

Upper Los Angeles River

Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)

Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, May 6, 2026

1:30pm - 4:00pm

LA County Public Works Headquarters, 1st Floor (Courtyard), Alhambra Room
900 S Fremont Ave, Alhambra, CA 91803

WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Ernesto Rivera, Los Angeles Flood Control District (Agency)

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

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

Cathie Santo Domingo, Los Angeles Recreation & Parks (Agency)

Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)

*Julia Lindner, Tataviam Land Conservancy (Community)

Jill Sohm, University of Southern California (Community)

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

*Curtis Castle, City of Glendale (Municipal)

Michael Vartanians, City of South Pasadena (Municipal)

Teresa Villegas, City of Los Angeles (Municipal)

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

Thuan Nguyen, Los Angeles County (Municipal)

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

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

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

Committee Members Not Present:

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

Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)

Rafael Prieto, City of Los Angeles (Municipal)

Dawn Petschauer, City of Pasadena (Municipal)

*Committee Member Alternate

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

1) Welcome and Introductions

Karo Torossian, Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) staff provided a brief WebEx tutorial and announced that a Spanish-language interpreter is available in the online meeting. Public Works staff facilitated the roll call of Committee Members and established a quorum.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 4, 2026

Public Works staff presented the meeting minutes from March 4, 2026. Member Ernesto Pantoja motioned to approve the March 4 meeting minutes, seconded by Chair Torossian. The WASC voted to approve the meeting minutes with 10 votes in favor, 2 votes in abstention, 0 votes opposed, and 5 absent at the time of voting (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

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3) Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

4) Committee Member and Program Updates

Public Works staff provided updates, noting:

- The Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) voted to approve the 2026 Biennial Progress Report for submission to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) on March 8, 2026.
- As of May 6, 2026, eight WASCs have recommended a Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY26-27) Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP). The Rio Hondo (RH) WASC is the one remaining.
- Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program staff will prepare the SIP Transmittal Reports for the ROC on behalf of the WASCs. This year, the SIP Transmittal Report is being updated based on prior feedback and will begin incorporating the released Initial Watershed Plans.
- The ROC is scheduled to discuss the recommended FY26-27 SIPs on June 10 and July 8, 2026.
- On March 12, 2026, SCW Program staff reminded Regional Program Project Developers to submit 12-month lapsed funding extension requests per the conditions of the Regional Program Transfer Agreement. Only Infrastructure Program (IP) Projects that were disbursed funds during FY20-21 have the potential to lapse funds. If a Project had not expended funds equal to that year's disbursement as of the FY24-25 Annual Report, they were sent the reminder email.
- Four extension requests were received by March 31, 2026. SCW Program staff reviewed the requests and provided notifications of extension at the end of April 2026.
- The Quarter 4 (Q4) 2026 Funding Report has been posted to the [SCW Program website](#) under the Resources tab.
- The SCW Municipal Program Team is now offering project support services to all cities with an updated City Services Contract with Los Angeles County Public Works. Current available services are limited to initial project planning and project design. Cities interested in utilizing these services or seeking clarification can contact the SCW Municipal Program Team at SCWPMunicipal@pw.lacounty.gov. Additional details on the scope and availability of future services will be shared in the coming months.
- To keep up with Program Updates as they are shared, the public can subscribe to receive email notifications on the SCW Program website. Implementation Updates are also located in the [News and Updates webpage](#) on the SCW Program website.

5) Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Adi Liberman summarized Environmental Outreach Strategies' recent activities, which include attending an LA Sanitation Open House, meeting with the League of Conservation Voters in Pasadena, and attending a workshop on Proposition 4 funding. Watershed Coordinator Liberman described upcoming regional conferences, like the Los Angeles County Business Federation Water Resiliency forum, and numerous project development activities. Watershed Coordinator Liberman also met with former Calabasas Mayor Dennis Washburn and members of the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, Esther Feldman and Isabella Isles, regarding potential SCW Program projects.

Watershed Coordinator Alonso Garcia shared that the Watershed Coordinator team has engaged with 400 community members across six events since January 1, 2026, including the Alhambra Eco Fair, a trail opening at the Elephant Hill Open Space, a tour of the Bowtie Demonstration Project, and Earth Day with Friends of the Los Angeles River. Watershed Coordinator Garcia summarized future outreach events that Council for Watershed Health is planning alongside community-based organizations like Los Angeles Walks and Pacoima Beautiful. Upon inquiry, Watershed Coordinator Garcia explained that the date of a Los Angeles Metro Rail to Rail Path bike ride is being finalized.

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Watershed Coordinator Kristina Kreter shared that Council for Watershed Health has assessed and supported ten projects in various development stages, including the Elephant Hill Open Space and Stormwater Infrastructure Feasibility Study, the Diego Rivera Learning Complex, and a Canoga Park project developed from the Pacoima Beautiful People's Collaborative Academy. Watershed Coordinator Kreter described collaborating with students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) to develop an interactive dashboard identifying school greening projects. Chair Torossian requested the watershed coordinators to invite UCLA to provide dashboard access for committee members.

6) Presentations and Discussion Items

a) Key Areas of Interest for 2026 Call for Projects

Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) presented on the Round 8 (FY27-28) Call for Projects ULAR WASC Priorities. Slides are available on the [SCW Program website](#).

SCW Program Strategic Advancement team, formerly the SCWP Watershed Planning team, described the 20th requirement of the Feasibility Study Guidelines. Member Teresa Villegas shared concerns about the technical skills required for SCW Program applications and requested that the Strategic Advancement team's presenters attend WASC Meetings in-person to facilitate open dialogue. Antos explained that the application system automatically populates opportunities available for Project developers based on project area. Antos noted that a walkthrough of new requirements and submission guidelines will occur at the Call for Projects Info Sessions scheduled to take place on May 13 and 14, 2026.

Antos explained that the projects funded to date deliver about 20% of the 2045 SCW Program target for Groundwater Recharge Benefits. Chair Torossian commented that the metric seemed low considering that much of the benefits displayed are still anticipated rather than completed benefits. Member Edith de Guzman commented that the graphic distilled complex information effectively and expressed comfort with the number.

Member Curtis Castle commented that the ULAR WASC's progress on Water Quality Benefits aligns with that of the other WASCs.

Upon inquiry, Antos confirmed that the 2025 total benefits metric include estimates or data on projects regardless of what phase they are in. Antos explained that monitoring data will be incorporated into the metric in the future for projects currently in planning and design.

Chair Torossian expressed concern about the WASC's progress on Groundwater Recharge and Storage. Antos suggested an emphasis on project areas with overlapping Water Quality and Water Supply Benefits.

Watershed Coordinator Kreter inquired whether applicants receive points for projects that capture stormwater but do not perform groundwater recharge. Antos encouraged applicants to review the guidelines, as in some cases capturing stormwater can provide benefits for Water Quality, Water Supply, and/or Community Investments.

Member Castle expressed hope that ongoing Scientific Studies (SS) lead to reform of Municipal Load Reduction goals and explained that MS4 requirements are difficult for municipalities to look past when considering projects because the municipalities face fines for noncompliance. Member Castle stated that stormwater capture for recharge is well understood by the public.

Member Villegas commented on the significant amount of funding invested in projects to date and asked if the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) cycle could occur biennially. Antos explained that the Los Angeles County Flood Control District can pause the Call for Projects, but an individual WASC does not have the authority to do so; however, Antos noted that signaling disinterest in funding projects this round would allow potential applicants to note the Committee's preference.

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Member de Guzman noted that most projects are in planning and design and expressed concern for future Project Modification Requests (PMRs). Member de Guzman noted the importance of effective operations and maintenance (O&M) for optimal project performance post-construction. Antos explained that workforce development for O&M is under discussion at the ROC and that Committee Members can request progress updates from Project developers.

Member Cathie Santo Domingo noted that the 2028 Summer Olympics and rising gas prices will impact construction schedules. Member Santo Domingo emphasized the importance of projecting realistic construction timelines during the application process.

Member Jill Sohm and Chair Torossian seconded Member de Guzman's concerns about PMRs and a subsequent lack of funding.

Chair Torossian expressed disinterest in funding new projects due to the number already in planning and design and expressed support for shovel-ready, cost-effective projects that meet SCW Program goals. Chair Torossian expressed openness to pausing funds for projects until developers provide realistic timelines. Antos explained that the WASC can engage with projects that have earmarked funds in future SIP to verify that projects are advancing and additional funding is warranted. Funding, however, that has already been incorporated in a Board-adopted SIP is not within the authority of the WASC to adjust. Chair Torossian requested that Project developers who have not signed Transfer Agreements be identified during the Mid-Year Reports.

Watershed Coordinator Kreter reported that Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have shown significant interest in applying for SCW Program funds due to the community benefits that the SCW Program supports, including living infrastructure, green space, and biodiversity. Antos proposed that Committee Members advocate for partnerships between larger institutions and CBOs that need funding for infrastructure projects. Upon inquiry, Antos highlighted Amigos de los Rios' partnership with the Monrovia Unified School District and the City of Monrovia as an example, and suggested that Committee Members ask Project developers directly about community support going forward.

Member Thuan Nguyen suggested that Project developers incorporate ideas from communities surrounding the project location while the project is still in planning. Antos noted that the Watershed Coordinators can assist with coordination between agencies and CBOs.

Member Nguyen proposed funding projects in phases, rather than combining applications for both design funding and construction funding. Member Kevin Ho seconded Member Nguyen's suggestion and noted that Project applicants are often overly optimistic about construction timelines.

Upon inquiry, Antos explained that data on benefits from projects in design is preliminarily evaluated by the Scoring Committee but later will be replaced with more accurate monitoring data.

Member Nguyen asked if the 39.82% of project costs attributed to leveraged funding in the ULAR WASC is misleading, noting that the equivalent dollar amount must be higher than that of other WASCs, since ULAR receives the most funding of all the WASCs. Antos confirmed that this amount is the largest of the WASCs in dollars, but not in proportion of total funding, and asked if the Committee expects greater than 40% leveraged funding from applicants. Chair Torossian noted that 50% leveraged funding was the benchmark for previous SIPs. Chair Torossian explained that the phased approach Member Nguyen suggested would save funds and put projects in a better position for grant applications prior to construction. Upon inquiry, Chair Torossian explained that Project proponents with PMRs are also expected to seek leveraged funding.

Member Villegas expressed concern that a 50% leveraged funding requirement might deter potential proponents from applying to the SCW Program.

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Upon inquiry, Chair Torossian highlighted the West San Fernando Valley as an area of interest for future projects, including Disadvantaged Communities outside of the cities of Calabasas and San Fernando.

Antos asked whether Committee Members would prioritize certain project types or targets. Member de Guzman expressed support for school greening. Chair Torossian stated that water capture and flood prevention should be prioritized, with a continued focus on Disadvantaged Communities. Watershed Coordinator Kreter suggested impervious surface removal. Antos reminded that impervious surface removal is both a SCWP target unto itself and can provide additional benefits like diminishing urban runoff and promoting infiltration.

Antos requested the Committee Members' input on the SIP Deliberation Workbooks. Member Villegas expressed support for both physical and digital copies. Chair Torossian suggested providing summaries with additional documents available via QR code. Member Sohm expressed support for the workbook, but proposed digital copies in case an alternate must attend meetings.

b) Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan (SOEP)

Watershed Coordinators Adi Liberman, Alonso Garcia, and Kristina Kreter presented on the ULAR SOEP. [Presentation slides](#) and the [SOEP](#) are both available on the SCW Program website.

Member de Guzman commended the work of the Watershed Coordinators. Member de Guzman noted reaching out to the Watershed Coordinators about an upcoming exhibition on water in Los Angeles.

Upon inquiry, Watershed Coordinator Kreter explained that the Watershed Coordinators engage with smaller agencies at least once annually to discuss project support and funding. Member Nguyen suggested checking on projects that the WASC has funded to date.

Member Pantoja expressed appreciation for the Watershed Coordinators' work and requested that information on Proposition 4 funding and other grants be made available. Watershed Coordinator Liberman summarized plans to identify projects that could benefit from Proposition 4. Watershed Coordinator Garcia noted that a section on the Council for Watershed Health newsletter highlights funding opportunities. Watershed Coordinator Kreter added that the Watershed Coordinators typically share funding opportunities on a project-by-project basis, and that quarterly [Leverage Funding Report and Matrix](#) are produced by Regional Coordination and loaded to the resources section of the SCW Program website.

7) Public Comment

Public Works staff invited in-person, virtual, and call-in users to provide public comment.

Clara Solis (Save San Pascual Park) commented that the preferred alternative described in the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Arroyo Seco-San Rafael Treatment Wetlands Project does not include a nature-based option. Solis requested that the Cities of Pasadena and South Pasadena consider extending the draft EIR comment period from 45 to 90 days. Solis also expressed that the Arroyo Park Infiltration Gallery Project and the Arroyo Seco-San Rafael Treatment Wetlands Project are related and urged Committee Members to revisit approval for the former. Solis also noted that Los Angeles City Councilmember Ysabel Jurado has expressed opposition to the Arroyo Seco-San Rafael Treatment Wetlands Project.

Yael Pardess expressed concerns about the potential impacts of the Arroyo Seco-San Rafael Treatment Wetlands Project's impacts on San Pascual Park. Pardess commented that community engagement efforts by the Project proponents have felt insufficient.

8) Voting Items

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a) Approve the Updated Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Area Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan

Chair Torossian motioned to approve the Updated ULAR Watershed Areas Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan, seconded by Member Villegas. The WASC voted to approve the motion with 13 votes in favor, 0 votes in abstention, 0 votes opposed, and 4 absent at the time of voting (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

9) Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 1 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at Public Works Headquarters. More information is available on the [SCW Program website](#). Items on the next agenda include:

a) Regional Program FY25-26 Mid-Year Report Summary

Chair Torossian noted that the ULAR WASC's FY26-27 SIP would be presented to the ROC on June 10, 2026.

10) Adjournment

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