

# Regional Oversight Committee

## Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, May 14, 2025

1:00pm – 3:30pm

LA County Public Works Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor (Courtyard) Conference Room B  
900 S. Fremont Ave, Alhambra, CA 91803

Zoom Meeting (provided for public participation)

### Committee Members Present:

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

Barbara Romero, City of Los Angeles

Kristine Guerrero, League of Cities

Lauren Ahkiam, LAANE

Diana Tang, Long Beach Water Department, Vice-Chair

Belinda Faustinos, Retired NGO & State Agency Executive, Chair

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)

### **Meeting Summary:**

At the May 14, 2025 Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting, Committee Members received summaries of the effort completed by the Watershed Planning ROC Water Quality working group, and the Watershed Planning ROC Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratios working group.

Following discussion, the ROC voted to advance elements of that work in specific ways (see motions below). Committee Members also received a presentation from the Regional Coordination team and three Watershed Coordinators to support development of the 2025 Biennial Progress Report.

### **Key Action Items:**

- Public Works will carry out the notifications and information sharing called for by the ROC related to the Watershed Planning ROC Water Quality working group.
- Public Works' Watershed Planning staff will evaluate opportunities to incorporate into the Initial Watershed Plans elements of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Climate Action and Fire-Safe Recovery "*Initial Recommendations and Draft Action Plans for The Resilient and Sustainable Rebuilding of Los Angeles County*" dated May 1, 2025, available at: <https://lincubator.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/BR-Commission-Initial-Recommendations-Draft-Action-Plans-1.pdf>
- Public Works will develop a memorandum of input received from the Watershed Coordinators about the 2025 Biennial Progress Report as a resource to the ROC.
- Public Works, in coordination with County Counsel, will report back if the SCW Program could have a special call-for-projects that is off the normal cycle to potentially accelerate the pathway for projects eligible for SCW Program and contributing to fire recovery.

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

Diana Tang, Vice-Chair of the Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program Regional Oversight Committee (ROC), welcomed Committee Members and members of the public and called the meeting to order.

### **2. Roll Call**

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

### 3. Agenda Review and Meeting Purpose

Vice-Chair Tang 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 about the Watershed Planning ROC working groups and receive input from Watershed Coordinators regarding recommendations for the ROC's 2025 Biennial Progress Report.

### 4. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

### 5. Approval of April 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair Tang presented meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Member Kristine Guerrero motioned to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Member Charles Trevino. The Committee voted to approve the April 9, 2025, meeting minutes with 7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 in abstention and 2 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

### 6. Public Comment Period

One public comment card was received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting and can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). Participants on the Spanish interpretation line and call-in users were also invited to provide public comment.

Maggie Gardner (Our Water LA Coalition – OWLA) commented on the ROC Water Quality working group's memo and commended the memo for providing direction and interim progress indicators. Gardner commented that the proposed 2038 target for achieving Water Quality standards in receiving waters, along with interim load reduction targets for key pollutants by 2032, represents a positive step in ensuring program effectiveness and measurable environmental benefit. OWLA supports the commitment to clean water, strategic project prioritization, Adaptive Management framework, and mapping and transparency. Gardner encouraged the ROC to make a few refinements to ensure this approach fully reflects the intent and vision of the SCW Program, especially in delivering meaningful benefits for communities most impacted by pollution, disinvestment, and climate vulnerability, by centering multiple benefits and equity alongside water quality. Gardner commented that while the approach identifies water quality as the primary driver for project selection, the SCW Program should deliver multiple Community Investment Benefits—including urban greening, heat mitigation, job creation, and equitable public health improvements. Gardner commented that treating these elements as integrated priorities rather than secondary considerations will better align implementation with the full vision of the SCW Program. Gardner also remarked that prioritizing underserved communities and elevating community leadership must go beyond broad land-use and geographic criteria to include clear metrics that direct resources to historically underinvested, pollution-burdened, and park-poor communities. To maximize the value of the progress reports received by the ROC, Gardner recommended formalizing a clear and consistent reporting process that ensures all stakeholders remain informed and aligned throughout implementation.

Susie Santilena (Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment) commented on the ROC Water Quality working group compendium, stating that water compliance should be a driving factor for SCW Program implementation. Santilena noted that setting an overarching goal of meeting Water Quality standards directly impacted by dry weather and stormwater runoff by 2038 is an important step. Santilena recommended SCW Program staff review the previous Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs) funded in the past rounds to estimate the amount of capital investment and number of projects realistically able to be

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delivered in the next 13 years. Santilena additionally recommended Public Works staff create scenarios to benchmark compliance and set realistic expectations in the SCW Program. Regarding the Community Investment Benefits and Benefit Ratio working group's memo, Santilena expressed appreciation in seeing a detailed breakdown on fire resiliency related to the existing Community Investment Benefit Scoring Criteria. Santilena recommended clarifying how future high risk fire zones will be prioritized in the SCW Program – whether that be through Scoring Criteria amendments, such as modifying Scoring Criteria for the North Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area to promote more projects crossing the Scoring threshold, or prioritizing fire resiliency within Watershed Planning.

### **7. Discussion Items**

#### **a. Watershed Planning ROC working group summaries**

Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) Watershed Planning staff shared an overview of Watershed Planning efforts. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). Watershed Planning staff shared that the ROC working groups mirror the working groups formed during the 2023 Biennial Progress Report. The purpose of the ROC working groups is to support efforts to develop Initial Watershed Plans and provide input on the approach for setting targets and identifying strategies for SCW Program goal attainment.

Watershed Planning staff presented findings from the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group. The working group's compendium can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Chair Belinda Faustinos explained that the recommendations made during the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group were geared towards Watershed Planning, and Community Investment Benefit recommendations related to Scoring Criteria are a separate discussion. Chair Faustinos noted that the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group aimed to address recurring themes from the ROC during 2023 and 2025 Biennial Progress Report discussions and the Metrics and Monitoring Study (MMS) related to quantifying Community Investment Benefit metrics. Chair Faustinos commented that the opportunity to increase open space is a critical element of quantifying Community Investment Benefit metrics, given that many projects in the SCW Program have worked to revitalize or enhance existing parks but commented that creating new open space or parks should be prioritized in the SCW Program.

Chair Faustinos also commented that engagement related to increasing Community Investment Benefits in projects should include municipalities, given that most projects are initiated by municipalities. Additionally, Chair Faustinos commented that the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group aimed to provide ideas for how fire resiliency can be integrated into park enhancements, new recreational opportunities, and school greening. Chair Faustinos also encouraged Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Members to use the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group recommendations during SIP deliberations. Member Diana Mahmud commented that population density is also a factor that affects how communities receive benefits, explaining that more walkable communities may experience project benefits differently than a community of single-family residences or areas with existing open spaces.

Member Carl Blum clarified with Watershed Planning staff that the designation of “complete” for each of the recommendations on the presentation slides indicates that a recommendation has been incorporated into the Initial Watershed Plans. Member Blum and Member Trevino agreed that engaging municipalities is critical for implementation, noting that engagement can help Project Proponents understand the technical feasibility of a project in addition to the capacity support available.

Member Norma Camacho suggested viewing the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group recommendations programmatically and not just as single project opportunities, citing school greening as an example where a school district should be contacted rather than a specific campus.

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Member Mark Gold clarified with Chair Faustinos and Member Mahmud that the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group intended to provide recommendations to be implemented by Watershed Planning, and that the Initial Watershed Plans would reveal whether the recommendations need to be more targeted in the future.

Regarding the connection between Community Investment Benefits and wildfire resiliency, Member Gold suggested Watershed Planning staff consider the recently published initial recommendations and draft from the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Climate Action and Fire Safe Recovery and integrate with the Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio working group compendium, if possible.

Member Lauren Ahkiam clarified with Chair Faustinos that Disadvantaged Community Benefits are separately claimed from Community Investment Benefits during a Project Application. The Committee discussed the concept of project benefits historically being determined based on geographic proximity to a community and how direct community feedback about receiving a benefit in addition to geographic distance is increasingly considered, such as through the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA) survey.

Member Barbara Romero commented that Project Applications should include specificity about particular Community Investment Benefits, to better exemplify what project elements produce benefits that are wanted and needed.

Member Blum and Vice-Chair Tang suggested that community meetings should be sponsored or co-sponsored by municipalities to ensure that community-based organizations (CBOs) are engaged with municipalities early during the process.

Watershed Planning staff presented a summary of the ROC Water Quality working group. The compendium can be found on the [SCW Program website](#). Vice-Chair Tang commented that while the SCW Program should not bear sole responsibility for municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit compliance, the SCW Program does play a critical role in providing funding for smaller municipalities in reaching MS4 compliance.

Member Camacho commented that one of the challenges identified in the Water Quality working group was that the Los Angeles County Water Plan is more focused on the quality of water supply and not the quality of receiving waters. Member Camacho commented that there should be an overarching entity to focus on the water quality of receiving waters. Public Works staff noted that the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) encompasses a broader influence than Los Angeles County Public Works' purview and that the Los Angeles County Water Plan provides a framework on how to address complex water issues regionally such as Water Quality.

Member Gold noted that the Water Quality working group was careful to ensure that the discussions did not solely focus on MS4 compliance and suggested keeping the recommendations together, rather than separate based on what could be done within the SCW Program and what might be outside the SCW Program's scope. Several Committee Members agreed that setting high goals for the SCW Program and seeing where gaps exist is preferable to separating those goals as items outside the scope of the SCW Program.

Member Gold suggested that the Water Quality working group's recommendations be integrated into the Los Angeles County Water Plan and Initial Watershed Plans, noting that both documents address Water Quality in the region. Member Blum commented that there are many entities working to address Water Quality in Los Angeles County, noting that municipalities receive 40% of SCW Program funding through the Municipal Program, and expressed that the region lacks a clear plan that encourages everyone to proactively use funds and strategically address Water Quality needs.

Member Camacho suggested that Watershed Planning consider non-SCW Program projects during the initial baseline analysis rather than wait until later phases to do so. Member Mahmud suggested that a Technical Resources Program project could be proposed to analyze the data accumulated thus far and identify the most efficient types of projects.

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Member Mahmud commented that SCW Program funds must be used efficiently, given the state of federal funding available and continuing budget challenges municipalities face. Member Mahmud noted that municipalities already have Watershed Management Plans and commented that municipalities could use the SCW Program's Initial Watershed Plans as an additional resource to work towards achieving MS4 compliance.

Member Blum suggested that the Regional Board meet with municipalities to prioritize which MS4 compliance goals need to be addressed first. Member Maria Mehranian agreed and added that a model to benchmark compliance progress on a watershed basis would help give credit to municipalities as Water Quality gradually improves.

The Committee discussed the importance of communicating the Water Quality working group's recommendations as soon as possible, rather than only during the 2025 Biennial Progress Report process. It was agreed that only the Revised Memo, rather than the entire compendium, needed to be shared with relevant parties since the Revised Memo was created for the purpose of dissemination.

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

#### **a. Inclusion of working group summaries and any pertinent recommendations into the draft 2025 Biennial Progress Report**

Member Gold motioned to approve the Regional Oversight Committee Water Quality Working Group Revised March 28, 2025 memo, adopt the 2038 target, disseminate the memo to the Board of Supervisors, the cities, the WASCs, and the County Water Plan; that the Watershed Plans reflect the recommendations in the memo. The motion was seconded by Member Trevino. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 in abstention and 0 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Chair Faustinos motioned to include the meeting summaries from the Initial Watershed Planning working groups in the draft 2025 Biennial Progress Report, concur with the SCW Program related recommendations, acknowledge the efforts already responsive to the recommendations, and affirm the consistency with the relevant findings of the Metrics and Monitoring Study. The motion was seconded by Member Mahmud. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 in abstention and 0 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

### **9. Watershed Coordinators 2025 Biennial Progress Report input**

Ryanna Fossum (Stantec, Regional Coordination), Santa Clara River (SCR) Watershed Coordinator Amanda Begley, Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Watershed Coordinator Tara Dales, and Upper San Gabriel River (USGR) Watershed Coordinator James Cortes presented on the Regional Coordination and Watershed Coordinator role and input for the 2025 Biennial Progress Report. Presentation slides can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Member Trevino confirmed that meetings with city councilmembers and staff are being conducted to promote participation and share information about the SCW Program. Watershed Coordinator Dales shared that the LLAR Watershed Coordination team conducts annual meetings with all 18 cities in the Watershed Area, meeting with Public Works staff and city councilmembers. Watershed Coordinator Dales added that a continuous effort is made to engage city staff given staff turnover and capacity. Watershed Coordinator Dales also noted that regional entities, such as the regional Gateway Water Management Authority, are also engaged given that many city representatives attend such meetings. Member Camacho encouraged targeting cities with a dense population.

Vice-Chair Tang requested Watershed Coordinators provide a written report documenting Watershed Coordinator efforts and themes. Member Ahkiam requested insight on how the ROC could best incorporate Watershed Coordinator's recommendations in the 2025 Biennial Progress Report or the SCW Program. Member Ahkiam noted the value of Watershed Coordinators in assisting Project Proponents with less technical expertise and supporting underserved communities.



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Member Mahmud confirmed with Fossum that the Watershed Coordinators meet monthly to foster knowledge sharing and suggested that some of the ROC's recommendations could be implemented through those meetings. Fossum also noted that there are three Watershed Coordinator working groups related to post-fire solutions, Tribal allyship, and schools and stormwater.

Member Mahmud also asked Fossum for recommendations on improving the function of the WASCs themselves, such as any specific recommendations to the Scoring Criteria sheet, Project application presentation processes, Project Modification Request processes, or other improvement of the function of the WASCs to increase overall productivity of the SCW Program. Fossum explained that a summary of themes presented could be developed, and Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) added that reflections could be communicated direct to Public Works staff. Member Mahmud encouraged the Watershed Coordinators to connect with smaller municipalities.

Upon inquiry, Public Works staff confirmed that they will follow up on whether the SCW Program has the authority to conduct a Call for Projects specifically in the fire-impacted areas and designate specific funding. Chair Faustinos noted that Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District has opened the Recovery and Emergency Support for Trails, Open Space, and Recreation (RESTORE) Program for fire-impacted communities, which is funded by Measure A dollars.

Chair Faustinos requested that a summary memo of Watershed Coordinators' recommendations show how each recommendation is being addressed, so the ROC can provide direction on which recommendations to prioritize. Public Works staff added that the Watershed Coordinators develop an annual Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan for their WA and that ROC Members along with Public Works can encourage Watershed Coordinators to include specific recommendations for the future.

### **10. ROC Member Updates**

Member Camacho shared about the harmful algal blooms along the coasts in Southern California and a recent Water Quality Coordination Meeting in Sacramento. Member Camacho shared that the San Francisco Regional Board presented recent efforts and study results that revealed a need to reduce nutrient load. Member Camacho suggested a nutrient criterion for the future in this region. Member Camacho noted that the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project is presenting on May 22 about algal blooms and invited Committee Members to listen.

### **11. Program Administration Update**

Public Works staff provided updates on the following:

- Initial Watershed Plans are expected to be available for review in late summer and will have a 30-day public review period.
- The CNSA Dashboard is live and received over 250 responses from community members to date; the Watershed Coordinators are a key distributor of the CSNA survey.
- Phase 3 of Watershed Planning with WASCs are ongoing.
- All nine WASCs have developed their FY25-26 SIPs and will be brought to the ROC in June.
- The next Call for Projects is underway. Call for Projects information sessions will be held on May 21 and May 22. Project Developers must be in attendance to submit a Project Application.
- The Watershed Coordinator Request for Statement of Qualifications responses have been 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 the Low-Income Senior-Owned Exemptions and General Income-Based Tax Reductions for FY25-26 is May 1.
- The 2024 Municipal Transfer Agreements are being processed and executed by Public Works. The fifth disbursements are ongoing. Cities will need to comply with all reporting requirements to receive

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the fifth disbursement. 65 cities have received disbursements to date and 20 cities are working on the requirements for distribution.

- A Metrics & Measures section has been added as a section in the Municipal Program Reporting Module. This Metrics & Measures section collects data for performance metrics specific to Municipal Program activities to align with and inform the Watershed Planning efforts and SCW Program progress assessments. The SCW Program is hosting a virtual workshop on Thursday, May 15 from 10:00am to 11:00am that will provide an overview of the Reporting Module and the Metrics and Measures tile functionality.
- Three voting members and two non-voting members of the ROC will be meeting separately to put together the top-line recommendations and findings for the 2025 Biennial Progress Report. This subgroup will meet every second Thursday of the month and work towards a 2025 Biennial Progress Report, to be previewed at the ROC this Fall.

Member Blum confirmed with Public Works staff that the WASCs have publicly discussed Watershed Area priorities via the Watershed Planning workshops and that Project proponents have access to those meeting minutes as well as the CSNA survey results to tailor project planning. Public Works staff added that the Project application also includes an option to designate the project as specifically requested by the community or WASC.

Member Mahmud clarified with Public Works staff that since Initial Watershed Plans will not be fully available for this round and Project proponents are encouraged, but not required, to submit projects in line with the Initial Watershed Plans. Public Works staff added that Project proponents have had access to the WASC's Watershed Planning meetings and could align project concepts with the Watershed Area's needs discussed.

### **12. 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](#).

### **13. Meeting Adjourned**

Vice-Chair Tang thanked ROC Members and the public and adjourned the meeting at 3:46 PM.