

Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Thursday, November 6, 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:

Ernesto Rivera, Los Angeles Flood Control District (Agency)

Art Castro, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (Agency)

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

*Kevin Ho, Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment (Agency)

*Gary Lam, Los Angeles Recreation & Parks (Agency)

Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)

*Scott Applebaum, University of Southern California (Community)

Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)

Marc David, City of Glendale (Municipal)

Michael Vartanians, City of South Pasadena (Municipal)

Karo Torossian, City of Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair

Teresa Villegas, City of Los Angeles (Municipal)

Thuan Nguyen, Los Angeles County (Municipal)

*Dawn Petschauer, City of Pasadena (Municipal)

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

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

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

Committee Members Attending Virtually:

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

Committee Members Absent:

Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)

Rafael Prieto, City of Los Angeles (Municipal)

*Committee Member Alternate

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

1) Welcome and Introductions

Karo Torossian, 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 September 3, 2025

Public Works staff presented the meeting minutes from September 3, 2025. Member Ernesto Pantoja motioned to approve the September 3 meeting minutes, seconded by Member Teresa Villegas. The WASC voted to approve the meeting minutes with 9 votes in favor, 5 votes in abstention, 0 votes opposed, and 1 absent at the time of voting (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

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3) Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Member Thuan Nguyen disclosed attending a meeting where the City of Pasadena presented on the Building a Green Infrastructure Workforce in the Region SS.

4) Committee Member and Program Updates

Public Works staff provided updates, noting:

- The Call for Projects deadline for consideration in the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY26-27) Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) was July 31, 2025. Program-wide, 29 Infrastructure Program (IP) Projects, 7 Technical Resources Program (TRP) Project Concepts, and 12 Scientific Studies (SS) applications were received. In the ULAR WASC, 3 IPs, 1 TRP, and 9 SS applications were received. Please visit the [Call for Projects page](#) of the SCW website for more information. The SCW Team is conducting completeness checks of all Applications. IP Project Applications deemed complete will be scored by Scoring Committee.
- The Scoring Committee began scoring IP projects in September and will meet again on November 10 and December 1 to continue scoring projects. If projects need to be rescored, Scoring Committee will meet again in December or January to rescore. IP projects that score above the threshold score will be sent to the WASCs for consideration for inclusion in the SIP.
- The deadline for submitting a Project Modification Request (PMR) for consideration in the FY26-27 SIP was October 31, 2025. For the guidelines, form, and FAQs, please visit the Guidelines for Project Modifications section on the [Adaptive Management page](#) of the SCW Program website. Please note that PMR form submittals are now required to be submitted through the recently updated [Reporting Module](#).
- The upcoming Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting is scheduled for December 10 at 1:00pm where the ROC will discuss the Draft Biennial Progress Report, open the 30-day Public Comment Period, and discuss next steps for the Initial Watershed Plans.
- The Scientific Symposium is scheduled for November 12 at 1:00pm to 4:00pm at Los Angeles County Public Works Headquarters. Participants may also attend virtually with listening capabilities only. The symposium will showcase the latest regional science that is both improving stormwater quality and advancing treatment technologies. There will also be an exciting panel discussion with renowned experts to explore the future of stormwater sciences.
- On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, there is an invitation to collaborate on Community-Proposed Projects funded by the SCW Program and the associated City of Los Angeles' Policies and Procedures for Community-Proposed SCW Program Projects. These projects would apply during Round 8 (FY27-28). Please contact the Watershed Coordinators for more information.
- The Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program received an overwhelming response, with a high volume of strong and competitive applications. A total of \$8.5 million of grant funding has been allocated across 52 approved projects, and proposed grant activities have begun. Detailed information about funded projects from all three rounds is available on the [Water Foundation's website](#).
- The SCW Program's Landcover Survey was updated for FY25-26. This Landcover Survey provides the aerial imagery used to calculate parcels' SCW Tax. Although the tax rate (2.5 cents per square foot of impermeable area) has not changed, a parcel's impermeable area may have changed. Each parcel's new impermeable area is anticipated to remain in effect until the next Landcover Survey update, approximately once every three years.
- To keep up with Program Updates as they are shared, please subscribe to receive email notifications. The SCW Program newsletter provides important updates on the Regional, Municipal, and District Programs, designed to help our community stay informed and engaged.

5) Watershed Coordinator Updates

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Watershed Coordinator Kristina Kreter shared that Council for Watershed Health is supporting community-based organizations that are interested in applying to the SCW Regional Program during Round 8 (FY27-28), including Pacoima Beautiful and Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative. Additionally, Watershed Coordinator Kreter mentioned that Council for Watershed Health supported Amigos de los Rios with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process and preparation of a PMR for the Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Project. Watershed Coordinator Kreter also noted that Watershed Coordinators hosted a SCW Program 101 Workshop and prepared a resource sheet for Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program awardees.

Watershed Coordinator Alonso Garcia shared that Council for Watershed Health supported numerous community-based organizations with their stormwater projects, including Save Elephant Hill and Willowbrook Inclusion Network, and tabled at recent community events hosted by Heal the Bay, Friends of the Los Angeles River, Altadena WILD, and Black Women for Wellness.

Watershed Coordinator Adi Liberman noted that the ULAR Watershed Coordinators recently toured the South Pasadena Nature Park to learn how the volunteer-run park deploys nature-based solutions. Watershed Coordinator Liberman also mentioned recent activities that Environmental Outreach Strategies has participated in, including tabling at the Calabasas Pumpkin Festival, staging a symposium for the business community on water issues, meeting with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California to discuss creating a new funding mechanism to support stormwater capture, and meeting with United States Congressmember Luz Rivas about the potential for securing federal funding for SCW Program projects. Watershed Coordinator Liberman noted that the Watershed Coordinators plan to meet with staff at Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains to discuss interest in the Regional Program.

6) Public Comment Period

Tim Brick (Community member) expressed concern for the Initial Watershed Plans and the public engagement process. Brick commented that the Initial Watershed Plans appear vague and not based on scientific data. Brick suggested that the SCW Program team reference the Sepulveda Basin Vision Plan developed by the City of Los Angeles.

Clara Solis (Community member) commented that over 1,000 Highland Park community members signed a petition opposing the use of San Pascual Park for the Arroyo Seco-San Rafael Treatment Wetlands Project and encouraged WASC Members to review the Project's Environmental Impact Report. Solis commented that the Project's public engagement process was not inclusive of Spanish-speaking community members.

Yael Pardas (Community member) expressed concern for the Arroyo Seco-San Rafael Treatment Wetlands Project, commenting that the Project does not align with goals of the SCW Program related to nature-based solutions and robust community engagement.

7) Presentations and Discussion Items

a) Watershed Planning Phase 4 Engagement

Public Works' Watershed Planning staff presented updates on Watershed Planning, including background on the Watershed Planning effort, overview of the [draft Initial Watershed Plans](#) and online [SCW Program Watershed Planning tool](#), and summary of public comments on Initial Watershed Plans. Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#).

Member Edith de Guzman inquired whether the Watershed Planning tool could incorporate a summary of public input on a Project. Watershed Planning staff noted that this could be considered and shared that while not a part of the Watershed Planning tool, the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment captured over 800 responses from members of the public regarding desired project features. Chair Torossian encouraged Project applicants who have completed the CEQA process prior to submitting a SCW Program

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Project Application to include any public comments from the CEQA process in the Project Application and shared with the WASC.

Watershed Coordinator Kreter acknowledged community members' comments that biodiversity is missing from the draft Initial Watershed Plans and inquired how public comments will be integrated into the Initial Watershed Plans. Watershed Planning staff shared that while public comments will be addressed in the final Initial Watershed Plan when feasible, gaps in the Initial Watershed Plans could be addressed in the next iteration of Watershed Planning occurring in five years. Watershed Planning staff clarified that the Initial Watershed Plans are specific to the SCW Program and are not intended to replace Integrated Regional Water Management Plans or Watershed Management Programs.

Hayat Rasul (Stantec, Watershed Planning) facilitated a discussion with WASC Members on how the Initial Watershed Plan could shape projects that will be submitted to this WASC in the future.

The WASC discussed different types of projects they would like to receive in the next Call for Projects. Member Villegas and Member de Guzman encouraged Project Applicants to develop projects that address climate change impacts and deploy innovative green solutions. Member Art Castro and Chair Torossian emphasized the WASC's interest in projects with flood prevention, Water Supply, and park and green space improvements. Member Ernesto Rivera encouraged Project applicants to explain in their applications how the Initial Watershed Plan shaped the Project Application.

The WASC discussed how the Committee likely will not have enough funds to approve funding for all Project Applications and PMRs, and will evaluate Initial Watershed Plan alignment to aid in SIP deliberations.

b) Scientific Studies (SS) Program Presentations

i. Holistic Assessment of Trash in Watersheds Scientific Study

Win Cowger (Moore Institute for Plastic Pollution Research, Project applicant) presented an overview of the Holistic Assessment of Trash in Watersheds SS. This SS aims to measure roadside trash loading, harmonize public data, and create watershed models to assess Best Management Practices (BMPs). Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#).

Upon inquiry, Cowger clarified that field investigations will be conducted at roadside sites, but the SS will also aggregate existing datasets on trash in waterways from various sources. Cowger explained that field investigation sites will be selected based on community priorities with input from technical experts including State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) staff. Upon inquiry, Public Works staff will confirm that the Water Board's participation in this SS will not be a conflict of interest. Cowger shared that the Water Board's participation could be removed if it is of concern.

Upon inquiry, Cowger clarified that field investigations would involve collecting data on each piece of trash found on 60 blocks within the ULAR Watershed Area. The SS would collect data five times per year over the course of three years. Cowger added that the field investigations would also document other characteristics of the sites, such as presence of anti-littering signage. Cowger explained that data collected will be used to calculate a trash accumulation rate. Cowger clarified that data collected by this SS could inform development of new targeted trash prevention strategies. Cowger also shared that a previous study conducted by Moore Institute for Plastic Pollution Research in Pinole, California guided the City of Pinole towards passing an ordinance that limits use of single use plastics by businesses.

The WASC encouraged the Project Applicant to reference the Street Sweeping Study conducted by the City of Los Angeles and the Water Board's Trash Amendments.

ii. Regional CECs and Pollutant EMCs in Stormwater Assessment Study

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Dr. Sanjay Mohanty (University of California Los Angeles, Project applicant) and Dr. Dylan Ahearn (Herrera Environmental, Project applicant) presented an overview of the Regional Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) and Pollutant Event Mean Concentrations (EMCs) in Stormwater Assessment SS. This regional stormwater study aims to link land use to emerging contaminants such as 6PPDQ, PFAS, and microplastics to help guide future BMPs and planning. Presentation slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#).

Upon inquiry, Mohanty shared that while conventional BMPs do not currently capture PFAS, other research is being conducted to evaluate how BMPs can be improved to address PFAS pollution in stormwater.

Upon inquiry, Ahearn clarified that the Project Applicant is not applying for funding in the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Watershed Area because the LLAR WASC does not have sufficient funding to support this SS. Jian Peng (Atkins Realis, Project applicant) shared that the LLAR Watershed Area could still benefit from this SS, because results from other Watershed Areas could be extrapolated to land uses within the LLAR Watershed Area. Peng clarified that the goal of this SS is to correlate land use type with presence of CECs, and results could inform where BMPs should be located to address pollutants. Upon inquiry, Mohanty shared that CEC hotspots will be identified based on literature reviews.

8) Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 3, 2025, from 1:30pm to 4:00pm at Public Works Headquarters. Items on the next agenda include:

- a) Additional SS Program presentations

9) Adjournment

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