

Santa Clara River Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Thursday, January 6, 2022
3:00pm - 5:00 pm
WebEx Meeting

Attendees

Committee Members Present:

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Dirk Marks, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (Agency)
Steve Cole, Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agency)
*Christopher Lapaz, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Janine Prado, City of Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services (Agency)
Hunt Braly, Poole & Shaffery (Community)
Mary Johnson, Agua Dulce Town Council (Community)
Sandra Cattell, Sierra Club (Community)
Ivan Volschenk, Evolve Business Strategies (Community)
Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, Santa Clarita Valley Community Hiking Club (Community)
Bruce Hamamoto, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Jason Gibbs, Santa Clarita (Municipal), Chair
Heather Merenda, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Mike Hennawy, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Tom Cole, Santa Clarita (Municipal), Vice Chair
Peter Massey, TreePeople (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

The District facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

Jason Gibbs, Chair of the Santa Clara River (SCR) WASC, welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 10, 2021

Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member Dirk Marks, seconded by Member Sandra Cattell. The committee voted to approve the November 10, 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 agreements for round 1 and 2 being processed. Project proponents should supply the District with requested information.
- The Scoring Committee finished scoring SCR WASC projects on November 22. The Pico Canyon Park Infrastructure Project scored 65 points.
- The Stormwater Investment Planning (SIP) tool data has been updated for WASC review. Please review the live beta version and provide feedback as needed.
- The Board of Supervisors voted on December 21, 2021 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.
- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans are due April 1 to the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP). Annual Plans are required to receive the Municipal Program revenue.
- Claims for the [Low-Income Senior-Owned Special Parcel Tax Exemption](#) and [general income-based tax reduction](#) are due May 1, 2022. More information can be found on the [Safe, Clean Water Program website](#)

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

a. Watershed Coordinator Quarterly Report

Watershed Coordinator Peter Massey (TreePeople) provided an overview of the accomplishments and work completed in the past six months as well as a snapshot of what is planned for the next six months. In the past six months, the Watershed Coordinator has:

- Developed the Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan.
- Identified and developed community-based project ideas.
- Connected community members, applicants, and public agencies around project ideas and needs.
- Coordinated with the WaterTalks Program about potential projects in underserved communities.
- Met with the City of Santa Clarita and LA County Public Works regarding projects already underway or intended for submittal to the SCWP.
- Built an inventory of potential projects and visited multiple potential sites.
- Conducted outreach to identify parties that may be interested in connecting with community needs and SCWP projects.
- Facilitated the effort to address community concerns regarding the pathogen study.
- Conducted outreach to elected officials to build relationships with field representatives.
- Met with multiple institutions and organizations with the goal of developing community partnerships
- Met monthly with other Watershed Coordinators to learn from each other, improve knowledge and skills, and leverage efforts to avoid duplication.
- Worked with the North Santa Monica Bay Watershed Area to develop a native plants toolkit to distribute to homeowners to encourage water conservation.
- Connected residents to community meetings for the County Water Plan being developed and the County Parks Needs Assessment.
- Attended the River Rally and met with over 200 members of the community, conducted at least 30 surveys on water-related issues, educated the community on how water moves through the watershed, and initiated contact with eight new interested parties.
- Identified areas of flooding concerns.

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- Engaged RV communities.
- Provided guidance to LA County Public Works on how to use community needs information when preparing public presentations on projects.

Next steps include:

- Developing project funding applications.
- Continuing to build network.
- Attending public events.
- Tracking Tribal needs assessment conducted by WaterTalks.

b. New updates

No additional updates were provided.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

No ex parte communications were disclosed.

6. Public Comment Period

Josafat Flores (LA County Public Works) submitted a comment card in response to questions from members of the Committee related to the Pico Canyon Stormwater Improvements Project. Flores' comment card is posted on the SCWP website.

Lynne Plambeck (Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment) expressed concern over the Pico Canyon Project, particularly at the Open Space Park. Plambeck is concerned that construction might negatively affect oak trees in the park. That area is the site of the Old Glory Pico Oak and Plambeck wants to ensure a CEQA document will be prepared before funding is awarded.

Sarai Jimenez (Our Water LA) posted a comment card expressing support for the renewal of TreePeople as Watershed Coordinator for the next term.

7. Discussion Items

a. Selection of SCR Watershed Coordinator for next term

District staff discussed the process for renewing or replacing the Watershed Coordinator for another term.

Member Cattell expressed support for renewing the contract with Watershed Coordinator Massey and Tree People. Member Cattell stated that Watershed Coordinator Massey and TreePeople have done an excellent job of engaging the community and answering questions from the WASC. The Member wholeheartedly endorses reselection. Member Cattell requested clarification about whether the Watershed Coordinator's one-year term begins at their start date, the fiscal year, or the calendar year. The District replied that the term begins when the notice to proceed is issued.

The District requested moving Agenda Item 9 to this point in the meeting, so that Watershed Coordinator Massey can return to the call and provide input for Agenda Items 7b and 7c.

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Member Hunt Braly suggested that voting items should be voted on directly following the discussion item rather than putting off the vote for a later time. Member Braly motioned to vote. Agenda Item 8 has been moved up as well, to accommodate public comments before voting.

8. Public Comment Period (moved up on agenda)

Member Mary Johnson expressed support for Watershed Coordinator Massey, stating that Watershed Coordinator Massey has been very responsive and jumped right into the role, before even being formally selected as Watershed Coordinator.

Member Diane Hellrigel mentioned that their time spent in the field with Watershed Coordinator Massey has been fantastic and they have both learned a lot from it.

Public Member Jacqueline Ayer echoed Member Johnson's comments and added that they are happy with Watershed Coordinator Massey and TreePeople's outreach to the communities in the watershed. Public Member Ayer expressed satisfaction with Watershed Coordinator Massey's efforts and requested the Committee renew their contract.

Plambeck expressed support for Watershed Coordinator Massey, adding that they have worked together for approximately two decades and Watershed Coordinator Massey is a good pick for the project.

9. Voting Items (moved up on agenda)

a. Reselect the current SCR Watershed Coordinator for the next term

Member Braly motioned to renew Watershed Coordinator Massey's contract. The motion was seconded by Member Hellrigel.

The WASC voted to reselect Peter Massey as the Watershed Coordinator for another year. The WASC invited Watershed Coordinator Massey to rejoin the meeting.

7. Discussion Items (continued)

b. Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary (continuation of Agenda item #7)

i. Quarter 3 (January-March) and Quarter 4 (April-June)

District staff provided an overview of the new Regional Program Quarterly Report Summary and asked for feedback from the WASC on how it could be improved. The summary is intended to provide a big picture overview to aid committee members in making determinations on the SIP and how to fund or not fund the SIP for future rounds. Project developers may be invited to future meetings to address any concerns.

Member Cattell would like to see an update on how the funds have been used, specifically for Newhall Park, and if there has been any community outreach. The WASC had asked to be invited to any community outreach events and to this point, they haven't heard anything. Member Cattell also asked if there is wiggle room for project modification, should they receive feedback from the community. District staff stated that scope modification does not include addition of scope, but modification of scope that has already been proposed. Adding items would affect funding, but updates on what has happened as well as any community outreach can be added to the summary.

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Chair Gibbs noted that funding for projects is usually planned out years in advance for the SIP. Chair Gibbs asked if the WASC must allocate the money that was planned out years ahead for the SIP. District staff answered that technically the WASC does not have to allocate those funds. If the WASC wants to change the project, it's important to be able to review those changes and decide what is best for the watershed. Member Johnson mentioned that updates are important because the projects are long term, and it is good to be able to review issues that have arisen or may arise in the future.

Chair Gibbs noted that a red activity concern indicates a change from the original proposal. Chair Gibbs asked for clarification about the specific activity concern. Project developer Darin Seegmiller shared that there have been delays in receipt of funds from the County and the activity concern is reflective of the impact this delay has had on the project's timeline. Seegmiller clarified that although the delay looks like an issue on the report summary, it is not truly significant.

Member Cattell requested additional information about why the project hasn't engaged the community yet, noting that usually projects conduct community engagement before coming to the WASC. Seegmiller shared that they want to have the project lined up before asking for community support and expressed their desire to produce a park design that will be supported by the community. Member Cattell reiterated that as the ultimate judge of the project, the community needs to be afforded the opportunity to provide input. Member Cattell suggested that the new parking area and adjacent older parking area present a good opportunity to be converted to permeable pavement parking areas. Seegmiller wants to finalize the scope better with the type of things Member Cattell is describing, especially the elements that will enhance the park's usability. Member Cattell also expressed an interest in ensuring the project receives input from those who use the park, not just those that live adjacent to the park.

Mike Antos (Stantec) asked the WASC for guidance on the level of detail they would like to see shared about the quarterly reports, moving forward.

Member Steve Cole followed up on the activity concern issue, asking who checks the activity concern box. The Member also noted that it is unclear what "Sum of Funding Projected" means. District staff responded that the "Sum of Funding Projected" is the total amount of funding requested by the project applicant. "Sum of Funds Awarded to Date" is the amount the project has been awarded to date.

Chair Gibbs noted that the Summary does not break down how much funding was awarded in a given year or whether the amount matches the anticipation or not. Chair Gibbs suggested adding additional columns to indicate the amount of funding awarded each year. That information would be of use in the event that one of the projects is delayed because of another's needs. Moving forward, it would be useful to know who and why an activity concern has been triggered, so that an update can be provided in the agenda rather than necessitating follow-up via future meetings.

c. Summary of projects and studies submitted for Santa Clara River WASC for Consideration ([SCW Portal](#))

District staff provided a tutorial on how to use the SIP tool which allows users to view budgets for a selected year or project, as well as budget projections.

Plambeck asked if quarterly reports or the SIP tool will be made publicly accessible. District staff responded that the SIP tool is available on the SCWP webpage and the quarterly report summaries will be uploaded as well. The link to the portal is located under the resources tab, not the specific WASC page. The link to the portal is also posted to the agenda.

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8. Public Comment Period (added to agenda)

There were no additional public comments.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 3, 2022, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM. See the SCWP website for details.

a. Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the SCR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review

Member Cattell asked LA Public Works to justify how they chose the specific locations for the Pico Canyon infiltration projects when there are plenty of alternative locations with similar soils. The Member asked about where the bacteria is coming from and whether there are other pollutants of concern, suggesting that the pollutants could potentially be managed through outreach to the neighborhood about their pollutant use and its impact on local waters. The Member inquired as to whether it may be feasible to combine the two Pico Canyon projects.

Flores (LA County Public Works) responded to Member Cattell, stating that different components were evaluated during the project's development, one of which was a Reasonable Assurance Analysis (RAA). The RAA used various models to determine the full scope of what would be needed to meet water quality objectives. The modeling system analyzed the upper SCR Watershed Area for cost effectiveness, water quality improvements and hydrology, nearby rain gauges, land use, and other existing data. This information informed the selection of the control measures and communities/locations proposed.

There is a major development upstream of the two parks, which have major drainage systems that generate pollutants. The project developer anticipates project will primarily address the bacteria TMDL exceedances, however, trash, metals, and toxins will also be addressed.

Member Bruce Hamamoto shared that the determining factors in selecting project sites were: (1) the presence of a nearby developed area that generated pollutants and (2) an existing drainage system that funnels runoff to a publicly owned land parcel. (Member Hamamoto noted that land acquisition is costly and may be seen as unfavorable to the public.) Based on those factors, the two Pico sites were selected. This determination is supported by findings from the WMMS modeling system available through the Flood Control District.

Member Cattell asked for clarification about why the presence of bacteria in this neighborhood is so high and whether management actions could reduce the load. The Member reiterated their question about whether the projects could be connected and combined. Flores responded that an investigation would need to be conducted to determine the source of the bacteria and clarified that other areas with similar developments also have bacterial exceedances, as is verified through monitoring across the watershed. The projects cannot be combined, not only because they are in different watersheds, but because permit requirements require differing levels of pollutant treatment. The projects are also in different stages of development and treat two distinct flows. A pump system would be required to combine the projects, thereby increasing costs significantly.

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Member Hamamoto noted that since a pump system is not the preferred way to overcome the elevation difference, perhaps a gravity flow system could be pursued. The Member spoke to Plambeck's concerns regarding the Old Glory tree, stating that an arborist study conducted approximately three years ago confirmed there would be no impact to Old Glory or any of the surrounding oak trees.

Antos reminded Member Hamamoto to be conscientious of the seat on the Committee he holds when discussing competitive projects. Antos suggested staff should answer project-related questions.

Member Johnson asked whether any source investigations had been performed to determine the current level of contamination. Flores responded that there is no baseline monitoring for either project. Flores noted that previous projects that included baseline monitoring demonstrated pollutant loads consistent or higher than existing SIP monitoring data. Flores noted that such tests cost between \$50k-100k. Member Johnson reiterated that they do not have any baseline monitoring. Flores clarified that they do have monitoring data from just north of both project locations at two different reaches within the watershed. That data shows pollutant exceedances. The developer is using that data in addition to the model to size and design the treatment systems, as well as previous experiences and results they've obtained from baseline monitoring.

Member Johnson reiterated that the exact contaminants and contamination levels at the location are unknown. Flores confirmed the Member's statement and added that the model has been used for various projects and post construction monitoring efforts. Member Johnson asked for additional details about the modeling system used. Flores explained that the project uses the WMMS 2.0 information system which provides a big picture look at pollutants within a tributary area by pulling information from nearby rain gauges and land use attributes.

Member Johnson expressed concern that without baseline monitoring data or a source investigation, the project may be addressing a nonexistent problem and is therefore difficult to support. Antos prompted Flores to explain the relationship between WMMS and the MS4 permit and how the regulator sets conditions of compliance. Flores conveyed that the RAA indicates potential water quality improvements and WMMS is the system that evaluates different combinations of BMPs that could be used to achieved specific levels of pollution reduction to comply with the permit. The system, therefore, helps prioritize projects and programs that are listed in the implementation plan. Antos added that compliance is determined at both the project site and collectively across all project sites.

Chair Gibbs asked if the Committee Members have any other items to discuss for the next agenda. Member Cattell indicated they would like to revisit this conversation again before voting on the Pico Canyon projects. Member Hamamoto asked if Member Cattell has a specific, new question regarding the project, that could help prepare them for the next meeting. Member Cattell replied they would like time to consider the information presented today.

Public Member Ayer expressed concerned that data obtained from miles upstream could be indicative of the project's capacity to treat pollutants. Ayer questioned whether the project could claim a rate of 80% cleanup without baseline data.

Plambeck requested follow-up information on the arborist study referenced by Member Hamamoto. The Member will send the study to District staff, who will upload and make it publicly available for the next meeting.

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11. Adjournment

Vice Chair Tom Cole motioned to adjourn; Member Cattell seconded the motion. Chair Gibbs thanked the WASC members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

SANTA CLARA RIVER WASC MEETING - JANUARY 6, 2022

		Quorum Present				(see meeting minutes for additional details)	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 11-10- 2021 Meeting Minutes	Reselect the current SCR Watershed Coordinator for the next term
Agency	District	Julian Juarez	x	Ramy Gindi		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
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Christopher Lapaz	x	A	Y
Agency	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services	Janine Prado	x	Amy Seyerle		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	Evolve Business Strategies	Ivan Volschenk	x			A	Y
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		A	Y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		A	Y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		A	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	Mike Hennawy	x	Jerrid McKenna		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Tom Cole	x	David Peterson		Y	Y
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	TreePeople, Inc.	Peter Massey	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	11	17
Total Voting Members Present		17			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	5	0
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	16	17
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

Attendees
Santa Clara River WASC Meeting
January 6, 2022

Dianne Hellrigel	Ryan Edgley	Julian Juarez	Carlos Moran
Dirk Marks	Kayla Kilgo - CWE	Blake Whittington	Heather Merenda
Mary Johnson	Jacqueline Ayer	Jonathan Lu	Peter Massey
Darin Seegmiller	Hunt Braly	Josafat Flores	Uriel Cobian - LACFCD
Clarasophia Gust	Steve Cole	Allen Ma - LA County Public	Amanda Zeidner
Ivan Volschenk	Sandra Cattell	Lauro Alvarado	Jerrid Mckenna
Iynne Plambeck	Maia Colyar	Mark Hall	Bruce Hamamoto
Chris Lapaz	Ashleigh Townsend	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Amanda Begley
Annakaren Ramirez	Mike Hennawy	Ariel Lew Ai Le Whitson	Trevor Davis
Oliver Cramer	Diane Trautman	janine prado	
Tom Cole	Mike Antos (Stantec)	Steven Webb	
Nate Schreiner	Elisha Back	Jason Gibbs	