group and on the Scoring Committee are advocating for more detailed scoring, including 3-4 letters of support from community levels and CBOs for additional points, emphasizing the understanding of facility use. The Watershed Planning team reminded the Group that MMS shared that projects could qualify beyond the typical criteria, such as safe routes to schools. Projects in DACs automatically benefit, but those proximate and providing benefits for communities aren't tracked, with claims verified by WASCs under current policy. The Group asked that Public Works work with municipalities to better engage and understand that smaller cities can reach out to their WCs for project support.

It was noted by the Group that some cities engage in this program with stormwater engineering staff, while other municipal elements engage with the community, including parks and elected representatives, though this isn't universal. The Group shared that Program leaders can impact by connecting people at cities doing engagement without considering stormwater, and vice versa.

There are also opportunities to build integrated city partnerships. For example, Rio Hondo is fortunate to work partially through San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, meeting with elected officials, city managers, and public works directors, allowing outreach messages to be preached effectively. Schools and

stormwater working groups are also involved. The Group called for exemplary case highlights via projects funded, implemented, and tracked by the program, language requirements by the program, and recommendations to collectively organize efforts towards recommended actions. Good engagement examples should be categorized by city size, municipality, organization, project, etc.

The Group also emphasized the importance of 3-4 letters of support versus one, engagement to ownership, WC roles, and WC working groups (tribal allyship, wildfire, and schools and stormwater). The Group addressed the unprecedented opportunity to elevate CIB via greenspace, using natural systems to collect water and clean runoff. The Group reminded Watershed Planning of the Elmer Street project, which reimagines what a community street can look like, with the entire neighborhood developed after that. The Group shared the sentiment that there is an opportunity to work, relook, and rebuild neighborhoods to be fire resilient, providing CIB opportunities aligned with improved watersheds to clean and capture stormwater and debris.

The Group ended by highlighting completed green street projects that increase trees, beautify neighborhoods, have dry wells, and multimodal transit, increasing shade and school routes, all incorporating multiple benefits from Ch. 16.03 of the Measure W Ordinance. The Group discussed that the larger picture of Watershed Planning and CIB involves building resilience to wildfires, planting trees and vegetation, improving landscapes, and increasing wildfire resilience. This includes opening up stormwater capture and managing water access for fighting wildfires. Existing efforts should be highlighted to adapt to wildfire resilience components. The Group mentioned housing proposals related to fire resilience, such as a 5-foot setback around houses. The Group suggested greening at schools as a priority for wildfire resilience, and future research and data collection should consider new concerns fitting with the conversation. The Group concluded and **proposed including a memo on the definition of CIB and its potential to include wildfire resilience in the existing language**, considering wildfire resilience and multiple benefits from that as a CIB, and deepening Program connections to other co-existing, multi-benefit planning efforts like safe routes to schools and green streets.

Action Items for Watershed Planning

- Distinguish between creating new green spaces and enhancing existing ones; pursue both, noting that there was a strong preference for prioritizing the creation of new park space from the group.
- Provide updates on the evaluation process from MMS recommendations on CIB tracking.

- Emphasize continuous engagement from community development to ownership, highlighting deep engagement and expertise in project development.
- Explore opportunities for land acquisition in fire-affected areas through donations to promote CIB as a restoration and water quality initiative.
- Consider qualifications, past positive community engagement, and developers' track records in communities when selecting partners.
- Highlight exemplary cases of projects funded, implemented, and tracked by the program, categorized by city size, municipality, organization, project, etc.
- Consider a memo on the definition of CIB and its potential to include wildfire resilience in the existing language.
 - *In-progress Memo: Wildfire and the Safe, Clean Water Program: Stormwater Planning and a Possible Pathway to Multi-benefit Strategies in Los Angeles County*

Memorandum

Date: 24 April 2025
From: Hayat Rasul, Mike Antos, Jon Abelson, Thom Epps, Brianna Datti
To: Safe, Clean Water Program Watershed Planning Community Investment Benefits and Benefit Ratios Working Group
Re: Wildfire and the Safe, Clean Water Program – Stormwater Planning and a Possible Pathway to Multi-benefit Strategies in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County faces an array of environmental challenges, particularly in a changing climate. Among the most pressing in the region are heat, flood, wildfires, and the threats of water scarcity, all of which a changing climate exacerbates. The intersections of climate challenges and stormwater planning provides the opportunity to rethink urban and environmental planning to center multiple benefits. The Safe, Clean Water Program, when written as Measure W, includes clauses that center the possible multiple benefits of projects that are encouraged to apply for funding. In Chapter 16 Section 3 of Los Angeles County Flood Control District Municipal Code, terms used in the Program are defined. Community Investment Benefits (CIBs) are defined as:

F. **"Community Investment Benefit"** means a benefit created in conjunction with a Project or Program, **such as, but not limited to:** improved flood management, flood conveyance, or flood risk mitigation; creation, enhancement or restoration of parks, habitat or wetlands; improved public access to waterways; enhanced or new recreational opportunities; and greening of schools. A Community Investment Benefit also includes a benefit to the community derived from a Project or Program that improves public health by reducing heat island effect and increasing shade or planting of trees or other vegetation that increase carbon reduction/sequestration and improve air quality."
 Ord. 2019-0042 § 1, 2019; Ord. 2018-0044 § 1, 2018.

The "such as, but not limited to," clause in the definition of CIB includes seven examples. These seven examples are colloquially referred to as the Such As Seven list of CIBs. The Working Group encouraged an evaluation of what fire and wildland-urban-interface strategies related to fire would already be "included" by the broad topics in this list. Below is a table which includes a non-exhaustive list generated by the Watershed Planning consultant team. This effort is also in alignment with County Water Plan integrated strategies for water management (see Strategy 12 in Los Angeles County Water Plan).

The below table outlines existing wildland-urban-interface strategies that increase wildfire resilience and are already written into the Program via the Such As Seven. Each strategy below is a suggestion. Notes are provided on whether a benefit can

be indirect as part of the complexity of qualitative benefits from projects (See Equity in Stormwater Investments, Watershed Planning Engagement, Community Strengths and Needs Assessment). Though indirect via the Program's language, the Adaptive Management of the Program is paving a path for the tracking of such benefits.

Community Investment Benefit [is] created in conjunction with a Project or Program, such as, but not limited to...	Related Wildfire Resilience Strategy
Improved flood management, flood conveyance, or flood risk mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slope stabilization with native plants • Maintaining integrity of emergency routes • Debris basin and dam maintenance
Creation, enhancement, or restoration of parks, habitats, or wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire prone invasive plant removal • Habitat enhancement for ecological resilience • Fire spread buffer • Wetland, riparian, upland soil moisture retention • Education and engagement assets and programs
Improved public access to waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency firefighting access to water • Emergency routes • Education and engagement assets and programs
Enhanced or new recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel management via open space programming, operations, and maintenance • Education and engagement assets and programs
Greening of schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire spread buffer • Education and engagement assets and programs

Reducing heat island effect and increasing shade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soil moisture retention• Fire spread buffer
Planting of trees and/or vegetation that sequesters carbon and improves air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post-fire air quality and recovery• Fire spread buffer



Meeting Summary 1

Date: 18 November 2024

From: Hayat Rasul, Mike Antos, Stantec

To: SCW Program Watershed Planning Team

Re: Interested Party Engagement Meeting Summary

Safe, Clean Water Program Watershed Planning Regional Oversight Committee Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratios Working Group Engagement

October 30, 2024

Attendees

Belinda Faustinos, Safe, Clean Water Program Regional Oversight Committee

Rich Watson, Rio Hondo Watershed Coordinator, Rich Watson Associates

Santina Contreras, University of Southern California

Dawn Petschauer, City of Pasadena, and Rio Hondo Watershed Area Steering Committee

David Diaz, Active SGV, Scoring Committee

Staff and Consultants Present:

Melanie Morita-Hu, Justin Jones, Luis Perez, Jonpaul Sarro (SCWP Watershed Planning (WP), Los Angeles County Public Works)

Mike Antos, Hayat Rasul (Stantec)

Raina Dwivedi (California Natural Resources Group)

Discussion 1: Community Investment Benefits

- Are there benefits that are a priority for the region?
- Which benefit types should have targets to drive progress, and which can just be tracked with metrics?
- Are there existing resources that can be referenced?
- Aside from the seven listed CIBs, how should other benefits be addressed?

The working group shared that there will be implications to Metrics and Scoring. The group inquired if all metrics are weighted equally or if there will be scoring attached. The group emphasized the importance of how projects relate to scoring and addressing park needs. The group also shared that Urban Heat Island (UHI) Reduction requires trees, and that project eligibility might be influenced by this. The working group added that WASCs, as evaluators, may use quantitative data as a resource, not a direct influence on scores.

The group then shifted to talking about green space as a CIB. It was suggested that targets for new green space should be set separately from targets for enhanced park space, highlighting its critical importance for the region. The group again emphasized the importance of including new green space and distinguishing the benefits of new parks versus enhanced parks. The working group noted that new parks have different impacts, such as less community disruption.

Part of the discussion focused on greening at schools, and how greening of schools through infrastructure projects should also include public, private, and other youth-based educational programs.

The group emphasized that adding vegetation and greening can sequester carbon. Green space and vegetation are recommended, especially on routes to schools.

Similarly, they noted Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction could also be considered a CIB. They added that the County has a target to provide at least 15% canopy cover for all unincorporated County residents, focusing on equitable access via the Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP). They noted that the target for all unincorporated areas combined is 20% canopy cover.

During the discussion, the group was asked to consider how the SCW Program can guide those seeking to fulfill the policies about some CIB being “accessible.” The working group collectively agreed that this word was not intended to relate only to the American with Disabilities Act, and that policy definition of accessibility. In the context of CIB, “access” should not be limited to ADA access, but should also include physical access, public use, and enjoyment of green spaces

Finally, the group shared that Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission has stream enhancement plans, and Pasadena’s Climate Action Plan includes targets for mobility, greening, and water management.

Discussion 2: Benefit Ratios and Default Service Areas

- Are the ‘who benefits’ recommendations appropriate?
- Do you support the CIB default service area considerations? Will these data track meaningful progress towards the SCW Program goals?
- Are there additional recommendations to consider?

The group discussed whether the recommendations are suitable. The group acknowledged that tracking meaningful progress for CIB is complex.

The group reviewed a proposal to use specific distance buffers to document which people would benefit from different types of CIB, and generally agreed that specific benefit types, and even the scale of that benefit, should have differential distance metrics for who should be considered a beneficiary of the project, or project element. In particular, different size parks were thought to have different “service areas,” where a pocket park would serve a smaller area than would a larger regional park.

The group highlighted challenges with distance requirements and the need for community acknowledgment and supporting documentation, like community benefits agreements. It was shared that this was also a recommendation from the Metrics and Monitoring Study.

The discussion then centered on identifying active organizations and ensuring sustained involvement, including community-based organizations (CBOs) and parks and recreation directors. The group considered how to define project benefits and agreed that user input from the CSNA and community benefits agreements will be valuable but not sufficient without project specific engagement efforts.

The group requested follow up and notes via email and would like to provide more input on CIB in the context of the WP effort.

Action Items for Watershed Planning:

- Consider separating metrics for new from those for enhanced green spaces or recreational spaces as a resource for incentivizing new recreational area.
- Document additional planning documents recommended by the group against the existing list and consider their implications for opportunity analysis and target setting.
- Distribute a follow-up email with prompts for additional feedback from the Working Group Members.
- Prioritize engagement with municipalities to support awareness of SCW Program targets and to encourage alignment between municipal planning efforts (particularly Climate Action Plans) and SCW Program adaptive watershed plans.

Addendum

A follow up email was sent to the Working Group, which asked the following questions. Comments received are in italics below each of the questions. A summary is found at the bottom, where the comments are framed for their potential implications for initial watershed planning.

Question 1:

Of the seven Community Investment Benefits described by the program, are there existing targets in the region served by SCWP held by another entity? During the meeting we heard about the Community Forest Management Plan, Pasadena's Climate Action Plan, the SMBRC stream enhancement plans, and the LAUSD greening resolution.

Email Comment 1: *Recommended Plans:*

- *Parks Needs Assessment - Plus (30x30 State Targets use this as local plan)*
- *Not yet completed but good to keep tabs on the County's Climate Ready Communities Initiative & Climate Heat Action Plan*
- *SGV Greenway Plan; LA & SG River Master Plans.*

Email Comment 2: *Each city should have adopted a Climate Action Plan, so there are multiple local specific targets within each jurisdiction. With the 2014 passage of Measure P, (Neighborhood Parks, Gang Prevention, Youth/Senior Recreation, Beaches/Wildlife Protection Measure) the County of LA undertook what was a fairly robust community engagement and parks needs assessment study, some of the information might be outdated but much will still be accurate.*

Question 2:

The Metrics and Monitoring Study proposed that CIB should have an 'eighth' category: something requested by the community (that is not among the seven shown above). Have you any suggestions for how to set targets about providing community-identified benefits?

Email Comment 3: *The community needs assessment should identify potential benefits that vary based on the needs of each watershed area. The survey should provide a comprehensive understanding of these needs. Targets for providing community-identified benefits should align with available data, such as tree canopy needs, park needs, and heat impacts.*

Email Comment 4: *Difficult to discuss without knowing the additional target, targets should be established considering the size of the population benefited and the per capita cost of the benefit. If the target exists in another document, such as a Climate Action Plan, the SCW target should be consistent with that document to the extent reasonable.*

Question 3:

After reviewing slides 11-17, have you any specific thoughts on the proposal for how the program can understand “who benefits” from each project?

Email Comment 5: *(about slide 13) The term "population served" should be replaced with "population benefited" to align with the community needs identified by local community members and organizations. The term "community acknowledgement" should specify that the acknowledging entity must be a locally based organization with at least three years of community service.*

Email Comment 6: *The intent of "population served" is synonymous with "population benefited," but the latter is more precise. It is suggested that local jurisdictions also be included as entities providing community acknowledgement, with the requirement that such acknowledgement be subject to city council or county board of supervisors action to allow for public comment.*

Email Comment 7: *It would be beneficial for the DAC Benefit to be determined by the Scoring Committee to ensure consistent application of metrics throughout the program.*

Email Comment 8: *The DAC Benefit should continue to be determined by the WASC, as they are more familiar with the communities within their watershed compared to the Scoring Committee, which oversees a larger region. Consistency in determining DAC benefits is desirable, so the Scoring Committee should have the ability to review DAC benefit determinations based on established criteria and revise them only if there are serious concerns about accuracy.*

Email Comment 9 (about slide 16): *The drainage area upstream of the school should be considered as a potential service area. In many of the SCW's fully built-out*

communities' schools are unique in offering often large public spaces that might be used for infiltration. Such spaces are very difficult to find in most urban communities.

Implications for Initial Watershed Planning

The email comments made by members of the ROC CIB and Benefit Ratio Working Group align with the earlier comments made during the meeting of the group. Some of the items that are new in the email responses are considered below.

The plans recommended were already included in the work of the Initial Watershed Planning effort, most notably, the Parks Needs+ Plan. The Climate Ready Communities effort described is underway, so will be considered as a resource during future Watershed Planning efforts.

The scope of Initial Watershed Planning is not extensive enough to allow engagement with each municipality's climate action plan, as suggested. Instead, the OurCounty Plan and its follow-on work related to climate vulnerability and climate action are the source of climate action opportunity analysis and target setting efforts of the Initial Watershed Plans.

Comments about the link between community-stated needs and developing targets, performance measures, and data about community investment benefits are aligned with work completed during MMS, and are incorporated into the Initial Watershed Plans. The seven "such as" CIB categories are being considered for their alignment with outcomes sought after by communities.

In situations where a community seeks a benefit that can be delivered by SCW Program effort but that does not fit in the seven categories, Initial Watershed Planning and other elements of the SCW Program are establishing mechanisms where those benefits can be included by a project, judged as contributing to project eligibility, and counted as a delivered benefit amongst the outcomes of the SCW Program.

MMS proposed a multi-prong approach that is inclusive of existing planning documents (like Parks Needs+), use of the Community Strengths & Needs Assessment, direct engagement, and education. Documenting the source of community support is being strengthened within the SCW Program and will include multiple pathways. Ultimately, the sufficiency of any particular pathway for any particular project is likely to remain within the judgement of the WASCs (in the Regional Program) and the municipalities (in the Municipal Program).

The final comment about the extent to which a school property can be considered an opportunity area for the surrounding community is acknowledged. In the context of Water Quality and Water Supply Benefits, the technical team will consider if the

subwatershed in which the school property sits can be considered benefitted by a project located at a school, or if proximity to the campus, or even the service area of the school, is a stronger way to express who benefits from a school project.

Action Items for Watershed Planning:

- Evaluate and document decision-making about the benefit area of a school project.
- Continue efforts to support delivery of benefits sought by communities that are or are not aligned with the “such as” seven of the CIB policy.
- Continue discussions about the roles of non-governmental organizations, elected representatives, and elected representative bodies, in describing community preference.
- Consider adjustments to how Scoring Committee and Watershed Area Steering Committees can be engaged in verifying Regional Program projects’ claims about providing Disadvantaged Community Benefits.