

Safe, Clean Water Program

Santa Clara River

Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)



Meeting Minutes:

Thursday, March 4, 2021

10:00am – 12:00pm

WebEx Meeting

Attendees

Committee Members Present:

Kristen Ruffell (LA County - Sanitation)
Janine Prado (Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services)
Bruce Hamamoto (LA County Public Works)
Julian Juarez (District)
Steve Cole (Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency)
Heather Merenda (Santa Clarita)
Tom Cole (Santa Clarita)

Sandra Cattell (Santa Clarita Sierra Club)
Jason Gibbs (Santa Clarita)
Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel (St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation)
Mary Johnson (Agua Dulce Town Council)
Mike Hennawy* (Santa Clarita)
Hunt Braly (Poole & Shaffery)
Dirk Marks (Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency)

Committee Members Not Present:

None

*Committee Member Alternate

See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Jason Gibbs, Vice-Chair of the Santa Clara River WASC, called the meeting to order.

Mr. CJ Caluag of the District asked for a roll call of WASC members, and with a majority present, quorum was established.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 4th, 2021

The District uploaded a copy of the meeting minutes from the February 4th meeting, and Mr. Gibbs asked the committee members for comments or revisions.

Ms. Kristen Ruffell motioned to approve the meeting minutes, with Ms. Heather Merenda seconding this motion. The Committee voted to approve the meeting minutes (Approved, See vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

Mr. Gibbs asked if any Committee members had any updates to provide.

Mr. Caluag provided the District updates, starting with the fund Transfer Agreements (TA). The first approved annual plans are posted on the municipal TA website, with over 50 percent of the municipalities approved to receive their local returns. The outstanding municipalities are requested to submit their municipal annual plans as soon as possible, as the next round of annual plans are due in April.

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In terms of the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) timeline, Mr. Caluag stated that an interactive web-based SIP planning tool is in development and will be available to the public shortly, with the goal of utilizing the tool to execute the SIP programming for each Watershed Area (WA) by May.

Regarding the Watershed Coordinator (WC) selection process, Mr. Caluag stated that each WASC is moving forward with their primary WC choice. The WCs are working on providing their insurance requirements and their letters of intent, with WC contract execution expected in the coming weeks.

Mr. Caluag went over the available Resources on the Safe, Clean Water (SCW) website, starting with the Call for Projects Round 3 having a current deadline of July 31st. The SCW website includes tax reduction and credit programs available for Low-income and Senior property owners, with a May 1st deadline. There is more information on the tax reduction and credit program on the SCWP website found at <https://safecleanwaterla.org/resources/tools/>. Finally, Mr. Caluag gave a brief demonstration of the SCW Portal map which includes all the projects, gives access to all the applications, and will be the tool that the WASCs will utilize to review all of the project quarterly reports. The SCW Portal site is expected to give live on April 1st, with the first quarterly report review for each WASC coming on May 15th.

Mr. Caluag gave a brief overview on the Partial Funding guidelines, stating that an email was sent out to various SCW stakeholders. WASCs can now award partial funds to an Infrastructure Program applicant, which must demonstrate that the project can fulfill the entire scope utilizing other funding sources, or fund a specific project phase but not the entire project request. Awarding of partial funding should not result in any reduction of scope, project benefits, or score assigned.

Ms. Sandra Cattell asked if the tax exemption programs could be advertised on the local newspaper for public awareness, or what public outreach is being done at this time. Mr. Caluag responded that this information is available on the SCW website, and that if someone does not have access to the internet, the individual can call us to request the necessary forms and information be physically mailed, and stated that the WASC meetings are also being used to broadcast the tax relief programs. Ms. Cattell asked if the District would be willing to contact the local newspaper with this information, and Mr. Caluag responded that we can provide Ms. Cattell this information and then have Ms. Cattell contact the local newspaper.

4. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments submitted prior to today's meeting. Ms. Jackie Ayer, a member of the Acton Town Council, stated that L.A. County Public Health is moving forward with an ordinance that will allow residential recreational vehicle (RV) uses, and that the Acton and other unincorporated communities have continually stated that residential RV uses are already a problem, with several pictures taken of RVs digging a pit on a residential parcel to dump their raw sewage, but L.A. County does nothing about this. With no enforcement to protect the groundwater or local surface water, this ordinance will only make this problem worse as it puts the burden of enforcement on the community. All L.A. County does is issue a Notice of Violation (NOV) or include fines that are never collected. There is one parcel in Acton that is 700 feet from the Santa Clara River (SCR) floodplain which has 9 RVs on the parcel with no permitted septic systems. The WASC needs to be aware of this as it is relevant to the projects this WASC is considering, and Ms. Ayer suggested that this WASC take some form of action to try and get some enforcement mechanisms included in the ordinance, such as writing a letter of concern.

** Please note that item 7 was moved in front of item 5 in today's meeting agenda by the SCR Vice-Chair **

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7. Voting Items

a) Selection of Chair(s)

Mr. Caluag started this discussion with recapping that Mr. Darren Hernandez resigned from the WASC, and with the WASC Chair position vacant, the floor is open for any nominations or motions for this WASC's Chair.

Mr. Mike Hennawy nominated Mr. Gibbs as the Chair, with a seconding of this nomination from Mr. Tom Cole. Ms. Merenda nominated Mr. Tom Cole as Vice-Chair, with a seconding of this nomination from Ms. Janine Prado. Ms. Ruffell motioned to combine these votes, with a second of this motion from Mr. Dirk Marks. The Committee voted to approve Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Tom Cole as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively (Approved, See vote tracking sheet).

5. Discussion Items:

a) Ex Parte Communication Disclosure

Mr. Gibbs asked if there were any Ex Parte Communication Disclosures from the WASC. Ms. Merenda stated that Mr. Steve Cole, Mr. Darin Seegmiller, Mr. Marks and Ms. Merenda recently met and discussed the water supply components of the Via Princessa Technical Resources Program (TRP) project. Ms. Merenda also disclosed that she recently attended the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting to discuss criteria with improving the project scoring process. Mr. Steve Cole and Mr. Darks also confirmed attending the meeting with City staff.

b) Summary of projects and studies submitted for Santa Clara River WASC for consideration (SCW Program Portal)

Mr. Gibbs gave a quick summary of the SCR projects submitted for Round 2 consideration, which are a total of 2 projects. One TRP study for Via Princessa and 1 scientific study project: Regional Pathogen Reduction Study. Mr. Caluag stated that the SCW Portal map is linked with the SCW Project Module website, and demonstrated the feature function filters on the SCW Portal map site, including use of the webpage dashboard. Ms. Ruffell asked if there is a way to see which applications have withdrawn from funding consideration, but Mr. Caluag responded that this is not available on the SCW Portal. For the 2 Scientific Studies which have withdrawn from funding consideration, Mr. Caluag stated that the District already has on-going efforts that coincide with these studies and will instead collaborate with these project leads.

With the SIP programming aiming to be completed in May, Mr. Caluag asked the WASC if it wanted to discuss the 1 TRP and 1 scientific study at this time. Mr. Gibbs asked about next steps with SIP programming and Mr. Caluag stated that the projects to be evaluated for consideration should occur at the early May meeting. Mr. Caluag brought up the Year 1 SIP funding totals to give the WASC an idea of where it is financially at this time.

Mr. Bruce Hamamoto stated that Mr. Rich Watson presented on the regional bacteria study in Year 1 and this WASC supported funding the study, but none of the other WASCs supported it, and as a result, this WASC also withdrew its support of the study. The regional bacteria study is now called the regional pathogen study, and Mr. Watson took this study to the L.A. Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) to address any questions now. Mr. Hamamoto's comment

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regarding this study is that any consultant work first gather input from the Acton and Agua Dulce communities and get their consent before they do any monitoring in these communities.

c) WASC discussion with Tree People, Inc. (WC) for future projects

Mr. Peter Massey of TreePeople, Inc., which is the selected Watershed Coordinator (WC) for this WASC, made himself present to the WASC.

Ms. Ruffell asked Mr. Massey what his plans are with moving this WA forward as TreePeople, Inc. is onboarded. Mr. Massey responded that initially, TreePeople, Inc. will be talking to everyone in the community and in the WASC to establish an outreach workplan and will be looking into helping develop projects for the next funding round. TreePeople, Inc. has signed the contract and returned it to the District for final execution.

Ms. Cattell stated her support of having a WC onboard given that this WA had the least amount of project applications submitted, and looks forward to seeing an increase in applications submitted. Ms. Cattell stated that one of her concerns in this WA is that areas like Agua Dulce and the east side of Santa Clarita need to be given fair and equitable consideration of the available funding, while helping replenish their local groundwater sources since many parcels are on production water wells. Ms. Cattell also expressed a concern with multiple areas spending a lot of money, including having a Groundwater Sustainability group, this WASC, the Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP), and various water agencies all trying to do the same thing. Finally, Ms. Cattell expressed a need to have a unified approach with addressing invasive plant species which consume a lot of water, such as Arundo, Tamarisks, and other species. Mr. Massey took note of all these concerns.

Ms. Cattell stated that this WASC may want to make the residential RV untreated sewage concerns a priority. Ms. Mary Johnson stated that she agrees with Ms. Ayer's and Ms. Cattell's concerns, which is that wastewater going into the local groundwater is a serious problem and that this ordinance will make things a lot worse.

6. Public Comment Period

Ms. Ayer stated that these meetings have changed format, and that the public should be allowed to speak on an item that is before the WASC board when it is being discussed and considered. Ms. Ayer said that the first public comment she provided had nothing to do with the agenda items because before, this group allowed the public to speak on the agenda item as it comes up, and apparently this is not how it is done anymore and that this is a problem.

For agenda item 5.b, Ms. Ayer stated that the Acton Town Council (ATC) has no objection to the RNA/DNA marker portion of the regional pathogen study. However, the ATC appreciates Mr. Hamamoto's comment because we are very concerned with the monitoring, modeling, and source identification portion of this project. The ATC objects to the monitoring or modeling within Acton that is done without the cooperation and consent of the community of Acton. The modeling approach is incapable of accurately assessing source contributions over Acton's 100 square mile area, and in particular, since the boundary conditions include the residential septic systems as a source, the model is programmed to point to residential septic systems as a problem whether it is true or not. Given this, the ATC is looking to this WASC to ensure to modeling or monitoring is done outside the City of Santa Clarita, or unless the ATC meets with the consultant to give its consent.

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For agenda item 5.c, Ms. Ayer stated that the ATC has pointed out several times that Downtown Acton has severe flooding every time it rains, and have sent pictures to County staff showing the Downtown area under feet of water. Much of the water goes right by our park, of which L.A. County owns a sizeable dirt lot adjacent to the developed park. A project can be developed on this dirt lot that this WASC has supported for other park projects. The problem is the community of Acton has no engineering department and has no capability of proposing a project or conducting the necessary studies or field investigations to see if the project is feasible. As this WASC considers projects moving forward, the ATC asks that the focus is not just on urban areas and look broadly at all areas.

8. Items for Next Agenda

Mr. Gibbs asked if there were any items for the next agenda from the WASC.

Ms. Ruffell stated that by the next meeting, the WASC will have access to the SIP Planning Tool and encouraged WASC members to look at the tool and be prepared to make a motion for this WASC's SIP and requests this as a voting item in the next agenda.

Ms. Merenda asked that District staff provide a status update on the ROC changes to SCW project scoring criteria.

Ms. Johnson asked if the WASC will have the analysis for Scientific Studies (SS) from the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) before the April meeting. Mr. Caluag said we will get the WASC the information as soon as it is available, but this may not be until after the next WASC meeting on April 1st. Ms. Johnson said she would prefer not to vote on the SS until the SCCWRP information is made available. Ms. Ruffell stated that for clarification, her proposed agenda item is contingent on having the SCCWRP information available before final SIP programming.

Mr. Hamamoto asked for flexibility with the SCCWRP agenda item, and maybe consider making it a standing item where if the information is available, the discussion can proceed as necessary.

Ms. Merenda asked if a SCCWRP member can attend the next WASC meeting to answer any questions the WASC may have on their findings. Mr. Caluag stated that he can ask, but that he is not the lead staff working with SCCWRP on these efforts.

Ms. Ruffell asked if the SCCWRP information will be available before a WASC meeting, or if it will be presented at the actual WASC meeting. Mr. Caluag stated that there was initially an April 1st deadline, but that the District needs to follow up and determine if this is still on schedule to answer this inquiry.

Mr. Hunt Braly asked when the WASC will have the signed contract finalized with TreePeople, Inc. and if TreePeople, Inc. will be onboarded before the next WASC meeting. Mr. Caluag stated that we are hoping the contract is finalized before the next meeting.

Ms. Ayer asked if the residential RV issues, specifically the lack of enforcement, can be an agenda item at the next WASC meeting. Mr. Braly supports this as simply an information-only agenda item, with any actions to be updated by either L.A. County and/or the City of Santa Clarita. Ms. Cattell supports Mr. Braly's recommendation.

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9. Adjournment

Mr. Gibbs thanked the WASC members and the public for their time and participation and adjourned the meeting.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 1st, 2021 10:00AM -12:00PM
Virtual Meeting – WebEx Events

SANTA CLARA RIVER WASC MEETING - MARCH 4, 2021

		Quorum Present				Voting Items	
Member Type	Organization	Member	Voting?	Alternate	Voting?	02-04-21 Meeting Minutes	Jason Gibbs as Chair and Tom Cole as Vice Chair
Agency	District	Julian Juarez	x	Carolina Hernandez		y	y
Agency	Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency	Dirk Marks	x	Mike Alvord		y	y
Agency	Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency	Steve Cole	x	Rick Viergutz		y	y
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell	x	Martha Tremblay		y	y
Agency	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services	Janine Prado	x	Jennifer Del Toro		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Poole & Shaffery	Hunt Braly	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	Agua Dulce Town Council	Mary Johnson	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	Santa Clarita Sierra Club	Sandra Cattell	x	Diane Trautman		y	y
Community Stakeholder				Frederick Andre Hollings			
Community Stakeholder	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation	Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel	x	Heidi Webber		y	y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		y	y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		y	y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Jason Gibbs	x	Darin Seegmiller		y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Heather Merenda	x	Oliver Cramer		y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Robert Newman		Mike Hennawy	x	y	y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Tom Cole	x	David Peterson		y	y
Total Non-Vacant Seats		16			Yay (Y)	16	16
Total Voting Members Present		16			Nay (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	0	0
Community Stakeholder		4			Total	16	16
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

Attendees
Santa Clara River WASC Meeting
March 4, 2021

Bruce	Hamamoto	Tom	Cole
Blake	Whittington	katie	m
Maritsa	DRA Inc	Sarai	Jimenez
Oliver	Cramer	Jacqueline	Ayer
Josephine	Gutierrez	Safe	Clean Water LA
Darin	Seegmiller	janine	prado
Dianne	Hellrigel	Heather	Merenda
Diane	Trautman	Mary	Johnson
Hunt	Braly	CJ	Caluag - LACFCD
Julian	Juarez	Paul	Glenn (GHD)
Carlos	Moran	Mayra	Cabrera - LACFCD
Kathye	Armitage	Steve	Cole
Kristen	Ruffell	Allen	Ma
Peter	Massey	Dirk	Marks
Sandra	Cattell	Jason	Gibbs
Kayla	Kilgo - CWE	Mike	Hennawy
Justin	Jones LACFCD	Alysha	Chan
Cameron	Revere	Elisha	Back
Jerrid	McKenna	Jon	Abelson