SAFE CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

Initial Watershed Plans

Appendix C. Engagement Summary

February 2026

SAFE CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

Initial Watershed Plan: Appendix C. Engagement Summary

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Appendix C. Engagement Summary

C.1 A Commitment to Interested Party Engagement

Interested parties consist of the Governance Committees, including the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC); Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs); and Scoring Committee, municipalities, water advocacy groups, and leaders in school greening. Governance Committees and interested parties have valuable experience and unique perspectives on the Program. The engagement approach included structured and focused facilitation sessions, curated with guiding questions. This engagement was grounded in the following general objectives, where participants were:

- Introduced to WP and informed how their input would be considered as part of the process.
- Informed about existing planning efforts, plans, and associated datasets relevant to Watershed Planning.
- Asked to contribute knowledge about plans, studies, and datasets for consideration during Plans development.
- Provided opportunities to describe and prioritize strategies to advance the SCW Program Goals regionally and locally.
- Iteratively informed on how their contributions influenced the planning process.

C.1.1 Understanding This Report

The engagement methods for each of the interested parties involved are summarized below, and the results of engagement are synthesized in later sections. The synthesis of feedback received from the broad suite of interested parties had meaningful influence on the Plans' development, which influenced several elements of the Plans such as actions and targets. Synthesizing the feedback received allowed input to be aligned with the appropriate aspects of WP and within the scope of the SCW Program.

This WP Engagement Summary is divided into sections that describe the different groups that were engaged. The first and most extensive section describes engagement with the nine WASCs, whose members are:

- Important sources of local knowledge, and
- Understand their respective WAs' opportunities, challenges, constraints, and priorities.

Following is ROC section, which includes insight from the ROC Water Quality (WQ) and Community Investment Benefit and Benefit Ratio Working Groups.

The final section of this Summary describes the engagement with other interested parties.

C.1.1.1 Limitations

This Engagement Summary reflects the extensive engagement conducted and valuable input received. While all feedback was carefully considered, only feedback that aligned with the SCW Program and current WP scope influenced Plan elements at this time. Future adaptive management efforts may consider incorporating feedback that was not captured in the current Plans, while other recommendations fall outside of the scope of the SCW Program. Refer to Chapter 5 of the Plans for more detail on how engagement feedback was incorporated. Additional detail, from Governance Committee meeting engagements, can be found in the approved meeting minutes; see Table C-1 below.

Additionally, interested parties and the public, beyond the groups mentioned above, may have had the opportunity to engage with WP through the monthly Governance Committees meetings, 45-day public review period for the Draft Plans, the Watershed Planning workshops funded by the SCW Program Education and Engagement Grants Program and led by Los Angeles Waterkeeper, or others. Descriptions of these other engagement efforts, and the feedback received therein, are not included in this Summary.

Engagement was conducted in English without interpretation, excepting meetings conducted by the ROC, and the Upper Los Angeles Area WASC, where interpretation in Spanish was available.

C.2 Synthesis of Input by Watershed Area Steering Committees

Each WASC has seventeen voting members and at least one non-voting Watershed Coordinator. These members are appointed to represent Agency, Municipal, or Community perspectives, and each is expected to bring relevant professional experience aligned with SCW Program Goals and regional interests. The nine WASCs are comprised of community leaders with varied expertise (i.e., hydrology, water management, environmental management, community engagement) and a strong familiarity with local and regional social, infrastructural, and political dynamics, making them primary collaborators in WP. At the time of this Summary, the latest (FY26-27) WASC Roles and Responsibilities presentation that details expectations of Committee Members and Committee Chairs was circulated to each WASC[1].

Engagement was carried out through a four-phase approach; the four phases are summarized below.

[1] See FY26-27 WASC Roles and Responsibilities presentation

Table C-1. Approved Meeting Minutes from Governance Committee meetings focused on Watershed Planning

Governance Committee Watershed Planning Meeting Minutes				
Governance Committee	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Regional Oversight Committee (ROC)	ROC Phase 1	ROC Phase 2	ROC Phase 3	ROC Phase 4
Scoring Committee (SC)	SC Phase 1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Upper San Gabriel River (USGR) WASC	USGR Phase 1	USGR Phase 2	USGR Phase 3	USGR Phase 4
Central Santa Monica Bay (CSMB) WASC	CSMB Phase 1	CSMB Phase 2	CSMB Phase 3	CSMB Phase 4
Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) WASC	ULAR Phase 1	ULAR Phase 2	ULAR Phase 3	ULAR Phase 4
South Santa Monica Bay (SSMB) WASC	SSMB Phase 1	SSMB Phase 2	SSMB Phase 3	SSMB Phase 4
Santa Clara River (SCR) WASC	SCR Phase 1	SCR Phase 2	SCR Phase 3	SCR Phase 4
Rio Hondo (RH) WASC	RH Phase 1	RH Phase 2	RH Phase 3	RH Phase 4
North Santa Monica Bay (NSMB) WASC	NSMB Phase 1	NSMB Phase 2	NSMB Phase 3	NSMB Phase 4
Lower San Gabriel River (LSGR) WASC	LSGR Phase 1	LSGR Phase 2	LSGR Phase 3	LSGR Phase 4
Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) WASC	LLAR Phase 1	LLAR Phase 2	LLAR Phase 3	LLAR Phase 4

Phase 1 (Summer 2024): Engagement with WASCs started with identifying key opportunities or constraints in their WA and within the SCW Program. WASC members identified strategies within their respective WAs that are most needed to achieve SCW Program Goals. Additionally, WASCs were introduced to WP, how their input could impact it, and how establishing targets and performance measures supports improvements to the SCW Program. A facilitated exercise helped WASCs consider and build consensus about how the SCW Program Goals align with their respective WA characteristics, priorities, and what strategies may be most supportive of achieving the Goals.

Phase 2 (Fall 2024): The synthesized feedback received during the Phase 1 engagement was reviewed with the WASC, who were given the opportunity to affirm or correct how feedback was interpreted. WASCs were also updated on the early Draft Plans outline and the next phases of their continued development.

Phase 3 (Spring 2025): During this Phase, earlier engagement feedback was reviewed, and members learned how their input could influence WP. WASCs were introduced to key elements of the Plans, including baselines, strategies, and opportunities, and received a demonstration of the beta-version Tool and the Community Strengths & Needs Assessment (CSNA) Survey and Dashboard.

Phase 4 (Fall 2025): After the 45-day public review period for the Draft Plans, the WASCs were engaged again by the Watershed Planning team. A presentation on the Draft Plans and a high-level synthesis of public feedback was shared with each WASC. This meeting included discussion on how to align future projects with the Plans, as required by the addition of the 20th requirement in Section 2.0 of the Feasibility Study Guidelines (FSG).

C.2.1 Central Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area

C.2.1.1 Phase 1

The CSMB WASC recommended many potential beneficial strategies for the WA, including a priority strategy to augment Water Supply through innovative water capture and reuse projects and programs (Table C-2). The WASC also shared that the creation of green spaces in disadvantaged communities is a priority because it will address historical disparities. The WASC also expressed a desire to see collaborations with local school districts, such as, but not limited to, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), integration of green initiatives into school environments, and taking advantage of valuable opportunities for community engagement and environmental education.

C.2.1.2 Phase 2

The WASC asked about the limitations of WP and requested a comprehensive review of its impact on smaller municipalities, particularly in relation to the regulatory Watershed Management Plans (WMPs) related to the Los Angeles County Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit compliance. The WASC expressed that the effectiveness of the CSMB WA Initial Watershed Plan will depend on its proper execution, with a cautionary note about the potential pitfalls if the plan and associated Watershed Planning Tool (Planning Tool) are not well designed or easy to use. The WASC also expressed a desire to see the CSNA shared with all the WA's municipalities. The WASC highlighted the importance of outreach to disadvantaged communities and suggested using "heat maps" for the data visualization of community priorities, such as flood protection, be included in the Planning Tool. The WASC recommended clearly listing any assumptions regarding meaningful engagement when using tools or maps, like the Good, Better, and Best engagement criteria noted in the May 2025 Interim Guidance[2].

[2] Safe, Clean Water Program 2025 Interim Guidance

Table C-2. CSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

CSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Evaluate the extent of available land for new green space in census tracts that are considered Disadvantaged.
Highlight the complexity of addressing the SCW Program policy about investment in Disadvantaged Communities in the watershed. Development patterns illustrate that some cities have very dense and low-income communities while other cities have moderately dense higher income communities. This results in some projects that are necessary for water quality compliance that do not benefit disadvantaged community members and therefore are harder to program into the CSMB stormwater investment plan. This is most pronounced for cities who have regulatory requirements related to Ballona Creek.
Use spatial data that represents historical disparities for project development and funding prioritization.
When considering historic disparities, do not only evaluate the portions of the WA considered disadvantaged by SCW Program policy, evaluate the entire WA.
In the different groundwater management areas, evaluate the different geohydrologic and policy implications for pursuing additional groundwater recharge.
Assess locations of LAUSD and other school district properties and their relationship to regulated runoff.
Emphasize the intent to include analysis of all school districts, not just LAUSD.
Inventory of LAUSD greening policies and prioritization of facilities for retrofit.
Engage with the County Office of Education.
Evaluate whether LAUSD and other school district capital improvement plans and greening targets exist and incorporate into plans where applicable.
Incorporate the recommendations from the County Water Plan with respect to groundwater recharge hydrology and policy goals for each groundwater management area.
Incorporate Los Angeles County Parks Needs Assessment Plus targets/goals for the WA.
Standardized ways or methods to quantify secondary benefits such as enhancement/creation of open space, recreation, education, etc., so that projects can be compared.
Provide technical assistance for applicants to consider green jobs & career pathway implications.
Prioritize direct primary benefits, consider racial/economic equity and historical legacies.
Reassess application questions to make them more accessible for local community groups to allow for variety of scales in project size.

C.2.1.3 Phase 3

The Watershed Planning team returned to the CSMB WASC to give a progress update on WP, including discussion on the major components of the Plans and demos of the companion online Planning Tool and CSNA Survey and Dashboard (Table C-3). Committee members showed strong interest in the Planning Tool's opportunity layers that highlight where potential projects and programs might advance the goals of the SCW Program. The WASC suggested including reference information about source data used in the analysis that produced opportunity layers as an effort to be transparent. There was also a recommendation for Project Developers to align their efforts with specific WA priorities, especially to move beyond just WQ regulatory compliance projects and to focus on multi-benefit projects.

Lastly, suggestions for the CSNA Survey and Dashboard included the potential for offering both short and long versions of the survey and improving visibility through a homepage link. The WASC emphasized the importance of collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or community-based organizations (CBOs) by project proponents.

C.2.1.4 Phase 4

Several Committee Members emphasized the importance of using the new mapping and planning tools to guide strategic decision-making for future water projects. Some Committee Members encouraged applicants and the WASC to explore the Plans and Planning Tool early so that proposed projects better align with the Plans to maximize impact. One Committee Member stressed that the CSMB WA has broad goals and limited resources, so the WASC should use the Initial Watershed Plan and Planning Tool to prioritize investments rather than simply award funding. Another Committee Member also noted that project timelines may shift to allow for better alignment, and the Facilitator reminded the group that the CSMB WASC has flexibility in how it uses the Plans and Planning Tool.

Other Committee Members discussed the need for clear communication of CSMB WASC priorities to help Watershed Coordinators and applicants plan effectively. A Committee Member expressed concern that green space may be undervalued in the Plans and advocated to incentivize more greening efforts. The WASC agreed that they should be proactive, not just reactive, during deliberations and expressed agreement in withholding funding until project proposals meet strategic goals. Overall, the conversation highlighted the need for thoughtful planning, transparency, and strategic use of limited resources.

Table C-3. CSMB WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

CSMB WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Confirm that all graphics and visualizations in presentations are clear and support interpretation of key planning elements.
Clarify and communicate that the Planning Tool will not incorporate unsubmitted projects.
Understand and integrate the County Water Plan's Nature-Based Solution Blue Ribbon Panel and Task Force recommendations.
Communicate clearly in the Plans that the Planning Tool and the CSNA are support tools for targeted engagement, not a replacement for direct outreach.
Emphasize green space more in the CSMB WA Plan to incentivize more greening efforts.
Point to the ability of the SCW Program to provide guidance on how the Plans can serve as a resource to Project Proponents.
Coordinate with SCW Program leadership to determine how or whether to integrate the Planning Tool insights into Scoring Criteria as part of Adaptive Management.
Use the Plans and Planning Tool to prioritize investments strategically.
Explore the development of short and long versions of the CSNA Survey for improved public engagement as part of Adaptive Management.
Provide guidance documents for the CSMB WASC and exercises to use the Plans during deliberations.

C.2.1.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the CSMB WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period included:

- Strengthening targets and ambition
- Enhancing data transparency
- Increasing focus on community engagement
- The importance of multi-benefit and distributed projects
- Refining benefit and metric definitions
- Promoting collaboration and accountability

C.2.2 Lower Los Angeles River Watershed Area

C.2.2.1 Phase 1

The LLAR WASC focused on advancing stormwater improvement strategies for dry and wet weather projects. This WASC highlighted how the LLAR WA is densely developed, meaning that land rehabilitation will likely be a characteristic of most projects. Similarly, the WASC expressed a desire for the development of multi-benefit projects that incorporate best management practices (BMPs) such as dry wells, infiltration galleries, green infrastructure (i.e., bioswales), and green streets to manage stormwater. The WASC also requested comprehensive operation and maintenance (O&M) planning for projects.

C.2.2.2 Phase 2

The LLAR WASC appreciated the clarity of the WP synthesis but provided more clarity about the strategy focus they discussed regarding schools and stormwater compliance. The WASC wanted to affirm that an effort was being made to understand the implications of regulated runoff analysis for LAUSD and other school properties, noting past project rejections due to MS4 compliance issues. The LLAR WASC noted that Phase 1 did not include discussion about metrics related to disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities and emphasized the importance of equitable project evaluation and funding distribution. The WASC also highlighted the need to understand sewer capacity for stormwater diversion, citing diminishing capacity in the Los Angeles County Sanitation District (LACSD) systems, and recommended incorporating local agency data into the Plans.

Table C-4. LLAR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

LLAR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Analyze dry weather runoff challenges and opportunities.
Evaluate the potential for distributed BMPs that collectively achieve cost-effectiveness thresholds of the SCW Program.
Describe relationship of regulated runoff to LAUSD and other school district properties. Upon describing that relationship, inquire about implications of regulated runoff analysis for LAUSD and other school properties.
Evaluate LAUSD and other school greening policies and prioritization of retrofits.
Document and factor existing land remediation efforts and/or plans (i.e., brownfields, parks).

LLAR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Public Works could provide more resources to understand the distribution of disadvantaged communities within the WA.
Proposed using the “severely disadvantaged community” policy used by the State to explore opportunities to overcome environmental injustices.
Visualize funding distribution within the WA; suggested that a heat map could be used to show fund distribution within communities.
Fund analyses that quantify the direct benefits from projects and proximate benefits from projects.
Link O&M spending with workforce development.
Consider LAUSD and other school district plans and targets.
Incorporate LA County PNA+ targets, and EPA Brownfields Program targets.
Investigate how distributed projects can collectively achieve the right cost-benefit thresholds.
Recommended incorporating local agencies’ project data to understand contributions by non-SCW Program projects towards targets.
Leverage Council of Governments (COGs) partnerships.
Understand sewer capacity for possible diversion to sewer.
Develop a capacity analysis of the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts sewers to aid in developing the Plans.
Prioritize proponents that partner with the private sector.

C.2.2.3 Phase 3

The WASC shared an interest in seeing the Plans be driven in-part by the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation’s Parks Needs Assessment (PNA) and Parks Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+) Initiatives, and the 30x30 goal held by the State of California, that aims to conserve 30 percent of lands and coastal waters by 2030 to address climate change and protect biodiversity. The WASC also inquired about the integration of disadvantaged community data and zoning across different WAs. The LLAR WASC mentioned that a PNA 2.0 report would be released in the summer of 2025 and suggested finding ways to synchronize with its goals and strategies.

The WASC also emphasized the importance of aligning LLAR WA needs with CSNA results in the Dashboard, highlighting its usefulness during Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) deliberations. The Committee stressed the importance of making strategic decisions and maximizing the impact of available funds within the WA.

C.2.2.4 Phase 4

The WASC reflected how their input that was assessed as meaningful to the SCW Program at a scale “beyond Initial Watershed Planning” could inform future Adaptive Management efforts in addition to countywide related programs, measures, and efforts.

The LLAR WASC focused on integrating the CSNA into the Planning Tool and tracking whether projects reflect community priorities, and were eager to understand and consider how CSNA data is incorporated in the Planning Tool and shared interest in the CSNA being a resource to visualize community input and identify community benefits while not substituting for direct community outreach, memorandums of understanding, and community agreements.

The WASC also considered how future project applications will use Plans under the proposed 20th FSG requirement. While members agreed that alignment with these Plans is essential for strategic decision-making, some expressed concern about added complexity for applicants.

The WASC also stressed the need for more innovative, collaborative projects, particularly those featuring nature-based solutions and school greening, citing related County initiatives. The Watershed Planning team noted efforts to develop metrics to track progress and foster innovation. The WASC highlighted that Plans will shape projects from concept and aid project deliberations, especially as many WAs face budget constraints. The Watershed Planning Team shared that they will be providing guidance for applicants on demonstrating alignment and encouraged members to explore the beta Planning Tool to identify priorities and opportunities.

Table C-5. LLAR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

LLAR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Confirm updates on potential public demonstrations of Watershed Planning Tools and the CSNA Survey and Dashboard.
Consider public comments on watershed constraints and water supply needs when evaluating and shaping future projects.
Evaluate the incorporation of Los Angeles County PNA and PNA+ initiatives and track their progress throughout 2025.
Support the development and use of metrics and performance indicators to assess progress and encourage adaptive management and innovation.
Evaluate the integration of disadvantaged community data and zoning across the WA.

C.2.2.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the LLAR WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period included:

- Emphasize hydrogeologic constraints,
- Acknowledge existing infrastructure, and
- Highlight recharge opportunities.

C.2.3 Lower San Gabriel River Watershed Area

C.2.3.1 Phase 1

The LSGR WASC focused on developing a list of existing planning documents that could influence the Plans, such as the SCW Program-funded *Gateway Area Pathfinding Analysis Scientific Study*. The WASC emphasized a desire to optimize multi-benefit solutions. The WASC requested that the Watershed Planning effort support those who are developing projects to ensure they complement existing WMPs that were produced in response to the MS4 permit[3]. The WASC also noted a need to enhance collaboration with community members and city officials to optimize water management efforts. This WASC also prioritized discussions about leveraging funding, designing projects to be lower cost for construction and O&M, and finding other programs outside of the SCW Program that could add multi-benefit stormwater management elements to their efforts. This discussion centered around the WASC's recognition that the outcomes sought by the SCW Program are often shared by other programs that drive investments.

C.2.3.2 Phase 2

The LSGR WASC reiterated the proactive project funding approach represented by the WASC Prioritization Criteria[4], which allows the WASC to signal interest to project applicants for strategies or elements prior to application. The WASC also asked for Watershed Planning efforts to consider how the WA being adjacent to the Orange County boundary could be leveraged to provide unique opportunities.

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[3] Regional Permit Program Page | Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
[4] LSGR WASC Prioritization Criteria

Table C-6. LSGR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

LSGR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Evaluate how water quality compliance pathways proposed by permittees can produce SCW Program outcomes.
Document priorities for brownfield remediation held by other agencies - Cite the Department of Toxic Substance Control, cities, and other entity mandates and resources focused on brownfields, specifically regarding the term "(re)development" as preferred over "remediation" for brownfields, as remediation is at an earlier stage and may not be suitable for implementing stormwater features on contaminated sites.
Identify public or privately managed large land parcels to support SCW Program goals.
Provide resources about how the WP process will map and identify large parcels, as most parks are already identified or evaluated for stormwater management.
Assess the implications of Orange County lands within LSGR watershed delineation.
Integrate subwatershed analyses in Adaptive Plans.
Identify planned green or complete street plans as opportunities.
Establish targets for leveraging funding.
Incorporate achievements expected from funded planning and implementation projects.
Create prioritized targets for hardscape redevelopment and removal, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
Evaluate the watershed-housing nexus, consider housing targets.
Leverage other non-traditional programs, like affordable housing, to optimize dollars to develop green space and mitigate outdoor water use.
Coordinate with County Measures R, J, H, A, and M.

C.2.3.3 Phase 3

Outreach strategies were discussed, including the suggestion to involve environmental commissioners to ensure appointed officials are well-informed. Questions about data accuracy and long-term management were addressed, with assurances that data will be updated as new projects are added. The project application process now requires more detailed data, supporting Adaptive Management planning beyond 2026, and all tools and documents will be updated regularly.

The discussion also touched on the potential to highlight projects outside the SCW Program that align with its goals, aiming to foster synergies that enhance project selection and community engagement.

C.2.3.4 Phase 4

The facilitator asked how the group anticipates the next round of SIP deliberations would progress, given the priority strategies and targets already established by the LSGR WASC in their 2023 Project Prioritization Criteria[5], and what the LSGR WASC hopes to receive from applicants through the Watershed Planning effort.

The WASC emphasized the need to work with applicants to refine submitted projects and ensure effective use of the SIP and Watershed Planning Tools for smoother deliberations. Members expect future projects to align with long-standing priorities and anticipate a more data-driven SIP process, aided by integrated tools. They also highlighted opportunities for creative funding strategies, particularly for large infrastructure projects, and suggested redirecting misaligned proposals to better-fitting programs with guidance from SCW Program staff and Watershed Coordinators. Concerns were raised about redundant studies, such as trash studies, which could be replaced with actionable interventions.

The discussion also covered prioritization, compliance, and leveraging partnerships. The WASC agreed that while the SCW Program supports diverse projects, some priorities carry more weight, and leveraging funding will be critical. The Planning Tool was seen as essential for identifying high-impact opportunities, and a checklist was requested to align strategies with Plans. Additional points included the importance of documenting community engagement for compliance, exploring public-private partnerships, and addressing limited land availability through creative zoning solutions. Finally, clarity on anticipated versus actual benefits was stressed; staff assured that the Planning Tool will display real-time data and post-performance metrics once available.

[5] The LSGR WASC developed a criteria for themselves prior to the Watershed Planning effort that helped them prioritize project types and themes.

Table C-7. LSGR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

LSGR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Include or require more detailed data from project applicants via applications to support long-term data collection and Adaptive Management.
Highlight contributions from non-SCW Program projects that support and align with SCW Program goals.
Use the CSNA Dashboard to assess investment appropriateness that aligns with areas that optimize multi-benefit solutions.
Encourage municipalities to host the CSNA Survey on their website.
Develop a checklist for each WASC that can be used by WASC members during SIP deliberations to track how a project is claiming Plan alignment.
Consider how SCW Program engagement efforts within the Technical Resources Program and Watershed Planning can contribute to required MS4 permittee engagement.

C.2.3.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the LSGR WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period included:

- Water Supply targets, strategies, and actions,
- Groundwater recharge constraints,
- Targeted infiltration opportunities,
- Potential risks of shallow infiltration, and
- Language clarifications and enhancements.

C.2.4 North Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area

C.2.4.1 Phase 1

The NSMB WASC highlighted opportunities for implementing nature-based solutions (NBS) since the WA has a greater proportion of open space compared to other WAs in the SCW Program. The WASC expressed that diversion to sanitary sewer, distributed NBS, and stream and wetland restoration are priorities. The WASC highlighted how NSMB and SCR WAs face similar opportunities and challenges since they both have large open spaces, often in the upper WAs. Regulatory WQ compliance and integrating small-scale stormwater capture solutions like rain gardens and cisterns are BMPs that the WASC would like to be evaluated through Watershed Planning. Additionally, the WASC acknowledged the benefit of engaging local communities and leveraging partnerships during project development.

C.2.4.2 Phase 2

The NSMB WASC discussed Caltrans' request to partner and receive credit for contributions to SCW Program-funded projects, noting the logical involvement due to the presence of their infrastructure in the WA. The WASC considered Caltrans' role in addressing Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and prioritizing projects, especially for creeks below underpasses. The WASC emphasized the need for Watershed Planning to identify partnerships. The WASC also discussed public recognition of clean beaches, leveraging grant funding for coastal resilience, the importance of beach benefits for WP, and consideration of the WASC's potential for planning for sea level rise. Investments in beaches and open spaces were seen as strategies for cooling and providing open space in the WA. The WASC also expressed interest in connecting agencies through potable reuse efforts.

Table C-8. NSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

NSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Investigate how distributed projects can collectively achieve the right cost-benefit threshold.
Assess remaining capacity and identify best opportunities for dry and wet weather flows diverted to Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.
Evaluate open space that could be acquired to "[protect] undeveloped mountains and floodplains, creating and restoring riparian habitat and wetlands" in the NSMB WA.
Analyze impacts of sea level rise, open space, beach recreation and relationships to stormwater and urban runoff as project opportunities.

NSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Engage with other capital programs in the region (i.e., Caltrans, LA Metro) and assess their priorities for potential alignment with SCW Program goals via Watershed Coordinators and the WASC.
Evaluate the Malibu Lagoon Restoration Project, which involves Caltrans reducing stormwater runoff as a potential path to deepen inter-agency relationships and enhance leverage funding opportunities.
Identify successful partnerships and model project designs.
Potential for Caltrans' role in addressing TMDLs and their interest in WASC project prioritization, especially concerning creek underpasses.
Adopt or include targets for existing public open space held by government entities.
Prioritize wet and dry weather runoff capture for diversion to water recycling facilities over groundwater recharge.
Incorporate a natural stream condition indicator as part of target setting for WQ, Water Supply (WS), or Community Investment Benefit (CIB).
Create subcategories for project size and project phase for funding Infrastructure Program projects.
Engage with potable (re)use programs for strategic partnerships.

C.2.4.3 Phase 3

The NSMB WASC raised concerns about the environmental impact of impervious surfaces and whether open space acquisition for conservation is reflected in the Initial Watershed Plan targets. The Watershed Planning team clarified that pollutant load reduction targets do account for impervious surfaces, including those on private property. The WASC emphasized the importance of integrating the Los Angeles County PNA and related funding into the planning process. While current discussions focus on identifying opportunities for park creation or enhancement, budgeting is guided by the assessment methodology. The Committee also highlighted the potential of Los Angeles County Measure A as a funding source for new parks and open space, suggesting it could be leveraged in future planning efforts.

The WASC further stressed the significance of large-scale projects, particularly in undeveloped areas, and the need to align planning with the region's unique geography and geology. The WASC expressed interest in gaining a clearer understanding of pollutant load reduction targets in future meetings. The Watershed Planning team emphasized the impacts that the County Water Plan's NBS Blue Ribbon Panel will have in defining and guiding best practices for projects in WAs that center NBS as priority solutions.

C.2.4.4 Phase 4

Watershed Planning staff updated the WASC on how the Planning Tool and Plans will guide future project applications, clarifying that applicants will first describe Plan alignment before undergoing a completeness review. While previously funded projects already support SCW Program Goals, members voiced concerns that new requirements may burden smaller municipalities and requested more accessible tools. The Committee revisited how SCW projects might incorporate broader benefits, such as CIBs and multi-benefit stormwater solutions, while staff emphasized that Plans differ from regulatory WMPs and Coordinated Integrated Monitoring Programs (CIMPs) by focusing specifically on advancing SCW Program objectives.

The WASC also discussed data gaps in the Draft Initial Watershed Plan, including missing nitrate and bacteria layers, noting that better hydrologic data is essential for siting high-value, water-supply-focused projects. Staff confirmed that although a 20th FSG requirement is being considered, project scoring will remain unchanged, with the 60-point eligibility threshold intact. Additional discussions explored opportunities to partner with parks departments, landowners, and schools to expand recreational and community benefits. Members emphasized leveraging multiple funding sources and complementary tools, such as the Living Infrastructure Toolkit, to strengthen both Technical Resource Program (TRP) and Regional Program applications.

Table C-9. NSMB WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

NSMB WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Explore land acquisition opportunities to the extent possible in the Plans, as proposed via the County Water Plan NBS Blue Ribbon Panel and Task Force recommendations, and Regional Open Space District (Measure A) leverage funding.
Confirm data or insights from the Los Angeles County PNA and its associated funding strategies into the NSMB WA Plan.
Communicate why nitrates are missing as a priority pollutant.
In future efforts, explore Los Angeles County Measure A as a potential leverage funding source for future planning rounds, particularly for parks, open space, and waterway projects.
Analyze impacts of sea level rise, open space, beach recreation and relationships to stormwater and urban runoff as project opportunities.
Make clear and accessible the pollutant load reduction targets, especially regarding their application to undeveloped areas and open space.
Promote the use of the CSNA Survey and Dashboard to guide project selection and community engagement throughout the Plan.
Provide WASCs guidance for the 20th Feasibility requirement to align with Plans.

C.2.4.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the NSMB WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period centered on:

- Fire resilience and Water Supply,
- Habitat and aquatic species protection,
- Restoration and connectivity,
- Funding and implementation support, and
- Environmental and Water Quality studies.

C.2.5 Rio Hondo Watershed Area

C.2.5.1 Phase 1

The Rio Hondo (RH) WASC placed an emphasis on supporting workforce development initiatives by creating training programs and collaborating with educational institutions. Expanding partnerships and funding opportunities, including engagement with new funding parties, and securing grants, are considered a priority for the WASC to maximize project impact. The WASC also shared a desire to focus on the downstream effects of projects and to ensure coordination with upstream initiatives to have effective SCW Program-wide stormwater management.

The discussion emphasized the need to synthesize and optimize WQ and WS efforts across the waterbodies in the RH WA, particularly focusing on Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) owned properties. For example, it was recommended that WP evaluate potential opportunity areas along the Eaton Wash.

WQ compliance was another key topic of interest for the WASC. Members were curious about the Program's distribution of projects, such as potential overconcentration of projects in one portion of the WA, with little to no projects in other areas.

C.2.5.2 Phase 2

The importance of recognizing the benefits of distributed projects and the need for open space in densely urban areas, particularly in disadvantaged communities, was highlighted. The inclusion of the PNA+ dataset was also mentioned to address regional inequities. Efforts to create new green spaces were recommended by the RH WASC, including undeveloped city-owned spaces like the Sierra Madre Boulevard

median in the City of Pasadena. The WASC also discussed incorporating relevant datasets, such as undeveloped public property data, into WP.

The WASC also shared that WQ data, both upstream and downstream of projects in the WA, is iterative and updated annually in their regional Watershed Management Plans. The WASC mentioned that the Program focuses on modeling rather than collected WQ data, which is useful initially but needs to include actual data over time.

Table C-10. RH WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

RH WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Evaluate which areas of the WA are not yet sufficiently managed for WQ and/or WS.
Identify LACFCD properties across the WA.
Track County Unincorporated Areas with potential project sites and provide an update to the RH WASC.
Incorporate understanding of upstream/downstream relationships to support integrated design and prioritization.
Evaluate other multi-benefit projects planned (i.e., school districts, green streets, flood channel rights of way, US Forest Service, Metro, Caltrans, Emerald Necklace).
Reiterate the importance of planning for the San Gabriel Valley (SGV) Greenway Network.
Identify candidate large land parcels managed by other governments or private landowners to support SCW Program goals.
Assess the engagement and CIB delivery by projects planned in other efforts.
Link O&M spending with workforce development.
Communicate a preferred per-applicant leveraged funding target.
Investigate how distributed projects can collectively achieve the right cost-benefit threshold.
Expand definitions of disadvantaged communities beyond economic characteristics.
Identify how CIBs can be felt, documented, and considered, beyond the exact project footprint.
Partner with other capital improvement programs so they provide SCW Program benefits.
Link with transportation efforts to improve urban greening and stormwater capture in relation to complete streets.
Requested a public workshop on Watershed Planning as not all cities are represented at the RH WASC, and there is a large portion of County Unincorporated Area in the RH WA.

C.2.5.3 Phase 3

The RH WASC sought clarity on how frequently data in the Planning Tool would be updated. The RH WASC emphasized the importance of using real WQ data over modeled data for municipal validation. The Planning Tool was further detailed,

distinguishing between funded and completed projects. Watershed Planning staff shared that completed projects are required to report on post-construction monitoring for three years, and reported benefits will be reflected in the Planning Tool as they become available.

The WASC also explored broader planning elements, including workforce development, referencing the *Accelerate Resilience Los Angeles* report[6] to highlight the value of a strong green workforce in multi-benefit project design. The Watershed Planning team discussed the use of both top-down and bottom-up[7] methods to set acreage goals and acknowledged the desire of the WASC to incorporate recent changes in the California Toxics Rule. Subwatershed-scale planning was also considered by the WASC, though concerns about cost and feasibility were noted by Watershed Planning staff. The CSNA Survey and Dashboard were highlighted as key tools for aligning projects with community needs, with the WASC expressing interest in revisiting CSNA findings post-SIP approval for Fiscal Year (FY) 25-26. The CSNA Survey and Dashboard is supported by a promotional toolkit and are accessible via the SCW Program, and the Survey is available on some municipal websites.

C.2.5.4 Phase 4

The RH WASC discussed preparations for the next Call for Projects, which closes July 31, 2026, emphasizing that future submissions must align with Plans under the proposed 20th FSG requirement. Members expressed appreciation for the Planning Tool, noting these resources will help proponents adjust projects to meet SCW Program goals and WA priorities. The WASC anticipates that the Planning Tool will guide SIP deliberations across Infrastructure Projects, Scientific Studies, and Technical Resource Program applications.

Watershed Planning staff confirmed that the Planning Tool includes opportunity layers that identify areas suitable for multi-benefit projects, which will be updated as new projects are adopted. The WASC highlighted the value of evaluating project benefits and alignment to inform budgeting decisions when funding is limited. While projects offering significant benefits may still lack alignment, the WASC acknowledged that alignment will influence funding decisions. Watershed Planning staff shared that projects which applied for funding by the July 2025 Call for Projects deadline were not required to demonstrate alignment with the Plans since they were not available yet.

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[6] The Collaborative Advantage: Principles for the Next Generation of Multi-Benefit Projects in Los Angeles County
[7] Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters

Future applicants will be required to demonstrate alignment; additional guidance will be available before the next Call for Projects to ensure compliance with this new requirement.

Table C-11. RH WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

RH WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Continue demonstrations and training on Watershed Planning Tools, including the CSNA Survey and Dashboard.
Clarify what baseline data is in each iteration of the Plan.
Consider adding a strategy for the RH WASC to recommend project developers to report progress desired for three years after project implementation and encourage submission of post-project performance data.
Integrate aspirational green workforce development goals into the RH Initial Plan, referencing the Accelerate Resilience Los Angeles' The Collaborative Advantage: Principles for the Next Generation of Multi-Benefit Projects in Los Angeles County Report. Add the report as a reference for strategies regarding workforce development for the RH WASC.
Express some goals as percentages for improved clarity.
Consider cost and feasibility concerns when doing subwatershed-scale analyses for Adaptive Plans.
Make clear the strategies, such as interim targets, partial funding, and multi-benefit project identification for the RH WASC Initial Plans.
Focus support for Watershed Coordinators to engage municipalities that have extensive opportunities or that have not previously submitted projects.
Incorporate recent changes from the California Toxics Rule into the effort and connect with the RH WASC Watershed Coordinators.

C.2.5.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the RH Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period centered on:

- Integration of municipal Plans and priorities,
- Technical accuracy and map corrections,
- Clarity, readability, and visual improvements,
- Data consistency and internal alignment, and
- Engagement, equity, and strategy clarifications.

C.2.6 Santa Clara River Watershed Area

C.2.6.1 Phase 1

The Santa Clara River (SCR) WASC suggested strategies focused on enhancing stormwater infiltration and optimizing existing green spaces. The WASC indicated that Projects aimed at improving stormwater capture and integrating NBS into park development (i.e., invasive plant removal, school greening) are preferable. The WASC, strengthening community engagement through educational outreach and environmental stewardship programs, will further support these efforts.

C.2.6.2 Phase 2

The SCR WASC highlighted the importance of addressing local issues within watersheds separately rather than clumping them together, which allows for tailored solutions that contribute to SCW Program-wide benefits. Committee Members also advocated for incorporating more recharge areas and wildlife corridors, noting that the SCR serves as a crucial “wildlife freeway” and should center Projects that keep wildlife in mind, including in areas like the Saugus outflow. The WASC expressed interest in evaluating green spaces and undeveloped open spaces as potential Project locations as they can be developed into new parks and other similarly zoned and used areas, like recreational fields.

Table C-12. SCR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

SCR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Evaluate existing green space for ability to support WQ improvements through capture and infiltration.
Prioritize groundwater recharge through natural systems (i.e., NBS).
Identify areas in or near soft-bottom rivers with invasive species.
Identify river-adjacent locations for community improvement projects.
Emphasize in the Plans that the SCR WA is a wildlife corridor.
Incorporate wildlife safety and passage as a priority.
Analyze school district properties and any related school district priorities for their relationship to SCW Program goals. Align with school district goals for greening and water management.
Evaluate what SCW Program goals can be achieved in the rural upper watershed.
The Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency is analyzing parcel ownership to identify potential recharge, recycled water, and green space projects along the SCR, and seeks alignment of NBS and open space acquisition in the SCR WA Plans.

SCR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Evaluate how WQ compliance pathways proposed by permittees can produce SCW Program outcomes.
Incorporate a natural stream condition indicator as part of target setting for WQ, WS, or CIBs.
Emphasis on the need to use natural stream indicators (i.e., Stream Quality Index (SQI)) to monitor and improve stream conditions.
Prioritize meaningful engagement and educational efforts with local schools, which could be supported by Watershed Coordinators or with an engagement grant application.
Slow the river to benefit habitat, recharge, and hydromodification.
Document environmental injustices to encourage projects to support equity.
Evaluate other capital programs in the region and their project priorities.
Analyze progress towards WQ attainment to prioritize future investments.
Evaluate large lot parcels managed by government or private.
Analyze tree canopy to document urban heat island impacts.
Consider how municipal tree canopy planning can express opportunities for SCW Program contributions.

C.2.6.3 Phase 3

The SCR WASC discussed the Watershed Planning Framework, recognizing its complexity and value while emphasizing the need for timely updates and accessible tools. The WASC expressed their appreciation for the effort completed on the draft Plans and prioritization of the acceleration of groundwater recharge projects in the WA. Concerns were raised about the accessibility of infographics, prompting a call for improved data visualization in public meeting slides and on the SCW Program's web tools. In response, the Watershed Planning staff committed to improving usability through upcoming information sessions.

The WASC also highlighted the potential importance of the CSNA Dashboard during and after SIP deliberations. The broader Watershed Planning team conducted a demonstration of the CSNA Survey and shared that social media kits for promoting the survey are available online. The CSNA Dashboard is expected to evolve over time, with Watershed Coordinators incorporating related periodic summaries into their Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plans (SOEPs). The WASC found the survey particularly well-suited for their rural and County Unincorporated Area communities, reinforcing its value as a tool for inclusive and informed project planning.

C.2.6.4 Phase 4

The Facilitator asked members to consider how these Plans will guide deliberations next year. The SCR WASC expressed interest in focusing on pollution reduction, school greening, and multi-benefit projects, while stressing equity by ensuring benefits extend beyond affluent areas. Members noted that although one project is on hold, it still meets the WA's required Disadvantaged Community benefit ratio. They also encouraged proponents to consider greening Newhall School, which serves or is adjacent to a disadvantaged community. The WASC highlighted the importance of using WASC-specific examples in presentations and expressed enthusiasm for updates to the Draft Initial Watershed Plan and Planning Tool. These enhancements will help visualize how projects influence metrics and targets tied to regional climate goals, supporting more informed and strategic decision-making during future deliberations.

The WASC expressed support for implementing smaller scale projects and noted the availability of leverage funding to advance these efforts. The Watershed Coordinator highlighted regional initiatives such as the County Water Plan NBS Blue Ribbon Panel and the Schools and Stormwater Working Group, which address school-related projects. Members voiced concern that many schools do not apply to the SCW Program and suggested outreach to identify barriers to participation. They also emphasized the importance of school tours, community engagement grants, and promoting schools as hubs for broader community involvement. Key priorities reiterated included incorporating invasive species removal, particularly in areas like Acton and Agua Dulce, and improving analysis and communication on groundwater recharge contributions.

The WASC discussed the need for projects that address climate change and extreme weather impacts, such as drought, flooding, heat, wildfire, and wind, while acknowledging challenges in translating high-level Plans like the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act compliance goals and Urban Water Management Plan targets into actionable local strategies. Members expressed growing interest in open space acquisition, especially high-value parcels, and encouraged applicants to integrate this into proposals. The WASC suggested including coordination with riverfront landowners and conducting invasive species management (e.g., Arundo removal). The WASC noted that some project ideas are still in early development and can be updated to more effectively incorporate the WASCs priorities.

Table C-13. SCR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

SCR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Prioritize and expedite groundwater recharge projects within the SCR WA.
The CSNA Survey has an opportunity for outreach and engagement improvement and can be particularly useful for engaging rural and County Unincorporated Areas in the WA.
Improve analysis and communication of how projects contribute to groundwater recharge in the SCR WA (whose basins are often at capacity).
Highlight the role of schools in broader community engagement.
Visualize project impacts on metrics and targets related to regional climate goals within the Planning Tool .
Clarify school greening targets and strategy applicability based on public comments and the local conditions for school districts in this watershed.
Confirm updates on potential public demonstrations of Watershed Planning Tools and include user experience comments in public review periods.
Enhance the accessibility and quality of infographics.
Translate high-level plans (Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan/SGMA, Urban Water Management Plans/UWMPs) into actionable local strategies.
Incorporate SCR WASC feedback throughout engagement and public review period.
Refine projects funded to date over time in the Planning Tools.
Integrate observational data and visual assessment of projects into Adaptive Plans.

C.2.6.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the SCR WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period centered on:

- Clarifying school greening targets and strategy applicability
- Improving rural community engagement
- Expanding equity and diversifying the SCW Program benefits present in the SCR WA.

C.2.7 South Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area

C.2.7.1 Phase 1

The SSMB WASC shared interests in prioritizing greening projects that improve public health, reduce urban heat island effect, and remove hardscape, particularly in communities that face environmental injustices. The WASC also called for improving communication and outreach and other tools to strengthen community involvement, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Prioritizing environmental justice, increasing local job opportunities, and expanding scientific research partnerships were also named as important strategies that would contribute to the attainment of SCW Program Goals.

C.2.7.2 Phase 2

The WASC drew attention to the relationship with improving public health across several of the elements of WP, particularly aligning with existing tree canopy planning and targets to mitigate urban heat. Additionally, the WASC reinforced the need for planning to incorporate stormwater capture and use in the absence of significant opportunities to infiltrate into the groundwater. The WASC expressed concern about the LA County Department of Public Health's regulatory action becoming a barrier to stormwater capture and reuse for irrigation, which may require the water to be treated to drinking water standards. The WASC hoped that engagement around this topic would continue between regulators, municipalities, and advocates.

Table C-14. SSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

SSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Document environmental injustices to encourage projects to support equity.
Evaluate other capital programs in the region and their project priorities.
Analyze progress towards WQ attainment to prioritize future investments.
Evaluate large lot parcels managed by government or private entities.
Analyze tree canopy to document urban heat island impacts. Consider how municipal tree canopy targets can be used to establish SCW Program contribution targets.
Develop a granular focus on specific needs for communities facing environmental injustices.
Geographically differentiate between stormwater infiltration, reuse, and diversion to wastewater treatment plants for the water supply Indicator.
Understand the relationship between regulatory public health actions and their nexus with stormwater capture for reuse.

SSMB WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Develop a goal for projects to foster partnerships and leveraged funding.
Engage more community groups throughout all phases of the application process through all phases of project development.
Interest in the connections between air quality, transportation, WQ, and public health, which could be explored scientifically.
Continue work by municipalities and advocates with public health and WQ regulators to establish how stormwater capture for use as irrigation can be made feasible.

C.2.7.3 Phase 3

The SSMB WASC focused on the link between the SCW Program WQ target and the regulated TMDL compliance by 2038, which was a focus created by the work of the WQ ROC Working Group, described below.

The WASC discussed funding strategies, noting that some WASCs are trying to require matching contributions from all project applicants.

Suggestions were made to incorporate data from non-SCW Program-funded projects into WP, including spreading grounds data, to support the region's stormwater capture goals. The WASC emphasized the CSNA Survey and Dashboard as foundational tools for community engagement.

C.2.7.4 Phase 4

The WASC emphasized that Draft Plans should provide a strategic framework for applicants and help clarify project necessity. Members asked if applications would reference specific targets, and Watershed Planning staff confirmed that future applications must demonstrate alignment with the Plans. Watershed Planning staff shared that the forthcoming integration of the SIP and Planning Tool will allow scenario-building to assess how projects advance Watershed Planning goals. The Facilitator noted that while some past projects may have been compliance-driven, WP will guide the prioritization of projects that have multi-benefits and enhance the delivery of multiple of the SCW Program's Goals, which will require more scrutiny by WASC members when deliberating on project advancement. The WASC agreed to encourage stronger alignment with SCW Program priorities and strategies.

The discussion also covered the CSNA, which will inform future outreach Plans and recommendations for engaging specific communities. Members reflected on their role in proactively signaling priorities to applicants and using the Draft Plans to guide

evaluations. Watershed Planning staff shared that constructed and anticipated benefits will appear in the Planning Tool which is based on data input by applicants. Finally, the WASC asked about data updates; staff confirmed that progress toward targets and opportunity areas will be updated annually.

Table C-15. SSMB WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

SSMB WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Incorporate SSMB WASC feedback throughout engagement and feedback received during the public review period for the Draft Initial Watershed Plans.
Refine projects funded to date over time in the Planning Tool.
Integrate observational data and visual assessment of projects into Adaptive Plans.
Incorporate data from spreading grounds into stormwater capture targets.
Clarify definitions and naming conventions for planning indicators, themes, and other technical terms in Planning Tool.
Track constructed and anticipated benefits in the reporting module.
Some SCW Program Goals are qualitative and may be underrepresented in applications.
Encourage municipalities and Watershed Management Groups to use and share the CSNA Survey and Dashboard.
Plan for inter-agency engagement to validate baseline data sources.

C.2.7.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the SSMB WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period centered on:

- Enhanced data transparency,
- Increased focus on community engagement,
- Importance of multi-benefit and distributed projects,
- Refinement of benefit and metric definitions, and
- Promoting collaboration and accountability.

C.2.8 Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Area

C.2.8.1 Phase 1

The Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) WASC identified WS, workforce development, and improved public health as priorities. Other elements of the discussion considered equity and WQ improvements. The WASC underlined the need for future projects to have stronger partnerships and leveraged funding, and that O&M of projects remains an uncertain challenge over the long term. The WASC also discussed focusing on building resilience to climate change impacts and acknowledging the SCW Program's potential to address these issues.

C.2.8.2 Phase 2

The WASC inquired about opportunities for project development in densely populated, low-income areas and expressed interest in exploring opportunities for Tribal engagement. The WASC encouraged that open space assessment should include both public and private open spaces. The WASC requested the inclusion of soil hydrology and flood risks in Watershed Planning opportunities.

Table C-16. ULAR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

ULAR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Link MS4 compliance, groundwater recharge, and water reclamation planning to maximize stormwater capture for WQ and WS.
Align with the aggressive goals of the MS4 permitting process.
Prioritize severely disadvantaged communities and distribute projects among them to overcome historical environmental injustices.
Include Los Angeles County Community Forest Management Plan information on heat island effect, disadvantaged communities, and County Unincorporated Areas.
Document which portions of the WA are already managed for WQ or WS by projects inside or outside the SCW Program.
Include soil hydrology and flood risks in opportunity areas.
Evaluate and prioritize greening efforts in projects (i.e., encompassing existing public and private green space, tree canopy).
Differentiate infiltration, reuse, diversion for WS Indicators.
Create prioritized targets for hardscape redevelopment and removal, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
Develop partnership targets that include multi-agency, public-private partnerships, labor, and community.

ULAR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Align project benefits and workforce Indicators in the WA.
Coordinate with wastewater treatment programs.
Demonstrate new technologies (current and proposed).
Prioritize public health, cooling, and climate resilience.
Opportunities in the WA for Tribal consultation and engagement.
The County and City of Los Angeles have resilience and climate response targets that can be adopted and/or mirrored (i.e., City of Los Angeles Climate Emergency Mobilization Office and Office of Forest Management).

C.2.8.3 Phase 3

The WASC discussed outreach strategies during this session with the Watershed Planning team. One main point of outreach was to school students; the WASC asked whether high school students attending events with parents should be encouraged to participate in the CSNA. The Watershed Planning team responded affirmatively, encouraging youth to participate in providing their knowledge and desires to the SCW Program community database. Later, the WASC emphasized WS and storage capacity as a key metric in their watershed area and wanted Plans to address underinvestment in unincorporated areas of ULAR.

C.2.8.4 Phase 4

A WASC member and a member of the public raised concerns about the lack of biodiversity considerations in the Plans. SCW Watershed Planning staff responded that major comments are being reviewed, and some will be addressed before early 2026. They also noted that the Plans are specific to the SCW Program and do not replace other regional Plans like Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMPs) or WMPs.

The discussion also focused on how future project applications should align with the Plans. Members expressed a desire for applicants in Round 8 (FY26–27) to address climate change, include innovative green infrastructure, and clearly reference how their projects reflect Initial Watershed Plan strategies.

Finally, Members discussed funding limitations and the need for strategic project selection. With limited resources, the WASC emphasized that they cannot fund all projects and Project Modification Requests. Suggestions from other WASC members included phasing projects over multiple years to improve funding opportunities and prioritizing holistic, innovative, and climate-forward projects.

Table C-17. ULAR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

ULAR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Consider adding a layer to the Planning Tool to show construction progress and compare projected vs. actual outcomes.
Use the Planning Tool to identify high-need areas and align with other agency studies (i.e., Los Angeles County PNA).
Encourage youth to participate in the CSNA Survey.
Explore ways to incorporate ULAR WASC-specific public comments into the Planning Tool and consider major community concerns, such as biodiversity and wildlife corridors, in Initial Watershed Plan updates by early 2026.
Clarify in the Plans that all projects must still go through scoring, even if scoring analysis is not integrated into the Planning Tool.
Emphasize storage capacity as a key metric, while continuing to track pollutant reduction (i.e., zinc) to make the metric clearer to diverse audiences.
Address underinvestment (including in County Unincorporated Areas) to improve project readiness Encourage future project applicants (especially in Round 8, FY26–27) to align proposals with Plans, reference IWP strategies (this was later addressed via the 20th requirement in the Feasibility Study Guidelines); applicants should prioritize climate resilience, green infrastructure, and multi-benefit water supply solutions.
Invite municipalities to an information session before the public review period begins. Allocate time in future WASC agendas for a thorough project review using the Planning Tool.
Support strategic funding decisions to meet SCW Program Goals.

C.2.8.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the ULAR WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period centered on:

- Amplifying multi-benefit opportunities,
- Water Supply projects,
- Prioritizing nature-based solutions, greening, and resilience,
- Improving public and tribal engagement processes, and
- Preserving and restoring existing natural habitats.

Several WASC members emphasized the importance of publicly sharing the comments received during the public review period for the Draft Initial Watershed Plans. WASC members also noted that flood prevention, park improvements, and green space benefits, which are key priorities for the WASC, should be emphasized in future planning.

C.2.9 Upper San Gabriel River Watershed Area

C.2.9.1 Phase 1

Upper San Gabriel River (USGR) WASC provided feedback that centered on community greening as both a WQ strategy and a public health strategy. The WASC shared that there may be potential opportunities to develop these types of projects at schools and along the flood control channel rights-of-way. The SGV Greenway Network Plan[8] was mentioned as published in Fall 2024, which will provide important project concepts and information. The WASC also expressed interest in a series of application priorities, including a more diverse pool of applicants, more leveraged funding and multi-benefit solutions, as well as a commitment to anti-displacement. Finally, the WASC expressed that all urban stormwater runoff is currently managed as a Water Supply source in the headwaters of their watershed, meaning that new projects are unlikely to produce additional water supply.

C.2.9.2 Phase 2

Municipal Climate Action Plans were recommended for review, noting that some cities in the WA may have Plans that incorporate green infrastructure goals or targets. The WASC discussed the need to reassess the capacity of aging stormwater capture projects to perform effectively now and in future climate change scenarios, which would inform replacement, and operations and maintenance strategies to enhance asset management.

The assessment of large public parcels as opportunity areas received positive feedback. There was caution shared about brownfields, emphasizing that the brownfield remediation strategy of containing subsurface contaminants rather than cleaning them up may preclude infiltration strategies. Land acquisition combined with infiltration was highlighted as a strategy to expand green space and achieve SCW Program goals, particularly in park-poor communities.

The discussion also focused on improved public health outcomes, especially in areas near freeways, suggesting that these areas could be called out as opportunities for the Program. It was recommended to revisit and make public health considerations more visible in the Plans.

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[8] San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network Strategic Implementation Plan

Biodiversity and habitat goals were also discussed, emphasizing the importance of habitat connections and linking projects. This relates to defining the scale of projects and ensuring they are interconnected, which the WASC thought should be explicitly mentioned in the Plans.

Table C-18. USGR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2 of Engagement

USGR WASC Input from Phases 1 & 2
Evaluate school sites and flood control channel rights-of-way as high-priority opportunity areas.
Evaluate the potential for distributed BMPs that collectively achieve cost-effectiveness thresholds of the SCW Program.
Evaluate transportation-related planning and implementation efforts for green streets.
Revisit and make public health considerations more visible in the synthesis.
Document best opportunities for diversion to sanitary sewer for WS.
Integrate an analysis of where infrastructure needs to be upgraded.
Identify MS4 outfalls as high opportunity sites for projects.
Align with targets from SGV Greenway Network Plan.
Recognize that all stormwater runoff from urban surfaces is already managed for WS.
Evaluate how well-operated and maintained projects support balancing benefits with long-term costs.
Municipal Climate Action Plans could be a source for target alignment.
Coordinate with EPA to clean up brownfields and create infiltration and capture opportunities while expanding/adding open space to the WA.
Support and collaborate with school districts to plan and implement multi-benefit projects while engaging students, teachers, and parents.

C.2.9.3 Phase 3

The WASC affirmed commitment to NBS and an eagerness to see how the County Water Plan NBS Blue Ribbon Panel will impact the SCW Program and the Plans. Some WASC members noted that the Watershed Planning presentation was complex and recommended simplifying it to improve engagement and understanding.

Concerns were raised about how legacy contaminants are prioritized over emerging contaminants in WQ targets. Suggestions included incorporating biological species monitoring, such as bioaccumulation of methylmercury, benthic macroinvertebrates, and soil monitoring. Community science testing was proposed as a potential approach using the Watershed Planning Tools.

C.2.9.4 Phase 4

The USGR WASC stressed the need for project proponents to demonstrate alignment with Initial Watershed Plan strategies and goals early in the process, encouraging formalized meetings with Watershed Coordinators to refine project proposals. Members noted that many Projects lack clarity on which constituents and problems they address and suggested that the Plans and Planning Tool could prompt more targeted conversations. The WASC affirmed readiness to reject applications that fail to meet expectations, emphasizing that the Plans should help applicants create stronger, more transparent projects that clearly articulate benefits.

Funding concerns were also discussed, with members underscoring the importance of leveraging funding and having accurate cost estimates, particularly for applicants requesting larger SCW Program funding amounts that are not pursuing other funding sources. The WASC called for applicants to show efforts to secure leveraged funding and to provide proper justification for the request SCW Program funding by detailing the specific benefits proposed projects will provide. Future opportunities related to California Climate Bond funding were discussed as an opportunity, with an emphasis on how Plans could support broader project planning beyond the SCW Program, particularly in Disadvantaged Communities, where leveraging funds is essential.

The WASC flagged challenges faced by municipalities like San Dimas, which struggle to qualify for disadvantaged community set-aides and matching funds, as critical issues to share with the Schools and Stormwater Working Group. Members identified resources, such as the California Climate Bond and SCW Municipal Program, as key leverage opportunities for advancing multi-benefit projects.

Table C-19. USGR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4 of Engagement

USGR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Incorporate feedback on legacy versus emerging contaminants and explore biological and soil monitoring.
Consider community science testing as part of future monitoring strategies.
Create resources to help Watershed Coordinators support project proponents in articulating how their projects align with Initial Watershed Plan strategies and goals, including example language and templates.
Promote the use of Watershed Planning Tools for integrated cross-program project planning.
Optimize data accessibility to support planning decisions.
Encourage or require project proponents to meet with Watershed Coordinators early in the planning process to refine proposals and ensure alignment with Initial Watershed Plan objectives.

USGR WASC Input from Phases 3 & 4
Develop technical assistance materials or workshops to help applicants understand the importance of securing leverage funding and preparing detailed, realistic cost estimates, especially for projects with regional impact or repeat funding requests.

C.2.9.4.1 Public Comment Review

High-level public comment topics on the USGR WA Initial Watershed Plan from the 45-day public review period centered on:

- Water Quality and Water Supply and
- Nature-based Solutions.

C.3 Program-Wide Input from Watershed Area Steering Committee Engagement

C.3.1 Phase 1

The WASC members focused on the uniqueness of each WA and the individual communities and landscapes represented. However, some common ideas were shared by multiple WASCs during Phase 1 engagements as shown in Table C-20.

Table C-20. Region-Wide Input from Phase 1 WASC Engagement

Region-Wide Input from Phase 1 WASC Engagement
Link MS4 compliance, groundwater recharge, and water reclamation planning to maximize stormwater capture for WQ and WS.
Evaluate open space and large lot potential, particularly on school campuses.
Incorporate historic land use disparities and environmental justice metrics across the Program area.
Acknowledge and include, where feasible, other capital improvement programs that can contribute regional outcomes.
Synergize SCW Program targets with other agencies' climate and water targets.
Link O&M spending with workforce development targets.
Define project scale and then evaluate the diversity of project sizes to date, informed by WA characteristics.

C.3.2 Phase 2

The Phase 1 SCW Program-wide synthesis was shared with each WASC to generate discussion. WASCs were asked to consider how the elements of the Plans may be of use to the WA, Project Developers, community members, WASCs, and other interested parties. Across the nine WAs, these discussions produced commonalities (Table C-21) for how the WASCs are considering next steps for the Plans and for the SCW Program more broadly.

Table C-21. Region-Wide Input from Phase 2 WASC Engagement

Region-Wide Input from Phase 2 WASC Engagement
Emphasis on the importance of engaging with local communities, particularly Tribal, underserved, and disadvantaged communities.
Interest in using tools like heat maps and dashboards to visualize data and project impacts.
Ensuring equitable distribution of resources and benefits, particularly for disadvantaged communities.
Prioritizing projects that align with WASC specific goals and needs, such as flood protection, WQ, and open space.
Need for collaboration with various interested parties, including municipalities, community-based organizations, and other agencies.
Interest in learning about the uniqueness of other WASCs and participating in more knowledge-sharing meetings and exercises.

C.3.3 Phase 3

Engagement with WASCs focused on providing high-level feedback about the Plans and Planning Tool, emphasizing how they can be better understood and effectively used by both community members and project proponents (Table C-22).

Table C-22. Region-Wide Input from Phase 3 WASC Engagement

Region-Wide Input from Phase 3 WASC Engagement
Desire for accessible presentations, reading materials, and web tools that use colors, fonts, images, and sizes that are easy to read and understand by anyone.
WASCs with significant undeveloped open space want to prioritize the recommendations from the County Water Plan NBS Task Force (when made available).
More goals and metrics regarding CIBs, especially for disadvantaged communities.
Ensure existing SCW Program Scientific Studies are represented in the Plans.
Enthusiasm for the CSNA Survey and Dashboard.
Desire to see the Plans prior to the public review period.

C.3.4 Phase 4

Watershed Planning staff provided a high-level summary of public comment topics on the Draft Plans received during the public comment period, which included the following:

- Editorial and technical revisions for clarity and consistency,
- Project funding and prioritization,
- Equity and Community Benefits,

- Metrics and reporting,
- Nature-based solutions, greening, and climate resilience,
- Process improvements, and
- Education and outreach.

C.4 Governance Committees: Regional Oversight Committee and Scoring Committee

C.4.1 Regional Oversight Committee

The Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) is comprised of nine voting members and two non-voting members who are subject-matter experts in the areas of WQ benefits, WS benefits, NBS and CIBs, public health, sustainability, and/or other fields related to stormwater capture or the reduction of stormwater or urban runoff pollution.

The ROC made an instrumental recommendation in the *2024 Regional Oversight Committee Biennial Safe, Clean Water Program Progress Report*[9] that, in part, led to WP. The Watershed Planning team created an engagement plan for engaging with the ROC which included four Phases, as follows:

- Phase 1: Review of the broader approach of WP at the Program-wide scale.
- Phase 2: WP progress check-in and address ROC questions about the initiative.
- Phase 3: Summarized WP progress to date, including the Draft Initial Watershed Plan outline and introduction to the Planning Tool.
- Phase 4: Reviewed Draft Initial Watershed Plan elements, including watershed characteristics, baselines, targets, strategies, actions, and opportunities.

[9] 20240201-SCWP-Final-ROC-Biennial-Report.pdf

The Scoring Committee[10] and Regional Oversight Committee[11] have guidance documents describing expectations for serving as Committee Members[12].

C.4.1.1 Phase 1

This Phase had two objectives:

1. Introduction to WP and discussion on how input would be considered in the process.
2. Discussion on specific definitions to evaluate during WP.

To achieve these objectives, Watershed Planning staff presented on the Watershed Planning Framework, proposed planning tools, and the outline for the Plans. Details on the proposed interested party engagement process and how WP process aligned with items in the 2023 SCW Program Biennial Progress Report were also shared.

Also, a facilitated roundtable discussion focused on how the first steps of the process aligned with prior statements and efforts by the ROC.

Members of the ROC suggested the California Water Plan's recommendations as a useful resource for WP, emphasizing the importance of self-determined priorities, measurable milestones, resource identification, and collaboration. The ROC also highlighted the significance of co-benefits, such as climate resilience and equity.

The ROC discussed leveraging existing Plans, studies, and tools, like the SCW Program funded PreSIP and Gateway Area Pathfinding (GAP) Analysis Scientific Study. The ROC also discussed funding, specifically the differences between capital and O&M funding, and the potential use of bond financing for SCW Program projects. The ROC suggested collaboration with other County community engagement initiatives, such as Infrastructure LA and efforts led by the Chief Sustainability Office.

C.4.1.2 Phase 2

A presentation was shared to refresh the ROC on WP, which included a summary of the feedback received during the Phase 1 engagements with the WASCs, and an update on the progress of the technical analyses being conducted to support it.

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[10] See Scoring Committee Operating Guidelines
[11] See Regional Oversight Committee Operating Guidelines
[12] See Los Angeles County Flood Control District Code Ch 18.07 and Ch. 18.08 for Scoring and Regional Oversight Committee composition, responsibilities, and expectations respectively

The objectives of this phase of engagement with the ROC were to:

1. Share how the WASC Phase 1 engagement efforts were summarized and how they would influence Watershed Planning.
2. Introduce the Initial Watershed Plan draft outline and solicit feedback through a facilitated discussion.

Watershed Planning staff presented information on the Watershed Planning Framework, including the Plans outline, and an introduction to the Planning Tool in development, and was followed by discussions on:

- SCW Program goals,
- Current definitions/practice,
- Potential recommendations and considerations,
- SCW Program target-setting process,
- Other related efforts, and
- Next steps/tentative SCW Program Adaptive Management timeline.

During the public comment period of the ROC meeting, a representative from the City of Los Angeles encouraged the ROC to engage with WASC Chairs and the Scoring Committee to better support WP.

The ROC also discussed the importance of tracking progress toward WQ goals and the need for collaboration across various entities.

The ROC highlighted challenges in securing new WS and the need for infrastructure to move captured water to areas of need. The ROC also discussed water capture for environmental benefits and whether these should be classified under WS or CIBs.

The ROC expressed interest in reviewing summaries of CIBs realized through SCW Program-funded projects. Additionally, the importance of integrating workforce development and green jobs into WP was highlighted, with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District cited as a successful example.

C.4.1.3 Phase 3

Watershed Planning staff summarized the WP progress to date and communicated how the Plans will evolve and be adapted in the future.

The objectives of this phase of engagement with the ROC were to:

1. Introduce elements of the Plans and Planning Tool and go over the outputs from the two ROC Working Groups.
2. Share what the adaptive management of future Watershed Planning efforts may look like.
3. Discuss WP in relation to the Biennial Report.

The Watershed Planning team provided a presentation sharing elements of an early Draft Initial Watershed Plan, the Planning Tool in development, and launched CSNA Survey.

For the third objective, Watershed Planning staff presented an overview of current efforts. Staff noted that the Working Groups discussion topics were similar to the working groups formed for the development of the 2024 Biennial Progress Report.

Findings from the WQ and CIB and Benefit Ratio Working Group (CIB & BR Working Group) were shared and discussed.

The CIB & BR Working Group highlighted a focus on increasing open space, prioritizing the creation of new parks, and integrating fire resiliency into park enhancements, recreational opportunities, and school greening. Municipal representatives that are part of the working groups noted that they play a key role in project implementation, and they should be actively engaged to ensure progress and support. The CIB & BR Working Group’s recommendations were encouraged for use during SIP deliberations.

The ROC emphasized the importance of considering population density and broader programmatic strategies, like district-wide school greening, when evaluating community benefits. The ROC encouraged clearer articulation of CIBs in project applications and recommended early engagement with community-based organizations by project proponents. They also discussed redefining project benefits to include direct community input, such as through the CSNA Survey. The ROC highlighted the need for efficient use of SCW Program funds amid limited federal and municipal resources and proposed leveraging existing tools like WMPs and Plans.

The ROC had extensive discussion about the SCW Program’s role in relation to the MS4 permits held by the County and cities. The WQ Working Group produced a Policy Memo (Attachment 1) summarizing the group’s recommendations planning and regional strategy for WQ improvement.

The ROC passed a motion recommending inclusion of the Policy Memo in the 2025 Biennial Progress Report.

C.4.1.4 Phase 4

In September 2025, during the fourth meeting of the Regional Oversight Committee on WP, which was held amid the 45-day public comment period for the Draft Initial Watershed Plans, Watershed Planning staff shared the related high-level comment topics received.

The Watershed Planning team facilitated a discussion with the ROC and asked the following questions:

- What will you look for to determine where the Plans are having a positive influence on the SCW Program as intended?
- What are your expectations for project developers in the Municipal and Regional Programs regarding their alignment with this new Watershed Planning element of the SCW Program?
- What expectations do you have for WASCs as they evaluate proposed projects and studies in relation to the Plans?

The ROC expressed hope that the Plans would help guide the Municipal and Regional Programs toward better project coordination and encourage the inclusion of ecological and historical conditions in developing nature-based solutions. The ROC emphasized comprehensive planning that balances WQ, WS, and CIB in alignment with the Program's fourteen goals. Members cautioned against relying solely on CSNA Survey data for determining community needs. Recommendations included forming a working group with key County departments to improve collaboration across the region. Additionally, ROC members highlighted the importance of integrating planning tools and quantifying success metrics and encouraging their use by Municipalities and decision-makers.

Further discussion focused on leveraging funding, and the benefits of adding CIBs to potential projects, like greening features, to qualify for broader funding resources. ROC members supported adding ecological and environmental data to the Plans and tools, referencing resources like the County Parks Needs Assessment, and proposed partnerships with large Municipalities, community colleges, and agencies to expand opportunities. They also suggested documenting existing programs and funding sources, citing Infrastructure LA, and including collaboration requests in the Biennial Progress Report. Concerns about future funding and prioritizing SCW Program Goals were raised, with emphasis on helping WASCs and applicants effectively use the Plans and tools. Watershed Planning staff noted that a technical info session on the Draft Plans was held in August 2025.

C.4.2 Regional Oversight Committee Working Groups

Due to the January 2025 wildfires that devastated portions of Los Angeles County the ROC Working Groups, described in below sections, met to consider how the fires and the climate-driven risk of future fires more generally may influence WP and the SCW Program.

Below are summaries of the two Working Groups' meetings.

C.4.2.1 Water Quality Working Group

C.4.2.1.1 Phase 1

In October 2024, the WQ Working Group was refreshed on the WP approach previously shared, including presentations on WQ opportunity analysis and targets. Working Group members raised concerns about potential confusion if different WQ targets are established and tracked as part of WP instead of the MS4 permit's compliance targets and requirements, particularly if the Watershed Planning targets are met while the MS4 permit requirements are not.

It was highlighted that while good projects are being submitted, their cumulative WQ benefits are not being tracked in relation to regulatory WQ compliance. The need for future investments to prioritize regulated contaminants was emphasized. It was acknowledged that the SCW Program alone will not achieve regulatory WQ compliance but is a crucial catalyst. The Working Group emphasized the importance of leveraging funding from state and federal sources to enhance the quality of expenditures both within and outside of the SCW Program.

The Working Group emphasized that WA targets should incorporate relevant information from WMPs. The Working Group suggested that legacy organic pollutants (DDTs and PCBs) and trash be added as WQ targets, noting that trash reduction compliance is managed separately under the MS4 permit.

The WQ Working Group shared that integrating ongoing monitoring data with SCW Program efforts is crucial, and noted the importance of planning, modeling, and designing effective metrics. They also acknowledged that there is a gap in consistency and integration between SCW Program goals and the MS4 Permit, and avoiding duplicative or conflicting reporting by the MS4/WMP and SCW Programs is important.

Following the meeting, the ROC WQ Working Group Compendium[13], was shared with the Watershed Planning team by members of the Working Group and revised over the duration of the Working Group's engagements.

C.4.2.1.2 Phase 2

In November 2024, the Watershed Planning staff and team emphasized the importance of anchoring WQ targets to SCW Program Goal A in the Los Angeles County Flood Control District Municipal Code to "contribute to" attainment rather than setting targets that suggest the SCW Program is solely responsible for attainment[14]. With this approach, the WQ targets can mimic the WS targets and establish a SCW Program contribution to the Countywide targets while also estimating the additional reductions that would be needed by other programs to achieve the Countywide targets.

The Working Group recommended shifting the focus from "compliance" to "attainment" and emphasized that project reporting should be performance-based to better reflect progress toward SCW Program Goals. The Plans intend to include the pollutants as reduction targets. On implementation, the Watershed Planning team explained that Plans will support informed decision-making by WASCs, offering opportunities and targets rather than specific projects and project locations. The Working Group expressed interest in stronger guidance for WASCs and suggested developing full Adaptive Plans and a Countywide Implementation Plan to clarify actions needed for WQ attainment. They also stressed the importance of consolidating the nine Plans into a Programmatic Executive Summary and identifying additional efforts beyond the SCW Program to present a comprehensive public vision of WQ needs. For project WQ assessment, the group advocated using both modeling and monitoring to assess the pollutant reduction impacts of projects. Existing WQ monitoring efforts were acknowledged, and the potential need for additional monitoring stations to support target evaluation was discussed.

C.4.2.1.3 Phase 3

In March 2025, the WQ Working Group reviewed the final policy Summary with the Watershed Planning team. The Working Group wrote a Policy Memo (Attachment 1) to represent their recommendation for WQ targets from the ROC WQ Working Group as

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[13] See Water Quality Working Group Compendium here
[14] See Los Angeles County Flood Control District Municipal Code Ch. 18.04

part of WP. WQ targets provide an opportunity for Countywide assessment of SCW Program efficiency.

The WQ Working Group stressed the importance of including SCW Program-funded and other relevant projects data since 2000 into the Planning Tool. They also advocated spatial prioritization of projects, inclusion of project-specific maintenance costs, and consideration of wildfire resilience. The group emphasized the need for a phased approach to implementation, stronger alignment with the LA County Water Plan, and analysis of potential larger high impact projects.

C.4.2.2 Community Investment Benefits and Benefit Ratio Working Group

C.4.2.2.1 Phase 1

The Community Investment Benefits and Benefit Ratio (CIB & BR) Working Group discussed how tracking CIBs in WP could influence project scoring, raising questions about whether all metrics are weighted equally and how scoring currently relates to addressing park needs. They emphasized that Urban Heat Island Reduction requires tree planting, which may affect project eligibility, and noted that WASCs may use quantitative data as a resource rather than a direct scoring influence. The group highlighted the importance of distinguishing targets for new green space from those for enhanced park space, especially given the region's needs. Greening at schools was also discussed, with a recommendation to include public, private, and youth-based educational programs as opportunities. The group emphasized that vegetation and greening can sequester carbon and should be prioritized along common school walking routes. Greenhouse gas emissions reduction was suggested as a potential CIB, and the County's canopy cover targets—15% for Unincorporated Area residents and 20% overall—were cited as key equity goals under the Community Forest Management Plan. The group clarified that "accessible" CIBs should go beyond American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance to include physical access, appropriate languages access, public use, and enjoyment. They referenced existing plans, such as the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission's stream enhancement efforts and Pasadena's Climate Action Plan, which include mobility, greening, and water management targets. Recognizing the complexity of tracking meaningful CIB progress, the group reviewed a proposal to use distance buffers to identify beneficiaries, agreeing that benefit types and scales should have differentiated service areas (e.g., pocket parks vs. regional parks). They also noted challenges with distance

requirements and stressed the importance of community acknowledgment and documentation, such as community benefits agreements. The group emphasized the need for sustained involvement by active organizations, including CBOs and parks and recreation directors, and agreed that user input from the CSNA Survey and community benefits agreements is valuable but must be supplemented with project-specific engagement.

C.4.2.2.2 Phase 2

The CIB & BR Working Group elected to do some work separately over email about Watershed Planning performance measures and targets.

Other Plans the CIB & BR Working Group noted should be included in preliminary analysis included the following:

- Los Angeles County Parks Needs Assessment,
- Los Angeles County Parks Needs Assessment Plus,
- County Climate Ready Communities Initiative & Climate Heat Action Plan,
- SGV Greenway Network Plan, and
- Los Angeles & San Gabriel River Master Plans.

The Working Group emphasized the importance of aligning SCW Program targets with existing local plans, which, despite some having older data, still offer valuable insights. It was stressed that the SCW Program should reflect the unique needs of each WA and use available data, such as tree canopy coverage, park access, and heat impacts, to guide community-identified benefit targets. Targets should also consider population size and per capita cost, and, where applicable, align with existing plans to ensure consistency. The term “population served” was recommended to be replaced with “population benefited” for greater precision, and “community acknowledgement” should come from locally based organizations with at least three years of service to a particular community. Some members of the Working Group felt it was important that community acknowledgement could come from elected leaders acting as a body via a public meeting. There was a split in opinion regarding who should determine Disadvantaged Community Benefits: some supported the Scoring Committee for consistency, while others favored WASCs for their local knowledge, with a compromise allowing Scoring Committee review only in cases of concern. Additional comments highlighted the value of schools as unique public spaces in urban areas, suggesting that upstream drainage areas be considered part of their service area. Lastly, the complexity of tracking community benefits was acknowledged, with support

for using differentiated distance metrics based on benefit type and scale, and a call for stronger community engagement and documentation, such as benefits agreements and input from active local organizations.

The Working Group highlighted that the Climate Ready Communities effort described in previous engagements is underway and should be considered as a resource during future Watershed Planning efforts when and if made available.

C.4.2.2.3 Phase 3

In March 2025, The CIB & BR Working Group discussion focused on the role of CIBs, particularly considering the January 2025 wildfires, and the need for more inclusive, resilient planning. They also discussed the value of meaningful community engagement, noting that deep, ongoing involvement—rather than a single letter of support—should be prioritized in project scoring. The group encouraged leveraging Watershed Coordinators and CBOs to support smaller, locally impactful projects, especially in fire-affected areas where land acquisition and restoration could serve both WQ and community goals.

The conversation also addressed the need for clearer guidance for Project Developers, emphasizing a continuum from engagement to ownership and the importance of selecting partners with proven community track records. The Working Group highlighted the work of the Metrics & Monitoring Study (MMS) and the Infrastructure Justice for LA Coalition in breaking down engagement into measurable outputs and suggested integrating these insights into Watershed Planning. They also discussed the role of elected officials and municipal departments in community engagement, advocating for stronger cross-sector collaboration. Examples like the Rio Hondo partnership with the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG) were cited as models for integrated outreach. The Working Group proposed categorizing successful engagement examples by city size and project type and emphasized the need to elevate CIB through green infrastructure that supports wildfire resilience. The CIB & BR Working Group concluded by recommending that wildfire resilience be formally recognized as a CIB.

C.4.3 Scoring Committee

The Scoring Committee (SC) is made up of six members with specific expertise in areas related to WQ Benefits, WS Benefits, and CIBs. The SC is responsible for evaluating Regional Program Infrastructure Program project applications, using the Scoring Criteria of the SCW Program FSG. The SC uses the Scoring Criteria rubric and their expertise to confirm the number of points a project receives in the different benefit categories; all projects must meet the threshold score to be eligible for SCW Program funding consideration. Additionally, the SC produces an annual summary that describes specific areas of improvement for the SCW Program that is relevant to the SC's responsibilities.

C.4.3.1 Phase 1

The Watershed Planning team presented at a SC Meeting in August 2024. Phase 1 focused on definitions that are central to WP, including:

- Wet vs. Dry weather projects,
- Local Water Supply,
- Impermeable Area Removal, and
- Leveraged Funding.

The SC added an exploration about definitions related to Disadvantaged Community, WQ, and local WS benefits. In response to how projects should describe their intended WQ outcomes, members highlighted the challenge of classifying large watershed projects that do not neatly fit into the dry or wet weather categories of the Scoring Criteria. The SC emphasized the need for load-based scoring to better reflect pollutant removal, particularly for projects that treat flows with large amounts of sediment and suggested aligning project goals with TMDL requirements. The SC also discussed the importance of understanding how WQ benefits intersect with green space and recommended that the ROC explore these issues further through its working groups.

Regarding the quantification of local WS benefits, SC members called for a clearer definition of what constitutes "new" water and how downstream recharge should be accounted for, especially when political boundaries or adjudications complicate benefit attribution. The SC proposed developing a list of example projects to help clarify which types produce WS benefits. On the topic of impermeable surface removal, the SC debated the merits of using percentage versus total area removed, referencing reports from the Pacific Institute and OurWater LA. Finally, in discussing cost-benefit

calculations, members raised equity concerns about disadvantaged communities being penalized for lacking leveraged funding. They suggested that SCW Program funds should serve as anchor investments to attract additional state and federal resources, rather than requiring leveraged funds as a prerequisite for scoring points.

C.5 Other Interested Party Engagement

Interested party engagements focused on meeting with 'aggregators', for instance, with the League of California Cities (aggregator of municipalities), and OurWater LA (aggregators of NGOs and CBOs). This was an effort to listen to the broadest group of perspectives, while making the most of the time available in the process.

Table C-23. Other Interested Parties

Organization	Expertise
Los Angeles County MS4 Permit Group	Regional understanding of WQ, municipal project delivery, and permit compliance timelines
OurWater Los Angeles (OWLA)	Extensive presence in the program as an advocacy group with expertise in multi-benefit projects and engaged planning
Schools	Representatives from schools and community-based organizations that work with schools and how to increase school greening across the County, in alignment with NBS and other stormwater infrastructure
Rebuild Southern California Coalition	Workforce development, job pathways, regional economic growth
League of California Cities	Municipal planning, project delivery, financial capacity, and regional and local Plans and relationships
Watershed Coordinators	Consultants to the SCW Program that are non-voting WASC members, and experts of the communities represented in each of the nine WAs

C.5.1 Los Angeles County MS4 Permit Group

Key staff from municipalities and the County, and their consultants, meet routinely to discuss efforts related to fulfilling the MS4 permit conditions from the LA Regional Board. Watershed Planning staff were invited to attend the meeting and provided an overview presentation on WP. Members of the LA Permit Group shared that regional projects involve discussions with multiple cities, many of which are developed with

SCW Program Goals in mind and, consideration of multiple benefits such as WQ, WS, and CIB benefits.

The group was concerned that more WQ requirements from the SCW Program could conflict with the mandates of the permit and cause vital funding in the SCW Program to be diverted away from the compliance pathway that all are following.

The group acknowledged that the permit-driven Watershed Management Plans, originally developed in 2014 but iteratively updated since, were created to identify projects that contribute to Water Quality attainment and therefore compliance, and only secondarily (if at all) issues of Water Supply and community investment. The group further reflected on how central the Watershed Management Modeling System (WMMS) is to their process, which is itself not designed to pursue multi-benefit project identification, and how this leads to significant effort and cost associated with adapting a Water Quality compliance project to be a successful SCW Program project. The MS4 Permit Group would like Watershed Planning to help identify WS and CIB opportunities, as that will help overcome this stated challenge.

C.5.2 OurWater LA

The OurWater LA (OWLA) Coalition played a key role in supporting the passage of Measure W, which created the SCW Program. In advance of the meeting with Watershed Planning team, OWLA prioritized the SCW Program's goals B, C, D, G, J, F, and K. The nature of the facilitated meeting led to the bullet list below of key items that OWLA members shared with the Watershed Planning team as key items to prioritize:

- Community-wide benefits over individual ones, considering who is affected, such as those experiencing extreme heat for cooling benefits,
- Projects that align with community needs and scale, differentiating between direct and indirect impacts,
- Projects that provide benefits that are recognized by community members, driven by authentic engagement,
- Education as necessary to explain funding and changes. Achieving community-wide acknowledgment is difficult, but education programs can bridge gaps as well as working with local groups (Watershed Coordinators, CBOs, and WASCs),

- Greening serves broader benefits like carbon mitigation and heat reduction, while habitat focuses on creating spaces for species based on their ecological requirements,
- Existing County Initiatives with the County Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), including wage standards and training programs, should be explored,
- Indicators that include Project Labor Agreements, career pathway quality, local hire compliance, and low-barrier entry jobs,
- Public sector maintenance jobs are preferable to private sector roles,
- NBS should mimic or restore natural processes, using natural materials whenever possible. Engineering can be involved, especially in urban areas, without necessarily defaulting to gray infrastructure,
- The spectrum of "natural processes" may require human intervention, but mimicking nature should aim for self-sustainability. Guidance like the US Army Corps of Engineers' "Engineering with Nature" is helpful, and
- Clarification on whether artificial materials like astroturf are included under nature-mimicking definitions.

C.5.3 Schools & School Greening Leaders

The Schools & School Greening meeting attendees discussed aligning goals with the SCW Program, highlighting the LAUSD Greening Board Resolution's[15] valuable information for achieving greening goals, though more funding is needed. LAUSD aims for 30% green campuses but needs targets for stormwater management. Smaller districts are emerging as leaders in school greening and workforce development. Equity in resource distribution and sustainable funding are crucial. Attendees emphasized integrating greening into various projects and programs. Green Schoolyards America aligns with Los Angeles County's 30% tree canopy target for underserved communities and tracks policy language. Strategies for the next five years include phasing in greening Initiatives, aligning state-level targets, and enhancing coordination between agencies. Barriers include policy gaps, funding constraints, and site conditions, with a need for tailored standards and ADA compliance integration.

Meeting attendees shared that there are also project management barriers, noting that the schedule and sequencing of capital projects on campuses is crucial. The group shared that there are bungalow removal projects in the queue that often transform into

[15] Greening at LAUSD — A4GS

outdoor classrooms, which can be a great use of space but may require additional planning for ADA compliance and greening efforts.

While the group noted that LAUSD master Plans may not be up to date, they can still provide a framework for current and future projects. Attendees added that it will be important to cross-reference these Plans with current needs and regulations. The group also noted that increasing the technical capacity within a school district can help manage and execute these projects more efficiently, reducing costs and liabilities.

C.5.4 Rebuild Southern California Coalition

Watershed Planning staff provided a presentation on WP and shared the difference between the Public Works' Watershed Planning staff and the SCW Program Administration Team (SCW Program staff).

The discussion by the Rebuild Southern California Partnership (Partnership) focused on streamlining project delivery and promoting jobs and pathways. The organization was less focused on defining "green jobs" and cared about increasing "jobs."

A significant challenge identified by the Partnership was ensuring that projects are delivered in a reasonable timeframe. Concerns were raised by the Partnership about funds accumulating without projects being completed, with questions about the total amount collected under the SCW Program, the number of projects delivered, and the funds awaiting approval.

When asked about Disadvantaged Community Benefits, the Partnership noted the importance of considering the benefits of labor contracts for low-income communities and ensuring that investments are directed towards disadvantaged areas.

The Partnership also touched on the complexity of estimating job creation from NBS projects compared to traditional infrastructure projects. The Partnership emphasized the need for adaptive management and regular reviews of project progress. The Partnership shared that their goal is to expedite project delivery and hoped that the Plans will support project development and progress.

C.5.5 League of California Cities

The Watershed Planning team provided an overview presentation on the WP. Participants asked about the relationship between the SCW Program Plans and compliance with the MS4 permit. Some participants stressed the importance of not

linking Watershed Planning target too closely to MS4 compliance, as the SCW Program alone will not be sufficient to fully achieve compliance.

The attendees were then asked the following discussion question:

- How do you see these Plans, tools, and capacities helping you do your work?

The discussion centered on the CSNA Survey and included stories of community engagement and planning efforts that have led to projects that align with community preferences.

C.5.6 SCW Program Watershed Coordinators

C.5.6.1 Phase 1 - Fall 2024

The Watershed Coordinators reflected on the Watershed Planning workshops conducted at their WASC meetings. The Watershed Coordinators shared that input across all nine WASCs highlighted several themes, and synthesized the following items from their shared perspectives:

- For park amenities, there were calls for safer, walkable green streets, more games in parks, better lighting, cleaner restrooms, and improved park maintenance.
- In terms of schools as green hubs, suggestions included sensory playgrounds, green schools, and easier collaboration with LAUSD.
- Education on One Water emphasized community cleanup and keeping cats indoors to improve WQ.
- Addressing nuisance flooding and reducing trash as a visual Indicator of WQ Benefits is important.
- Safety in public spaces; suggestions for improved lighting, safe recreational spaces, and better access to nature.
- Calls for project completion and maintenance, especially in preparation for the 2028 Olympics, and concerns about drinking WQ and reducing heat.
- Sustainability efforts focused on anti-displacement strategies and green gentrification, while One Watershed Strategies included daylighting streams and removing invasive species.
- Opportunities for connection through jobs and economic opportunities, with the County DEO working on workforce development.

C.6 Conclusion

The engagement effort undertaken by the Watershed Planning team allowed members of the SCW Program governance committees and interested parties to share valuable experience and unique perspectives on the WASC and communities they represent. These contributions about the Program, specific topics, and geographies within the SCW Program inform the strategies, targets, and other elements of WP.

SCW Program is committed to continued engagement with interested parties as the Plans are implemented, as well as during future adaptive management of the Program.

Attachment 1.

Regional Oversight Committee Water Quality Working Group Policy Memo

Alternative Approach for Developing Water Quality Targets for Safe Clean Water Program Watershed Planning | March 28, 2025

Importance of Water Quality Targets

Specific, measurable targets that are clearly linked to Water Quality in receiving waters are necessary to focus municipalities' limited resources on priority Water Quality issues. Although SCWP does not provide adequate resources to meet Water Quality Standards attainment, it will serve as a catalyst to cleaner and safer water for people and aquatic life. There are a variety of sources that affect the quality of receiving waters, but WASCs do need to know how much progress SCW projects have made in attaining Water Quality standards in their watersheds. This assessment is critical in helping the WASC set Water Quality improvement priorities for projects. Specifically:

- Targets that are set with the goal of attaining Water Quality standards in receiving waters will help WASCs strategically prioritize projects during planning, as well as measure success after implementation. Focusing on Water Quality standards attainment will also help leverage resources from other funding sources.
- Targets that are developed and expressed spatially, with clear deadlines based on Water Quality regulations such as the MS4 Permit, will help the WASCs prioritize projects in critical areas that will have the most impact on Water Quality.
- Targets and Watershed Planning that consider the work of previous efforts, such as the LA County Water Plan, MS4 WMPs, and the City of Los Angeles' Watershed Investment Strategic Plans, will ensure project benefits are cumulatively assessed for more efficient disbursement of SCWP funding.

The following proposed Water Quality targets are intended to assess progress under the SCWP for Watershed Planning purposes and <u>are not</u> meant to determine

compliance with the MS4 Permit or as criteria to receive ongoing funding under the SCWP. The County would not be held accountable for not meeting the targets. Rather, the targets are a way to provide direction and a common goal to strive towards.

Proposed Alternative Water Quality Targets Approach

This proposal attempts to include parallel language to the existing Watershed Planning Process and Structure presented at the December 11, 2024, ROC meeting so that the proposal can be considered for incorporation into the existing framework.

Overarching Goal (Countywide Target) – Meet Water Quality standards in all receiving waters directly impacted by dry weather and stormwater runoff **by 2038**.

Objective 1 (Develop Watershed Area Interim Targets) – Attain interim load reduction targets in each of the nine Watershed Areas.

Achieve interim watershed-specific percent load reductions by 2032. Watershed-specific pollutants include zinc, *E. coli*, nitrogen, and PCBs/DDT. The advantage of the indicators is their simplicity and interim use; their purpose is not to demonstrate compliance with the MS4 Permit or attainment of final 2038 Countywide Target. It is merely an indicator to ensure that there is progress in the next few years towards reaching WQS attainment.

Action 1.1 – The County will establish Watershed Area load reduction targets based on estimates provided in MS4 Watershed Management Programs by end of 2025 (a 50% reduction can be assumed as default but should be adjusted for watershed-specific reduction needs). The method outlined in the October 7 Water Quality Workgroup presentation can be used, but at this point in time the targets will not be adjusted for SCWP contribution until data on efficacy by project type and costs are obtained.

Action 1.2 – The County, in coordination with the LA Water Board, will develop a method to directly measure attainment of interim load reduction targets that is based on modeled/estimated load reductions from projects as well as data from actual projects implemented.

Objective 2 (Priority Strategies) – Attain interim project-based performance targets in each of the nine Watershed Areas

Action 2.1 - Plans should be modified by June 2026 to include priority strategies based on their ability to meet interim load reduction targets (in Objective 1). The Opportunity Analysis should prioritize strategies by land-use and geographic area, using existing

WMPs and other relevant agency stormwater planning documents, when identifying opportunity areas to achieve load reductions.

Action 2.2 - The County's Watershed Area Planning Tool (Planning Map) should show where all SCWP-funded and other relevant projects have been or will be constructed (both regional and municipal funding) and present the pollutant load reductions designed to be achieved by these projects. Other relevant projects include all past constructed stormwater Quality projects completed by agencies and other parties (e.g., Proposition O, CBO/NGO projects completed before and outside of the SCWP) since 2000.

Action 2.3 - The LA Water Board will develop guidance for WASCs, based on existing WMPs and the County's summary from Action 2.2, on how to select priority strategies to achieve interim load reduction targets and final Water Quality standards.

Objective 3 - Countywide Assessment and Adaptive Management Implementation Plan

The County should develop a Countywide Adaptive Management Implementation Plan within 2-3 years. This Countywide plan is in addition to the proposed "Adaptive Watershed Plans" due in 2026 under the current framework. The Countywide plan should be designed to achieve the Countywide Target of meeting all Water Quality standards in receiving waters by 2038. The implementation plan will identify specific projects which align with the prioritized strategies to achieve this target, how progress will be assessed, and how progress will be reported back to the ROC.

Action 3.1 – Planning. The plan will include an initial assessment of existing data and quantitatively link the Watershed Area Targets (load reduction targets) and Priority Strategies (project-based targets) to the Countywide Target (all receiving Water Quality standards by 2038) so that correlations can be established between watershed area targets and receiving Water Quality standards to inform adaptive management at the County and watershed scale.

Action 3.2 – Assessment. The plan will include monitoring to assess project efficacy (using metric from Action 1.2), as well as receiving Water Quality (using MS4 and other data), to assess progress towards meeting interim load reduction targets and final Water Quality standards.

Action 3.3 – Reporting. The plan will include a procedure for reporting progress back to the ROC. The progress reports could be a synthesis of WARPs and other existing planning documents, including municipal program reports and dashboards. The

reporting could also be integrated with WRAMPS to ease reporting burdens and avoid duplication of effort.

Action 3.4 – The LA Water Board will work with the County to provide MS4 and other relevant effluent and receiving Water Quality monitoring data to help with planning, assessment, and reporting.