

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



Tuesday, January 25, 2022
1:00pm - 3:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Attendees

Committee Members Present:

*Aimee Zhao, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
Stephen Scott, City of Long Beach Parks & Recreation (Agency)
*Dr. Quynh Tran, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Esterno Rivera, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Kedrin Hopkins, Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Community)
*Joe Gonzalez, Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (Community)
*Dylan Porter, Port of Long Beach (Community)
Gina Nila, Commerce (Municipal), Chair
Dan Mueller, Downey (Municipal)
Melissa You, Long Beach (Municipal), Vice Chair
Laura Ochoa, Lynwood (Municipal)
*Sarah Ho, Paramount (Municipal)
Gladis Deras, South Gate (Municipal)
Tara Dales, SGA Marketing (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
*Erica Macenda, River in Action (Community)
*Manny Gonez, TreePeople (Agency)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Alex Rojas, Central Basin (Agency)
Cecil Looney, Signal Hill (Municipal)

See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees

1. Welcome and Introductions

Melissa You, Vice Chair of the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) 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.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 26, 2021

The District presented the meeting minutes from the October 26, 2021 meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes, by Vice Chair You. Member Gladis Deras seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the meeting minutes from October 26, 2021. (Approved, see Vote Tracker sheet)

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District Staff provided an update:

- On January 11, 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

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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.

- The District has initiated the process of sending fund transfer agreements. Addendums for Year 1 projects are already out and initial agreements for Year 2 projects were distributed.
- The Scoring Committee has scored projects across the program. 8 projects were submitted. Refer to the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) website for additional information.
- SIP tool data has been updated for WASC review. Please review and provide feedback as needed.
- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans are due April 1 to the SCWP. Annual Plans are required to receive the Municipal Program revenue.

Due to changes in staffing at Rivers & Mountains Conservancy, Member Joe Gonzalez reminded the Committee that a new alternate would not be appointed. Member Gonzalez will remain the Alternate indefinitely.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Tara Dales provided an update on activities which included:

- Developed Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan in May 2021. Developed and distributed associated outreach materials.
- Sent call for projects press release to 108 stakeholders.
- Held outreach meetings with SEITec, City Fabrik, LA Neighborhood Land Trust, and other organizations in November, December, and January.
- Gave two presentations and participated in four workshops.
- Completed four in-person events. Finalizing plans for the last two events of the fiscal year, both of which are virtual. One is about effective community engagement, and the other demonstrates how community members can use their gardens to help achieve SCWP goals.
- Watershed Coordinator Dales was scheduled, in partnership with USGR watershed coordinator, to table at the Water Replenishment District groundwater festival, which has now been postponed due to the COVID surge.
- Contamination, trash, and drought were the most common water issues reported by surveyed community members.
- Reached out to Public Works directors of cities not represented on the WASC.

Chair Gina Nila asked if Watershed Coordinator Dale will eventually work with city staff to develop projects that align with watershed area goals. The Watershed Coordinator confirmed that goal and noted that they will additionally work to ensure that projects that are submitted are supported by communities.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

6. Public Comment Period

Gloria Ramirez (Alvarez-Glasman & Colvin law firm) introduced themselves and shared that the firm represents the City of Huntington Park. Ramirez thanked the WASC for their time and consideration of the City's proposal for the Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern.

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7. Discussion Items

a) Infrastructure Projects (IP) Presentation ([SCW Portal](#))

i. Apollo Park Stormwater Capture Project

Presentation by Daniel Mueller and John Hunter. The objectives of this project are to improve water quality within the Los Angeles River Watershed, reduce local flooding on nearby streets, revitalize park facilities, implement nature-based solutions, supplement the Central Groundwater Basin, and increase available water supply.

The WASC did not have questions.

ii. Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern

Presentation by Cesar Roldan, Steve Forster, and Oliver Galang. The objectives of this project are to improve water quality in the LA River Upper Reach 2 Watershed and integrate environmentally friendly, cost-effective, nature-based treatments & public education.

Member Gonzalez asked for clarification, noting that appears the projects is competitive with a request for a \$12.5 million, 5-year SIP, but that the total cost includes amounts beyond the 5-years that would be listed as a “future funding” commitment by the WASC. District staff clarified that the future funding (\$16.5 million) would be programmed into the SIP tool. Member Gonzalez asked if approval of this funding would indicate approval for a ten-year plan. The District replied yes—if the WASC approves the SIP, they are approving the total amount. Every year following, they would approve a SIP to approve funding for follow-on needs each year. WASC members can track projects included in the SIP using quarterly reports and invited presentations from funds recipients so the WASC can make annual decisions about allocating funds for projects.

Forster noted that after the five-year plan, they will continue to seek funding from other state and federal agencies that may diminish the future needs of the effort. They would continue to reach out to other agencies to secure additional funding. Roldan said the goal is not to place all the funding needs on the County. The goal is to secure resources from the federal and state levels. They want to secure funding now to move forward and secure additional federal funds.

iii. Willow Springs Park Wetland Restoration and Expansion Project

Presentation by Nancy Villaseñor, Larry Rich, and Nate Schreiner. The objectives of this project are the revitalization of a 48-acre open space with the addition of a 4.1 ac-ft wetland, 7,980’ of trails, 232 trees, native plants, and education signage.

Member Gonzalez commented that this looks like a competitive project. They asked for clarification on the timeline, noting that the cost and schedule indicate that design will be complete in 2023. Rich expects design will take one year and noted that they will apply for construction funding in the future. Member Gonzalez asked if they also anticipate one year for construction. Schreiner confirmed that they expect construction to take one year.

Chair Nila asked for clarification about the existing wetland augmentation, noting that area appears dry and hilly in the aerial view. Schreiner said it is an arid region, but there was a

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project in 2017 that included planting along the trail, and the plants have since survived well. There are also historic willow trees on the site. Schreiner said the vegetation is expected to do well despite being located in an arid region. Rich said that the area labeled as an existing wetland is dry because it is a seasonal wetland fed by stormwater flows. Riparian and wetland plants persist in the area, even where there is no standing water. Chair Nila asked if the proposed augmentation effort would include the seasonal wetland. Schreiner said yes and that clarified that the project's new proposed wetland is an entirely separate wetland that would not connect to the existing wetland.

Rich provided additional information about the property's ownership and easement-holders. The property is owned by the City, and some oil companies have easements. The wellheads are fenced, but there are non-fenced easements that are open to the public. The company that has easements on the site is aware of the project.

Member Maceda asked about community educational opportunities. Schreiner replied that there is signage planned throughout the site and at trail heads to explain the functions of the site. Rich said that there are also existing educational opportunities on the site, including signs explaining the site's history. They are working with several community organizations to expand the signage to include information about native plants.

8. Public Comment Period

Mark Hall from the Los Angeles County Vector Control District had a question about the Salt Lake project. They asked who conducted the review of the mosquito minimization plan. Roldan replied that the proponent's consultants worked on the preliminary project plans. The goal is to get the project to the environmental phase so that additional questions like this one can be addressed. Mike Antos (Stantec) said that the feasibility studies must "have a plan to incorporate vector minimization in the project design, operations, and maintenance." The project submittal tool recommends that project proponents have the local vector control district or agency to review the plans. Feasibility Studies submitted using the project submittal tool are reviewed by the SCWP staff for completeness before projects are considered by the WASC.

Personnel from the Conservation Corps of Long Beach shared the Corps' support of the Willow Springs Park project, noting that it aligns with the Corps' goals and will facilitate community engagement.

Oliver Galang clarified that a vector minimization plan was included with the Salt Lake application, but no consultation was done. The applicants will likely consult with the Vector Control District during the design phase.

9. Voting Items

There were no voting items.

10. Items for Next Agenda

District staff asked if the Committee would like to have a three-hour meeting in February to be able to accommodate the full agenda. The Committee concurred with the recommendation. The next meeting of the LLAR WASC will be Tuesday February 22, 2022 from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM. See the SCWP website for meeting details.

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Member Gonzalez shared that other WASCs have asked that implementation be included in the budgets on the SIP tool, and asked the Committee whether they would be interested in making this request of projects that have been approved for design-only funding. The Member added that the other WASCs hope to anticipate construction funding requests by asking for implementation to be shown in the budgets. District staff said the tool does not currently reflect anticipated future requests but that past project applicants could be invited to these meetings, if the WASC has questions for them. Member Gonzalez shared their view that it would be useful to have past applicants present. The District will invite applicants to explain those anticipated future funding requests to the Committee. Watershed Coordinator Dales added that they are in contact with past project applicants and can circulate a spreadsheet for them to indicate their anticipated funding requests. District staff noted that the Committee has access to the SIP tool and may make edits. District staff will send out a ranking tool in order to get a sense of the projects that the members would like to choose.

Items for the next meeting include:

- a) Reselect the current LLAR Watershed Coordinator for the next term
- b) Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary
- c) Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the LLAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review

12. Adjournment

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

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		Quorum Present				Voting Items (see meeting minutes for additional details)
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 10-26-2021 Meeting Minutes
Agency	District	Ernesto Rivera	x	Ramy Gindi		y
Agency	Central Basin	Alex Rojas		Jeremy Melendez		
Agency	Water Replenishment District	Rob Beste		Aimee Zhao	x	a
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Dr. Quynh Tran	x	y
Agency	Port of Long Beach	James Vernon		Dylan Porter	x	y
Community Stakeholder	Conservation Corps of Long Beach	Kedrin Hopkins	x			y
Community Stakeholder	Rivers & Mountains Conservancy	Mark Stanley		Joe Gonzalez	x	y
Community Stakeholder	TreePeople	Cindy Montanez		Manny Gonez	x	y
Community Stakeholder	City of Long Beach Parks & Recreation	Stephen Scott	x			y
Community Stakeholder	River in Action	Melissa Bahmanpour		Erica Maceda	x	y
Municipal Members	City of Commerce					
Municipal Members	City of Bell Gardens	Gina Nila	x			y
Municipal Members	City of Downey	Dan Mueller	x	Delfino Consunji		y
Municipal Members	City of Long Beach	Melissa You	x	Cecilia Salazar		y
Municipal Members	City of Lynwood	Laura Ochoa	x	Noe Martinez		y
Municipal Members	City of Paramount	Adriana Figueroa		Sarah Ho	x	a
Municipal Members	City of Signal Hill	Cecil Looney				
Municipal Members	City of South Gate	Gladis Deras	x	Clint Herrera		y
Watershed Coordinator						
Non-Voting Member	SGA Marketing	Tara Dales	x			
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	13
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0
Agency		4			Abstain (A)	2
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	15
Municipal Members		6				Approved

Attendees
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Aimee Zhao	Ernesto Rivera	Mayra Cabrera - LACFCD
Alex Chin	Fiona McHenry-Crutchfield	Melissa You
Amanda Begley	Fred Gonzalez	Michelle Kim
Arturo Gonzalez	Gina Nila	Michelle Loekman
Brittany Rivas	Gladis Deras	Michelle Loekman
Brittany Rivas	Gloria Ramirez	Mike Antos (regional coord.)
Bryce Lee	Grace Kast	Nancy Villasenor
Cameron Castillo	Jeff Atijera	Nate Schreiner - Tetra Tech
Cecilia Salazar	John Hunter	Oliver Galang
Cesar Roldan	Joseph Gonzalez	Quynh Tran
Cesar Roldan	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Raul Alvarez
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Kedrin Hopkins	Safe Clean Water LA
Dan Mueller	Kedrin Hopkins	Sarah Ho
Daniel Hernandez	Larry Rich	Stephen Scott
David Sall	Laura Ochoa	Tara Dales
Dylan Porter	Lauro Alvarado	Travis Diaz
emily ramos	Manny Gonez	Uriel Cobian - LACFCD
Erica Maceda	Marcela Benavides	Wataru Kumagai
Ernesto Rivera	Mark Hall	Zeke Okoya