

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



Wednesday, December 1, 2021
2:00pm - 4:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Genevieve Osmena, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Art Castro, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
*John Huynh, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
Alfredo Magallanes, LA Sanitation & Environment (Agency)
Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Agency)
Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)
John Luker, Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (Community)
Max Liles, NBCUniversal, Inc. (Community)
Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)
Yazdan Emrani, Glendale (Municipal)
*Maged El-Rabaa, La Cañada Flintridge (Municipal)
Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair
Max Podemski, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice-Chair
Christine Peters, Los Angeles (Municipal)
*TJ Moon, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Kris Markarian, Pasadena (Municipal)
Adi Liberman, Environmental Outreach Strategies (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
Clarasophia Gust, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
Carlos Moran, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Cathie Santo Domingo, LA Recreation & Parks (Agency)

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Teresa Villegas, Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River WASC, welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

The District conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx and facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. District Staff also provided a Spanish translation of the tutorial.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 3, 2021

The District provided the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes, by Member Yazdan Emrani. Member Miguel Luna seconded the motion. The committee voted to approve the November 3, 2021 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no committee member updates.

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District Staff provided an update:

- Funds transfer process is initiated; currently setting up transfer agreements for the newly approved projects.
- If project proponents have not received any information from District, please email the District.
- Spatial Data Map on the Safe Clean Water Program (SCWP) website has been updated to include ArcGIS data and improve user experience.
- The Scoring Committee finished scoring all the IP projects and will proceed to score resubmitted projects that were unable to score. Resubmitted projects in the ULAR watershed area will be rescored on December 9.
- There were 12 projects total scored for ULAR. One scored lower than 60, they will resubmit for the next funding round. One project from the first Call for Projects decided not to proceed with receiving SCWP funds.
- Quarterly reports were due on November 15 for the Infrastructure and Scientific Studies Programs. A summary of quarterly reports will be presented to the WASC at a January meeting.
- The beta program of the municipal reports reporting module was officially released last week. Municipal reports are due on December 31.
- The District recently sent an email to the WASCs requesting vaccine information, with additional information from the Board of Supervisors on vaccine requirements.
- On November 30, the Board of Supervisors voted to continue meeting virtually, acting under the authority of Assembly Bill 361 which authorizes public committees to meet without complying with all the teleconferencing requirements of the Brown Act when the situation warrants it. The Board is reviewing every 30 days and will act to cover all the commissions and committees under their authority.

Chair Villegas asked how WASC members should provide vaccination information after the due date. District Staff responded that the District will send out more communication and that WASC members should respond to previously distributed emails to submit vaccination information.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinators Clarasophia Gust, Adi Liberman and Carlos Moran provided an update:

- Coordinators participated in various community events including City Plants, DACIP Project Sketching Workshop, outreach to current Technical Resources Program (TRP) projects, Environmental Awareness Day, and water equity trainings for Watershed Coordinators.
- Communications efforts included promoting the ULAR Facebook Group, launching a ULAR watershed coordinator webpage on the Council for Watershed Health website, and developing the ULAR eNewsletter.
- Their focus in December will be meeting municipalities and CBOs, conducting outreach to current TRP projects, and working with the City of LA Safe Clean Water Program Working Group.
- As requested by the WASC, Watershed Coordinators are also preparing a mapping tool to show benefits to disadvantage communities.
- All three Coordinators are working together to coordinate efforts throughout the ULAR Watershed Area.

Chair Villegas asked for more information about the water equity workshop training. Watershed Coordinator Moran shared that the first training was offered by the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and was open to all, but the December 2 workshop is specifically for Watershed Coordinators.

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5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Members Art Castro and John Huynh disclosed discussions about the Whitsett Field Park North Stormwater Capture project, as they work in the LADWP water supply team.

Chair Villegas received correspondence regarding the Community-Centered Optimization of Nature-Based BMPs Starting with the Gaffey Nature Center Facility Project, from Dr. Shahriar Eftekharzadeh on questions that were asked during the meeting.

6. Public Comment Period

See attachments for submitted public comment cards.

Mike Scaduto (Public Member, City of LA Sanitation and Environment) shared that the City of LA convenes a working group that has worked in partnership with the Watershed Coordinators. Public Member Scaduto noted that the City reports to the Administrative Oversight Committee and internally needs to follow a specific process for vetting, proposing, and administering projects. Scaduto requested the Watershed Coordinators include LASAN members in correspondence with council districts regarding proposed projects to ensure the projects can be included in City of LA's internal consideration processes.

7. Presentations and Discussion Items:

a) Infrastructure Program (IP) Presentations

i. Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture Project

Presentation by Merrill Taylor (Craftwater Engineering) and Peter Tonthat (LADWP). The Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture Project will capture 150 AF per year of stormwater, improve water quality, and enhance the disadvantaged community (DAC). Fifty percent cost match with strong community support.

Chair Villegas asked what the diversion structures entail. Tonthat clarified that the diversion structure and pre-treatment use gravity, so it does not involve pumps.

Chair Villegas asked for clarification on where the infiltration gallery will be located and what the water will be used for. Tonthat responded that the infiltration gallery will be located under the baseball fields at the park; the water will be used for storage and infiltration into the groundwater basin. The water will not be used for irrigation, due to limited demand for irrigation that does not justify the resources for treatment to Title 22 standards. Tonthat clarified that the water that is infiltrated will be naturally treated by the process of infiltration.

Member Genevieve Osmena asked whether there are localized flooding concerns near the park and whether the diversion will alleviate it. Taylor responded that the local flooding concerns are specific to areas upstream in the watershed and flooding is not a concern near the park. The project will help alleviate local flooding by diverting water from the upstream area of the watershed using a 90-inch storm drain.

Member Max Liles asked whether the project changes irrigation demand. Tonthat responded that the project will be upgrading the irrigation system to new codes and will also add new turf and trees that may or may not increase irrigation demands. Tonthat and Taylor confirmed that irrigation demands will be monitored and analyzed during project design to address the WASC member's concerns.

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Member Liles asked whether the irrigation system uses domestic or recycled water. Tonthat responded that the park uses domestic water currently.

Member Veronica Padilla-Campos asked whether they can vote for the project, given their involvement with Pacoima Beautiful. District Staff responded that Pacoima Beautiful is not receiving any funding, so Member Padilla-Campos should be able to vote.

ii. Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation and Maintenance

Presentation by Gordon Haines (LASAN). Operation and maintenance of 13-acres of lake and treatment wetlands at a vital multi-purpose City of Los Angeles facility.

Member Padilla-Campos asked if the swan boat and paddle boat business is owned by a private company. Haines responded that they are a private vendor hired by LA Parks and Recreation.

Member Padilla-Campos requested for clarification on whether the funding would only be for the water, not the park. Haines confirmed that the funding would only be used for water and park features that may impact the water. Haines also noted that water quality in the Echo Park Lake impacts businesses as well and would provide auxiliary benefits.

Member Christine Peters disclosed involvement as the LASAN liaison for the park. The Member asked about the community's concerns regarding invasive plant species and water quality issues impacts on recreation. Haines responded that they are looking to methods for removing invasive plant species, which are currently hand-controlled. The funds would help investigate and implement better strategies to remove invasive plant species. Regarding water quality, monitoring is conducted regularly for bacteria. The lake is mitigating pollutants, but O&M would allow for the project to control issues of community concern.

Member Peters reminded the WASC that the swan boats received a permit to extend operations to 10 PM. This recreation activity is one that will be impacted by the water quality in the park and the park provides a positive community benefit to the disadvantaged community.

Member Ernesto Pantoja asked who would be conducting the O&M tasks and what kind of jobs may result from the project. Haines responded that the park has been using short-term contracts with small local businesses, with mixed involvement from unions so far. LASAN is looking to use long-term contracts moving forward and noted that because there is not a specific union for the O&M tasks regarding lake maintenance, LASAN hires both unionized and non-unionized laborers.

Member Luna asked for information about the status of the bubble-gum apple snail population, an invasive species. Haines responded that LASAN is not using chemical deterrents; they are employing hand-reduction methods to control the bubble-gum apple snail population. The funds will help the project investigate and implement environmentally friendly methods of species removal. The bubble-gum apple snails consume plants in the lake that reduce the effectiveness of lake treatment.

District Staff reminded the WASC that the SCWP scores provided on the slides are preliminary scores and may be outdated. Refer to the Scoring Committee webpage for scores.

8. Public Comment Period

Kelsey Jessup (The Nature Conservancy) commented in support of the Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation & Maintenance project. Jessup noted personal experience with the community benefits provided by the park, particularly how it fills the need for community access to outdoor space. The project's multiple

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benefits are much needed in the area. Jessup noted that O&M is critical to maintaining the benefits provided by the project.

9. Voting Items

There were no voting items.

10. Items for Next Agenda

- The next WASC meeting will be held on January 5, 2022.
- Presentations for the Infrastructure Program will continue on January 5.
- A second meeting will be held on January 20, 2022.
- SIP discussions will take place late February or March.

Member Padilla-Campos asked whether the next meeting would include two presentations. District Staff clarified that future meetings would include two (three at maximum) presentations based on other agenda items.

11. Adjournment

Chair Villegas thanked WASC members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

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		Quorum Present				Voting Items
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 11-3-2021 Meeting Minutes
Agency	FCD	Genevieve Osmena	x	Ramy Gindi		y
Agency	Water Agency	Delon Kwan		Art Castro	x	y
Agency	Groundwater / Water Agency 2	Paul Liu		John Huynh	x	y
Agency	Sanitation	Alfredo Magallanes	x	Michael Scaduto		y
Agency	Open Space	Cathie Santo Domingo		Javier Solis		
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Ernesto Pantoja	x	Sergio Rascon		y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Miguel Luna	x	Yvette Lopez-Ledesma		y
Community Stakeholder	Environment	John Luker	x	Wendi Gladstone		y
Community Stakeholder	Business	Max Liles	x			y
Community Stakeholder	EJ	Veronica Padilla-Campos	x	Felipe Escobar		y
Municipal Members	Glendale	Yazdan Emrani	x	Edward Hitti		y
Municipal Members	La Canada Flintridge	Patrick DeChellis		Maged El-Rabaa	x	a
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Teresa Villegas	x	Barbara Romero		y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Max Podemski	x	Ackley Padilla		
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Christine Peters	x	Rafael Prieto		y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles County	Mark Lombos		TJ Moon	x	y
Municipal Members	Pasadena	Kris Markarian	x	Brent Maue		a
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	Environmental Outreach Strategies	Adi Liberman	x			
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	Council for Watershed Health	Clarasophia Gust	x			
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	Council for Watershed Health	Carlos Moran	x			
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	13
Total Voting Members Present		16			No (N)	0
Agency		4			Abstain (A)	2
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	15
Municipal Members		7				Approved

Attendees

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Vik Bapna - CWE	Mike	Sunshine Saucedo	Yaz Emrani
Jeannette Hernandez	Merrill Taylor	Lauro Alvarado	Art Castro
Clarasophia Gust	Kelsey Jessup	Mayra Cabrera	Veronica Padilla
Jim Rasmus	Darin Son (Notetaker)	Gordon Haines	Ernesto Pantoja
Sarai Bhaga	christine peters	Christine McLeod	ilene ramirez
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Thuan Nguyen	H. Ted Gerber	Thuan Nguyen
Peter Tonthat	Sheila Brice	Kelsey Reed	Maria Ramirez
Carlos Moran	Tanya Sullivan	John luker	William OBraitis
Joyce Amaro	Brianna Datti	TJ Moon	Alfredo Magallanes
Danielle Chupa	Drew Ready	Wendi Gladstone	Kris Markarian
Johanna Chang	Gus Orozco	Cathie Santo Domingo	Max Liles
Nayiri Vartanian	Edward Hitti	Jennifer Amarant	Pablo Forni
Trevor Davis	Lorena Matos	john huynh	Amanda
Teresa Villegas	Adi Liberman	Jason Casanova	Alynn Sun
Taraneh Nik-Khah	Susie Santilena	Maged ElRabaa	Conor Mossavi
Miguel Luna	Mike Antos (Stantec)	Miller Zou	Genevieve Osmena
J B	Noel Le	C Hernandez	Carmen Andrade
Jesenia Maldonado	max podemski	Luis Garcia	