

Safe, Clean Water Program

Regional Oversight Committee



Meeting Minutes:

Thursday, February 25, 2021
9:00am - 12:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Attendees

Committee Members Present:

Kristine Guerrero (League of Cities)
Barbara Romero (City of Los Angeles)
Irma Muñoz* (LA Regional Water Quality Control Board)
Shelley Luce (Heal the Bay)
Carl Blum* (LA County Flood Control District)

Belinda Faustinos (Nature for All)
Elva Yañez (Prevention Institute)
Municipal Water District)
Lauren Ahkiam (LAANE)

Committee Members Not Present:

Maria Mehranian (Cordoba Corp.)
Diana Tang (City of Long Beach)

Charles Trevino (Upper San Gabriel Valley
Municipal Water District)

*Non-voting members

See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees

1) Welcome and Introductions

Shelley Luce, Co-chair of the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC), called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the LACFCD and ROC invited Lisa Beutler back again as facilitator for Item 7. Shelley reiterated the purpose of the meeting was to pursue any predominance of thought amongst the ROC and provide input to the LACFCD regarding the topics of Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) and community engagement.

Matt Frary (District) discussed WebEx features and facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

2) Public Comment Period

Matt Frary (District) noted receipt of 6 public comment cards in advance of the meeting. Five of these were from representatives of SCOPE, who indicated they'd like to hold their comment for Item 7. The other comment card was from Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh from SEITec. He commented that projects should be required to be carbon neutral and gravity solutions should be encouraged above pumping solutions. He also commented that projects should be designed to address higher than the 85th percentile storm and optimized for water quality. (See public comment card attached to the meeting minutes)

3) Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 28, 2021

The District referenced and displayed the posted copy of the minutes from the previous meeting. Shelley Luce asked the Committee Members for comments or revisions.

Belinda Faustinos made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Elva Yañez seconded the motion. By roll call vote, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes.

4) Committee Member and District Updates

Shelley solicited any updates from Committee members. Upon confirmation of no committee updates, she asked Matt to provide the District updates. Matt reminded everyone that the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) Portal and GIS tools are accessible on the SCWP's webpage and allow users to explore current

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and funded projects, project concepts and scientific studies. Regarding Municipal Transfer Agreements (TAs), the District had received 70 Annual Plans and executed 63 TAs, with disbursements of funds to over 50 Municipalities. As for Regional TAs, the District received 35 of 48 Scopes of Work, but has not yet executed any TAs and continues to work with recipients. With respect to the Watershed Coordinators (WC), all WASCs have selected their preferred WC and 4 were provided contracts to date. The other WCs are in the process of submitting their letters of Intent and insurance requirements to the District for contract execution. The District intends to host the first collective meeting with the selected WCs in April, if able.

Regarding Scientific Studies proposals, an independent panel is being assembled by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) to provide an independent analysis and prepare standard scientific summaries for the WASCs to consider as they develop the recommendations for their upcoming Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs).

Partial Funding guidelines have been posted on the SCWP website. The District also made reference to the progress in advancing metrics and monitoring efforts of the SCWP and will continue working with stakeholders and appropriate entities to further accomplish and measure the goals of the program.

5) Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Shelley Luce attended Our Water LA Coalition meeting on Feb 16, 2021 and participated in a meeting with LA County Supervisorial District (SD) 2 on February 22, 2021.

Belinda Faustinos attended Our Water LA Coalition meeting on Feb 16, 2021. On February 17, 2021 she participated in a consultation between the SCWP staff and Board offices. She spoke with SD1 and SD5 Board offices regarding today's agenda item on DAC Benefits, Community Engagement, and Community Investments.

Elva Yañez spoke with Supervisorial District 1 regarding the agenda item on Community Engagement.

Lauren Ahkiam (LAANE) attended Our Water LA Coalition meeting on Feb 16, 2021. She also spoke with Our Water LA Coalition members and SD2 and SD4 regarding Community Engagement and Community Investments.

6) Public Comment Period

Matt read into the record the pertinent comments from a letter submitted by the North Santa Monica Bay (NSMB) WASC noting that it does not have any Disadvantaged Census Block Groups but that there are many disadvantaged community residents that visit the region. The WASC encouraged future consideration of investments in recreational resources and ecological connections that benefit disadvantage communities. They also stated additional support to encourage public participation. (See letter attached to the meeting minutes)

Shelley directed the District to call on representatives of the 5 comment cards from SCOPE, the Our Water LA (OWLA) Coalition letter, and the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG), as well as any other comments from the other available methods (raised hands, callers, and chat box).

Tiffany Wong commented on behalf of the OWLA Coalition letter regarding community benefits, engagement, and equitable investments. She commented that equitable investments work along three dimensions: contending with historical inequities from the past, building authentic partnerships with community in the present, and preventing disparities in the future. These principals can help strengthen the framework and principals around benefits. She also recommended changing the definition for Disadvantaged Community Benefits to protect investments and prioritize direct benefits.

Samantha Mathews, representative for SGVCOG, recommended that proposed projects receive points if the project is used by a DAC or if the project captures or treats drainage from or for a DAC. She also noted

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that Letters of Support from city councils, adjacent Municipalities, special districts, and other local stakeholders should be recognized as community support and that primary outreach occur after a project has been recommended for funding.

Deborah Exum, member of the Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), encouraged equitable investments in South Los Angeles and prioritization of community ownership from low-income communities of color.

[Translated from Spanish] Lourdes Huerta, member of SCOPE, spoke to representatives and developers saying that members of community have a right to be informed of Safe Clean Water Program project development in all stages within their community. She further commented that projects are being developed and implemented without informing the community. She noted these projects are being developed with taxpayer money; in turn, the community is paying for these projects. Therefore, she asked that residents and community groups be given the opportunity to participate and influence the project development and that the developers respond to the concerns of the community. The lack of community engagement obstructs the community's path and leaves the community not knowing if proper measures have been taken. She asked for the Program to work with residents and small community groups so that the community is informed of what is happening and how their tax dollars are being spent. She asked and urged that the Program consider and inform the community.

[Translated from Spanish] Joaquin Meneses, member of SCOPE, commented that his community is part of the Alameda Corridor and that they are also a part of an area where a major component of the demographics are a minority community. He proposed development of projects like South Los Angeles Wetlands Park that incorporate sustainable energy. He noted the community needs sustainable energy projects that will strengthen green stormwater infrastructure, economic growth by creating jobs, and quality of life, and educate communities in the direct participation of project development. He asked to be part of the project development process and that the committee consider the request.

Two of the other advance requests to speak on behalf of SCOPE were identified but the speakers were not present. These comment cards, and the others submitted in advance, are attached to the meeting minutes.

Nichole Heil, representative of the LA Alliance for New Economy (LAANE) and OWLA Coalition, commented on displacement risk associated with stormwater infrastructure and requested that the District provide project applicants, committee members, and program administrators training on displacement avoidance best practices. She also suggested requesting more detailed information from project applicants, including responses to a checklist of best practices.

Britany Rivas commented on the examination of the community investment benefits framework alongside the stakeholder process. She suggested, in the short term, to require project applicants to provide quantitative evidence, including budgetary information, to claim community investment benefits. She suggested, in the long term, that the SCWP reward project applications that describe how quantifiable community investments benefit DAC communities as identified through community engagements or local support, similar to the California Climate Investments Program, and that there be a minimum points requirement for community investment benefits and nature-based solutions.

Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh from SEITec requested future DAC benefits criteria include tangible benefits from the stormwater program to the DAC.

Multiple members of the ROC indicated the importance of having comments from Spanish-speakers translated at the meeting in order to ensure they are fully considered during committee discussions.

7) Discussion of focused topics re: upcoming Safe Clean Water Program guidance

a) Applying consistent Disadvantaged Community Benefits program policies. Facilitated by Lisa Beutler.

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Jon Christensen (UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, Luskin Center for Innovation) was introduced in the context of the District's upcoming efforts to further explore equity metrics. Jon affirmed that his team will be involved in developing a whitepaper and ongoing research and engagement. He summarized how the UCLA team, alongside other groups, will help advance metrics and monitoring efforts with equity being prioritized for the SCWP.

JR DeShazo, Vice Chair of the Scoring Committee (SC), was introduced to provide a summary of the SC perspective/experience on the two focused topics. JR commented on behalf of the SC that there is no clear definition of strong community support. To date, the SC has qualified strong community support as a minimum of 1 letter of support from a Community-Based Organization. He noted a concern over deciphering letters from local governments to determine whether they may be trying to reduce costs versus really being tuned into community needs and benefits. The current scoring criteria does not allow discretion to distinguish the range of modest to adequate community support. He noted that there are unanswered questions on the tangibility and timing of benefits to DACs, including water supply benefits that may be more regional than direct DAC benefits.

Irma Muñoz reiterated the concern that Spanish comments were not translated live. She stated the importance of improving communication and volunteered to translate if necessary. Others concurred, and Shelley confirmed that the Chairs would work on the matter of translation with the District.

Lisa Beutler initiated the discussion of the two focused topics, referenced the provided materials, and reiterated the role of the ROC. She reminded everyone that Matt had reviewed the timeline/approach last month. Input from today's meeting would be considered for both the Interim Guidance and 2022 Guidance, as able, and the discussion should point towards any predominance of thought amongst the ROC regarding ideal program guidance/function through ongoing adaptive management. Lisa also noted that not all ROC members were present, so any perceived predominance of thought may not reflect the entire committee but will still be valuable. Lisa and the District reviewed common acronyms/terms, the timeline, and the issue statement related to applying consistent DAC Benefits program policies.

Lauren Ahkiam asked if the NSMB WASC is required to commit project funds to DACs since they do not have a Disadvantaged Census Block in their watershed area. The District confirmed that the NSMB WASC is not required to commit funds to Disadvantaged Communities. The District clarified how the scoring criteria allocates points for Community Investment Benefits but no points are allocated for DAC Benefits. However, the District reiterated that the SCWP has a minimum funding requirement for Projects that provide DAC Benefits and that certain applications of that policy could have unintended consequences on the ability of WASCs to recommend desirable projects, which is why all angles will be considered carefully for any future guidance.

Belinda Faustinos raised concern for equity and when attributing DAC Benefits to Projects. As an example, she cited on project that claimed DAC Benefits based on the intent to bus students from disadvantaged schools to the project site and suggested this should perhaps not be a direct benefit. She also noted another project that she believed had a small DAC Benefit component and that it wasn't ideal to apply the full requested funding as DAC Benefit.

Barbara Romero stated that there was a need to institutionalize and formalize values for Community Engagement and Disadvantaged Communities that is useful for applicants. She remarked that no points being associated with DAC benefits sends the message that it is not important. Irma Muñoz echoed the thought that DACs need to be tangibly prioritized and the scoring criteria should include points associated with DAC Benefits.

Elva Yañez agreed with not allocating the funding toward the 110% calculation if the project providing benefits was outside of a DAC. She recommended referring to the Measure A mapped needs assessment. She highlighted a need for evidence-based data to identify and prioritize Projects in DACs. She suggested an alternative to the needs assessment could be that the Program explicitly incorporate the mapping tools into the framework like the metrics and monitoring effort will do and require project applicants to

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demonstrate how the project is addressing stormwater issues in DACs. Shelley Luce reminded the ROC to provide a clear recommendation on if a Project outside of a DAC can claim DAC benefits. Shelley Luce also affirmed interest in a needs assessment to identify needs within a DAC. Lisa Beutler acknowledged how ROC members were differentiating different types of DAC benefits. Belinda Faustinos agreed with Elva Yañez and Shelley Luce.

Lisa Beutler asked the ROC if the Potential Principles listed on page 8 of the [February 25th workbook](#) improve the clarity of the DAC provisions. Lauren Ahkiam commented the first Potential Principle seemed to repeat guidance already provided and that the second Potential Principle begins to acknowledge the information needed to help committee members make DAC benefits decisions. Barbara Romero suggested the DAC provision should consider economic opportunity and that Community Investment Benefits should include economic benefits, consider infrastructure needs, and educational opportunities. She also suggested considering scaled DAC benefits quantified by benefit magnitude and connections to multi-benefits.

Lauren Ahkiam acknowledged that the term “DAC” may be offensive even if it’s a state definition being used for SCWP. Lisa Beutler acknowledged that the Census Block Group used in the DAC definition is the framework for discussion but additional guidance may elaborate and use different terms, especially to help capture where the needs are.

Kristine Guerrero commented that projects outside of DACs that still benefit the DAC should be able to claim DAC benefits as this may incentivize projects to incorporate DAC benefits even if the project isn’t located in a DAC. If it’s limited to projects within a DAC, there may be less DAC Benefit overall.

The District clarified for Irma Muñoz the definition of Community Investment Benefits and how it includes public health considerations. Lauren Ahkiam recommended to not consider regional benefits, such as regional water quality or water supply benefits, as DAC benefits.

Belinda Faustinos highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement when developing metrics and more detailed guidance on this topic.

Shelley Luce stated she believes a project should be located in a DAC to be considered to have DAC Benefits, and noted the Program may later be able to develop a more nuanced approach to calculating value of DAC Benefits for projects outside a DAC. She urged the ROC to make a clear recommendation on the topic. Carl Blum noted awarding DAC benefits to projects only located in a DAC encourages projects to be located in DACs but there are a lot of factors to consider. If there are several ways to solve a problem and one is in a DAC, the project should be done in the DAC. He commented that mapping and the Watershed Coordinators would help solve the larger issues. Kristine Guerrero stated again that projects with DAC benefits located outside a DAC should still have value, and the perfect should not be the enemy of the good. Elva Yañez agreed with Carl Blum regarding the many factors and reiterated his prior comments about the value of more needs assessments. She believed that plenty of projects outside a DAC can still be funded, but there are big needs within DACs and that the SCWP can still work to reverse inequities. Belinda Faustinos emphasized the importance of only awarding DAC Benefits for projects located in a DAC.

The District acknowledged that this feedback is consistent with what has been received to date and there are still varying opinions. There was good discussion and general agreement that the workbook pointed to key issues for development of further guidance. The District will keep fleshing out potential concepts for future guidance, potentially incorporating some hybrid approach of those in the workbook, with acknowledgment that more robust guidance would likely need to come after the anticipated Interim Guidance.

b) Strengthening Community Engagement and Support

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Lisa Beutler and the District reviewed the Issue Statement, Potential Principles, Future Guidance Objectives and other discussion items related to discussion topic 2 of the [February 25th workbook](#). Due to the time constraint, Matt recommended the ROC focus discussion/input on pages 17 and 18 of the working since it incorporates the questions, concepts, and issues in the earlier pages. Irma Muñoz highlighted the importance of engagement including educating the community in addition to informing the community. She noted that engagement should be culturally and language relevant, that the wording used matters a lot, and that she didn't see enough education in the matrix boxes on page 18. The guidance shouldn't be rushed, so recommends taking time to do well.

Elva Yañez suggested that the ROC receive expert support on developing Community Engagement and Support metrics similar to what might be done for DAC Benefits. She commented that language regarding Community Engagement be more quantifiable, effective, broad-based, and inclusive.

Belinda Faustinos made a distinction between community education and community engagement. She recommended developing a comprehensive approach to educating communities as part of the larger WHAM program and requested the identification of metrics for evaluating authentic community engagement during project-specific engagement.

Barbara Romero commented that they want to create stewardship of projects and suggested using Measure A Community Engagement plans as an example framework to evaluate genuine engagement.

Lauren Ahkiam commented that genuine, collaborative community engagement can generate the interwoven DAC, Community Investment, Nature-Based Solution, and water quality benefits even though these benefits are scored separately. She commented it is important for applicants to be able to articulate how the benefits are interwoven.

Lisa summarized the predominance of thought from those members present, particularly that expert involvement is recommended, more language about education (program and project level) is desired, all efforts should be culturally relevant, and that good engagement can lead to better project development. The District affirmed that these concepts fit into the draft table (adapted from a sample currently available in the industry) and current trajectory, and that the District will continue to develop some additional guidance.

8) Items for Next Agenda

Shelley and Matt confirmed that the primary purpose of next meeting(s) is expected to be ROC review of Fiscal Year 2021-2022 SIPs from WASCs, but that updates on guidance and timing will be provided. Shelley solicited other ideas for future meetings and the following topics were mentioned for consideration:

- Updates from academic research partners
- Updates on progress of finding community engagement experts
- Discussion about developing additional needs assessment
- Discussion of the Biannual Review Process

9) Meeting Adjourned

Shelley Luce thanked ROC members and the public and adjourned the meeting.

Attendees

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Alex Tachiki	Eva Flores	Lorena Matos
Alex Paxton	Gregory Pierce	Lourdes Huerta
Alysha Chan	guadalupe duran-medina	Maritsa DRA Inc.
Aydin Pasebani	Gus Orozco	Matt Frary (LACFCD)
barbara romero	Hans Tremmel	Melanie Morita-LACFCD
Belinda Faustinos	Heather	Melanie Rivera
Blake Whittington	Humphrey Egekeze	Melissa Levitt
Brenda Ponton	Ilene Ramirez	Melissa Turcotte PW
brett perry	irma Munoz	Mike Antos
Brian Rowley	Jason Casanova	Mike Rudd
Britany Rivas	Joaquin Meneses	Nichole Heil
Bruce Reznik	Joe Venzon	Raina Dwivedi
Bryan Minor	John Mendoza	Renee Purdy
Bryce Lee	Jon Christensen	Richard Watson
Carl Blum	Joyce Amaro	ruth
Carlos Moran	JR DeShazo	Samantha Matthews
Carmen Andrade	Julie Carver	Shahriar Eftekhazadeh
caroline b	K S	Sheila Holt
Christine McLeod	katie m	Sheila Brice
Conor Mossavi	Kevin Chang	Shelley Luce (she/her)
Cung Nguyen	Kirk Allen - LACFCD SCWP	Sophie Freeman (SD3)
Danielle Chupa	Kristine Guerrero	Stephanie Tong
Deborah Bloome	Lauren Ahkiam	Susie Santilena
Deborah Exum	Leslie Johnson	Tiffany Wong
Drew	Lisa Beutler	Tom Love
Elva Yanez	Liz Crosson	Vik Bapna

North Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area Steering Committee

Date: December 23, 2020

To: Regional Oversight Committee
Safe, Clean Water Program

Matthew Frary
Los Angeles County Flood Control District

From: North Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area Steering Committee

Re: Comments on Framework for Potential Fiscal Year 2021-22 Stormwater Investment Plan Programming Guidelines

The North Santa Monica Bay (NSMB) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) reviewed the October 19, 2020 memorandum to the Regional Oversight Committee on the preparation of potential Fiscal Year 2021-22 Stormwater Investment Plan Programming Guidelines (copy attached). Based on the collective input of WASC members and their experiences preparing the NSMB's Fiscal Year 2020-21 Stormwater Investment Plan, we would like to share the following comments related to each of the five elements identified for additional clarification.

1. Programming partial funding

Given the limited funding available to the NSMB, the WASC would benefit from the opportunity to approve partial funding for projects submitted for inclusion in its Stormwater Investment Plan. For the NSMB's Fiscal Year 2020-21 Stormwater Investment Plan, the only qualifying project application was for the Viewridge Stormwater Improvements Project, which requested \$2.9 million in funding. Unfortunately, the project proponent opted to withdraw the application because, if approved, it would have monopolized almost two years of funding for the NSMB.

By approving partial funding for qualifying projects, the WASC would be able to leverage a larger number of projects and distribute the limited funds more equitably. When approving partial funding for a project, the WASC would request assurance from the project proponent of the availability of an alternate source of funding or confirmation that the projects is scalable, allowing for a smaller project with proportional benefits. If a partially funded project does not move forward as scheduled, the WASC would consider reallocating the funds to another project.

2. Applying Consistent Disadvantaged Community Benefits Policies

The NSMB has no disadvantaged census block groups shown on the Safe, Clean Water Project GIS map. However, the NSMB is a destination for many disadvantaged community residents who recreate in the region due to its beaches, trails, parks, campgrounds and

other visitor facilities. The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area receives approximately 500,000 visitors annually, providing recreation opportunities and ecological connections for a diverse urban audience that includes individuals who reside in park-poor communities. The City of Malibu and its population of approximately 13,000 host up to 7.5 million beach visitors during a typical summer season.

Safe, clean water is essential to support these recreational experiences. Partnerships with non-governmental and community based organizations can support programs to ensure that these resources serve the region's disadvantaged communities. As a result, the NSMB WASC would encourage future consideration of investments in recreational resources and ecological connections that serve and benefit disadvantaged communities.

3. Strengthening Community Engagement and Support

The NSMB WASC recognizes the importance of strengthening community engagement and ensuring community support for the projects that are included in its Stormwater Investment Plan. Guidance on the expectations for both community engagement and support would be helpful to ensure that project proponents have a consistent understanding. Also, additional support is recommended to encourage public participation and engagement in WASC meetings.

4. Clarifying Prioritization of Nature-Based Solutions

The NSMB WASC supports the proposal to provide additional guidance on project elements that would qualify as nature-based solutions, and the process to be used by WASCs to ensure that nature-based solutions are prioritized in a consistent way.

5. Understanding Water Supply Benefits

Project proponents in the NSMB have experienced difficulties scoring points in the water supply benefit area due to the unique characteristics of the watershed. The volume of water supply generated by projects in the NSMB is significantly limited by scattered development near relatively small tributary waterbodies, the lack of permeable soils due to local geology, and the lack of a usable groundwater basin. Additionally, the scoring for the Water Supply Benefit area is heavily weighted on cost effectiveness. No water supply points are awarded for projects that produce less than 25 acre-feet at a unit cost of more than \$2,500 per acre-foot. In the NSMB, the smaller tributary areas yield projects that produce smaller volumes of water supply and result in a higher unit cost.

The NSMB WASC would support consideration of more flexible scoring criteria for the Water Supply Benefit. The criteria could be amended to provide points for projects in the NSMB with a higher per acre-foot cost, recognizing the difficulty of delivering projects with new water supply at \$2,500 or less per acre-foot. In addition, the criteria could also be adapted to provide points for projects in the NSMB that provide less than 25 acre-feet per year of water supply, recognizing the smaller volumes of water that will be captured with sparse, distributed development and relatively smaller tributary waterbodies.



February 24, 2021

Regional Oversight Committee Members
Safe Clean Water Program

RE: Recommendations for ROC meeting on DAC benefits and community engagement

Dear Committee Members & Staff:

OurWaterLA (OWLA) is pleased to provide our recommendations to the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) as you consider program guideline updates for disadvantaged community (DAC) benefits and community engagement -- two key Safe Clean Water Program (SCWP) areas for delivering equitable investments prioritized by voters. We believe that equitable investments must work along three dimensions: contend with historical inequities from the past, build authentic partnership with communities in the present, and prevent reinforcing disparities in the future. We offer this framework, developed by the University of Southern California Dornsife Equity Research Institute in their evaluation of Measures M and A, to clearly outline our goal for strengthening the SCWP. Given our broad engagement with the community, project proponents, committee members, and other stakeholders, we have developed the following recommendations with robust input. These recommendations are consistent with our past advocacy but remain pertinent based on challenges identified during the early implementation of the SCWP. They will be further outlined in an upcoming research and evaluation memo published by SCOPE, which will be shared upon release. This letter represents the position of OWLA and not the working group organized by Accelerate Resilience LA; we look forward to discussing these topics further with the participants in that space.

1. Amending the definition of a DAC benefit

OWLA recommends amending the definition of a DAC benefit to protect investments in DACs and prioritize direct benefits. A DAC benefit should be defined as a **Community Investment Benefit and/or Nature-Based Solution located in a DAC and providing needed benefits directly to that DAC population**. Water quality and water supply elements provide regional benefits (which are required for the Regional Program) not only to DACs and not specific to DAC needs. Therefore, prioritizing community investment benefits and nature-based solutions in DAC projects will elevate place-based investments that provide multiple benefits and meaningfully improve quality of life in the immediate DAC neighborhood. Based on this

amended definition, only community investment benefits and nature-based solutions developed within a DAC should be counted towards the 110% minimum return on investment for DACs.

We also want to emphasize that the project should be located in a DAC -- not upstream or downstream -- and that benefits should be directed to DAC members in the immediate project location. Recommendations from District Staff and other SCWP stakeholders have suggested that DAC benefits could be provided upstream and downstream; however, that sets a dangerous precedent and opens the door wide open for low-quality DAC projects. We already saw how unclear definitions resulted in non-DAC-sited projects trying to make the case that they benefit DACs. For example, proponents of the Ballona Creek project tried to say that DAC members fished at the estuary; however, this is an indirect benefit. Another project in Arcadia said its school bus program served DAC members but it wasn't clear if this was a sustained program and is just another case of locating benefits and amenities outside of DACs.

The amended definition will also encourage DAC projects to meaningfully engage with community members and be responsive to local priorities and concerns in order to provide direct needed benefits. Meaningful community engagement also serves as one measure to anticipate displacement risk and prevent harmful impacts; however, we recommend greater attention to strengthening displacement avoidance planning in the SCWP to ensure DAC projects do not create additional harms in already vulnerable communities.

This framework is intended to help prioritize areas with the highest need and get more equitable multi-benefit projects into the pipeline, not discourage investment in critical water quality and water supply projects.

2. Improving scoring parameters for DAC projects

Reexamination of the community investment benefits framework is needed to improve DAC project guidelines. The current application lacks a quantitative framework for claiming community investment benefits, simply asking applicants to answer yes/no for each benefit. This makes it difficult to understand the quality of a project's benefit, compare projects under consideration, and keep proponents accountable to claimed benefits. *In the near term*, project proponents should be required to provide more quantitative evidence, including budgetary info, to claim these benefits.

In the long term, we recommend a reexamination of this framework, alongside a stakeholder process, to ensure key community-identified benefits are accounted for, properly quantified, and on equal footing with other program goals. At a minimum, projects should be required to score at least 5 points for community investment benefits and 5 points for nature-based solutions. Having community investment benefits and nature-based solutions account for so few points (25 in total out of 110) means projects can achieve the minimum threshold score of 60 points with little consideration of these benefits. Greater quantification of benefits and project budget

transparency will support partial accounting towards the 110% minimum benefit return on investment for DACs based on the amended definition outlined above.

To evaluate whether DAC projects in particular are providing needed benefits, applicants should also describe how community investment benefits are responsive to DAC priorities identified through community engagement and/or local support from grassroots groups or CBOs and be rewarded for doing so. The County could integrate a methodology similar to the [California Climate Investments' "Evaluation Criteria for Providing Benefits To Priority Populations"](#), which is used to ensure cap-and-trade-funded projects provide "direct, meaningful, and assured benefits to priority populations." Lastly, as more projects are being funded, there needs to be effective metrics to ensure equitable processes and outcomes throughout the program and project lifetime.

DAC project proponents need to engage in more thoughtful consideration of displacement risk and integration of displacement avoidance strategies. We see a clear lack of understanding of displacement risk associated with stormwater infrastructure investment. Right now only DAC project proponents are asked to describe their displacement avoidance strategies in the application. Some stated they would simply comply with all future Countywide displacement avoidance policies while others said that their project would not impact housing development and therefore would not trigger displacement, which is flawed reasoning. The County should provide more robust training on measuring displacement vulnerability and displacement avoidance best practices for project proponents, committee members, and program administrators as part of their suite of pre-submittal workshops.

Instead of an open-ended question in the application, project proponents should be required to provide more information and work from a checklist of best practices. For example, applicants could provide an assessment of displacement vulnerability, a description of anti-displacement policies and programs that are already in place within the project area, and identification of new policies and programs that the applicant and/or municipality will pursue. A menu of potential new policies and programs could be modeled off of the one provided to applicants for the [California Climate Investments' Transformative Climate Communities program](#).

DAC project proponents could also be required to consult with tenants' rights and nonprofit affordable housing groups as part of their community engagement and project development process. To put this together, we recommend consulting experts in this field such as the LA Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing Collaborative (LA ROSAH), which is looking closely at the intersection of green infrastructure and displacement impacts and helped develop the Measure A Displacement Avoidance Policy. We also recommend that the County support the ongoing work of the WHAM Committee to develop and implement Countywide anti-displacement policies.

3. Strengthening community engagement project requirements

Strong requirements for community engagement will make for better DAC investments and SCWP projects overall because those who are closest to the challenges on the ground are also closest to the solutions. OWLA recommends that the SCWP utilize the [Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#), previously shared with District staff, to demonstrate community engagement best practices and support consistent scoring across projects. The tool is a 0-5 scale that distinguishes between projects that simply share information, projects that invite and are responsive to community input, and projects that give full ownership and decision-making power to local residents. *In the near term*, project proponents, committee members, and program administrators could be trained on this tool. *In the long term*, the application should include a scoring matrix in line with the Spectrum of Community Engagement and reward projects that provide community-identified benefits.

We also recommend stricter guidelines for the type of documentation that demonstrates local support. Project proponents should work in partnership with or solicit support from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) that organize or represent residents that will be impacted by the project. Letters of support and memoranda of understanding should include background on the NGO/CBO and how long they have worked in the local community.

In addition to demonstrating community engagement prior to application, project proponents should also be required to submit community engagement plans that they will implement if they receive SCWP funding, including outlining the costs and types of engagement to be pursued. Furthermore, community engagement requirements in the Regional Fund Transfer Agreement should be strengthened to ensure planned activities are responsive, accessible, inclusive, and culturally appropriate.

4. Investing in community engagement at program level

OWLA commends the initiative taken by program administrators and committee members to clarify the project guidelines for DAC projects and community engagement; however, we want to elevate the opportunity to support these efforts at the program level. Robust community engagement at the program level -- through the Watershed Coordinators program, public education funding, and increased DAC representation on Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) -- can strengthen community engagement at the project level.

We are excited by the progress made in the Watershed Coordinators program, which was created to address inequities in each WASC and is expected to serve as a bridge to DACs. Performance metrics and effective coordination can ensure this role demonstrates community engagement best practices for project development, supports local capacity-building in DACs, and results in funding for high-quality, community-driven DAC projects.

We also recommend the County advance implementation of the SCWP's public education funding to complement the work of the Watershed Coordinators and equip them and community

members with the language and tools to engage in project development. Public education will build water literacy and understanding of multi-benefit stormwater infrastructure as well as increase transparency and trust in the SCWP. The County should invest in local community-based organizations that have community engagement expertise and existing relationships in the County's DACs to support public education implementation. To the extent possible, participants should also be compensated to encourage participation.

Furthermore, WASCs should be structured to elevate marginalized community voices, especially those representing DACs. While each WASC is structured to have five "community stakeholders," these members represent environmental justice, business, and environmental interests and two at-large members. This configuration makes it such that there is typically only one grassroots CBO, if any, in a 17-member WASC to bring in DAC perspectives and be a strong advocate for equitable investments. These spaces should be structured such that marginalized voices are not marginalized in decision-making bodies. Having stronger equity advocates on the WASCs will help move better projects through the SCWP pipeline.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our recommendations on these issues. The OWLA Core Team is committed to improving the SCWP implementation process and look forward to continuing to work with the District staff on this effort.

Sincerely,

OWLA Core Team: Heal the Bay, LAANE, LA Watekeeper, Nature for All, NRDC, Pacoima Beautiful, SCOPE, The Nature Conservancy, TreePeople



Public Comment Form

Name:* Shahriar Eftekhazadeh Organization*: SEITec
Email*: Shahriar.Eftekhazadeh@seitecinc.com Phone*: 310 879 9376
Meeting: ROC Date: 02/25/2021

LA County Public Works may contact me for clarification about my comments

*Per Brown Act, completing this information is optional. At a minimum, please include an identifier so that you may be called upon to speak.

Phone participants and the public are encouraged to submit public comments (or a request to make a public comment) to SafeCleanWaterLA@dpw.lacounty.gov. All public comments will become part of the official record.

Please complete this form and email to SafeCleanWaterLA@dpw.lacounty.gov by at least 5:00pm the day prior to the meeting with the following subject line: "Public Comment: [Watershed Area] [Meeting Date]" (ex. "Public Comment: USGR 4/8/20").

Comments

I would like to recommend and request your consideration of the following amendments to the SCW Feasibility Study Guideline:

Carbon Neutrality

Given the existential crises of climate change brought about by CO2 emissions, and the global commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, ALL SCW Project must be carbon neutral and demonstrate the same in the study.

Gravity Solution

A key part of accomplishing carbon neutrality is to focus and develop gravity solutions, and avoid pumping and pump stations. SCW Projects must include evaluation of "The Gravity Alternative", and prove that it is not feasible before opting for pumping. Gravity solution must receive full score for Nature Based Solution. Any pumping would automatically disqualify project for Nature Based Solution score.

Design Storm

The Feasibility Study Guidelines must limit the project design to the 85th Percentile 24-hour storm. Currently, full Water Quality Score is given for the 85th Percentile 24-hour storm, but there is nothing to prevent designing for much higher storm events, or including unrelated elements, outside the main purpose and scope of the SCW Program.

Examples of the consequence of this include the ULAR FY20-21 projects, Lankershim Blvd and Oro Vista. More than 65% of the total budget for these projects (\$25.3 Million) is for new storm drains for flood control that only function in larger than the 85th P. storms. The project actually score higher without these storm drains!

Design storms larger than the 85th Percentile 24-hour event would be allowed only if accompanied by clear justifications by quantified and tangible benefits. No unjustified project elements outside the Design Storm would be allowed.

Project Optimization

Project modeling and optimization must identify the combination of variables for capturing the 85th percentile storm, and not for maximizing annual Water Supply volume, or catering to explicit Flood Control objectives.

Currently, there are two proposed ULAR FY 21-22 projects with estimated cost of \$219 Million (\$108.5 Million ask) "optimized" for Annual Water Supply (maximized annual infiltration). The scope and budget for these projects would be greatly reduced once optimized for Water Quality, with no impact on their current score!

The above proposed amendments will streamline the SCW Program with climate change and prevent the expenditure of precious SCW funds on projects and elements that are outside the purpose and intent of the Program.



Public Comment Form

Name:* Samantha Matthews Organization*: SGVCOG
Email*: smatthews@sgvcog.org Phone*: 207-249-5324
Meeting: Regional Oversight Committee Date: 2/25/2021

- LA County Public Works may contact me for clarification about my comments
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Comments

Comment on Item 7:



Public Comment Form

Name:* Deborah Exum Organization*: SCOPE
Email*: _____ Phone*: _____
Meeting: ROC Date: 2/25/2021

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Comments



Public Comment Form

Name:* Lourdes Huerta Organization*: SCOPE
Email*: _____ Phone*: _____
Meeting: ROC Date: 2/25/2021

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Comments



Public Comment Form

Name:* Joaquin Meneses Organization*: SCOPE
Email*: _____ Phone*: _____
Meeting: ROC Date: 2/25/2021

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Comments



Public Comment Form

Name:* Guadalupe Rivas Organization*: SCOPE
Email*: _____ Phone*: _____
Meeting: ROC Date: 2/25/2021

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Comments



Public Comment Form

Name:* Blanca Lucio Organization*: SCOPE
Email*: _____ Phone*: _____
Meeting: ROC Date: 2/25/2021

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Comments