

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



Tuesday, February 22, 2022
1:00pm - 4:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Attendees

Committee Members Present:

*Everardo Trujillo, Central Basin MWD (Agency)
*Aimee Zhao, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
Stephen Scott, City of Long Beach Parks & Recreation (Agency)
*Dr. Quynh Tran, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Ernesto Rivera, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Joe Gonzalez, Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (Community)
*Manny Gonez, TreePeople (Community)
*Dylan Porter, Port of Long Beach (Community)
Melissa Bahmanpour, River in Action (Community)
Dan Mueller, Downey (Municipal)
Melissa You, Long Beach (Municipal), Vice Chair
Laura Ochoa, Lynwood (Municipal)
Adriana Figueroa, Paramount (Municipal)
Gladis Deras, South Gate (Municipal)
*Thomas Bekele, Signal Hill (Municipal)
Tara Dales, SGA Marketing (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Kedrin Hopkins, Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Community)
Gina Nila, Commerce (Municipal), Chair

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 January 25, 2022

District Staff presented the meeting minutes from the January 25, 2022 meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member Manny Gonez, seconded by Member Gladis Deras. The Committee approved the meeting minutes from January 25, 2022. (Approved, see Vote Tracker sheet)

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District Staff provided an update:

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- On February 8, 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.
- For the Regional Program, the District has initiated the process of sending Fund Transfer Agreements for projects approved under Round 2 of the Stormwater Investment Plan.
- For projects approved in the Fiscal Year (FY) 21-22 SIP, quarterly reports will be due May 15, 2022.
- The District is continuing to process transfer agreements for Addendums for Year 1 projects and initial transfer agreements for Year 2 projects.
- The District sent a request for proposal to a consultant to develop a Feasibility Study for the Technical Resource Program project concept approved in the Round 2 Stormwater Investment Plan.
- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans are due April 1 to the Safe, Clean Water Program. Annual Plans are required to receive the Municipal Program revenue.
- SIP tool data has been updated for WASC review. Please review and provide feedback as needed.
- 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](#).
- It is important for the WASC and the work of the Regional Program to remain transparent and fair. These principles are built into the SCWP and are represented by the *ex parte* disclosures on each agenda. WASC members whose job connects them to specific projects should ask colleagues or consultants to attend WASC meetings to share about or advocate for those projects during Stormwater Investment Plan deliberations and should avoid using their position as WASC members to advocate for projects from their home entities. Not all projects are connected to a WASC member's outside job, and those that aren't must advocate for their inclusion during the managed opportunities (the application itself, presentation(s), questions from the WASC, and the public comment period). Ensuring that each project gets treated fairly during discussion and voting agenda items and that all proponents have equal access to engage the WASC discussion needs to be part of how the WASC manages itself.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

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

- Presentation on Watershed Coordinator activities for the year. Focus areas of Watershed Coordinator activities included understanding community needs within the watershed area; soliciting new projects; supporting current project applicants; raising public awareness; and supporting the WASC through information sharing.
- The Watershed Coordinator also discussed how the locations of the currently proposed projects relate to disadvantaged communities.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

6. Public Comment Period

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One public comment card from Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment was received and will be included with the meeting minutes.

7. Discussion Items

- a) Reselect the current LLAR Watershed Coordinator for next term.

District Staff explained that the Watershed Coordinator contract is for one year. The WASC needs to vote to renew the term for another year. If they choose not to renew the term, the WASC will need to interview potential candidates from the approved list and take another vote. The process would take approximately two meetings.

Member Adriana Figueroa expressed satisfaction with Watershed Coordinator Dales' performance, suggesting that one year is not sufficient to evaluate the watershed coordinator's abilities and supported re-selecting the coordinator. Member Joe Gonzalez said that Watershed Coordinator Dales has been responsive and helpful in sharing resources.

- b) Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary

i) Quarter 3 (January – March 2021) and Quarter 4 (April – June 2021)

Vice Chair You noted that the Quarter 2 quarterly reports were due in February. District Staff gave an overview of the SIP tool, which included project information from the last two rounds of quarterly reports. District staff shared that the only project that plans to request additional funds is the City of Long Beach's Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment project. The WASC is waiting on a signed addendum with additional funding information from the City of Long Beach. Member Figueroa asked what the "Activity Concern" under the Regional Program Quarterly Report Summary referred to for the Long Beach project. District Staff said the schedule is delayed but in progress, according to a prompt in the SIP tool. Cecilia Salazar (City of Long Beach) said that there was a delay in procuring materials for construction. They will confirm with the engineer, but they do not think the delay is a major concern. Vice Chair You said the Committee is in the process of finalizing the contract with Long Beach and assured the Committee that the allocated money will be spent. Member Figueroa asked if the sum of expenditures to date represented money awarded to date. Vice Chair You said that Quarter 3 reporting would be due May 15 and would represent January to March 2022.

- c) Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan. [SCW Portal](#) & [LLAR Scoring Rubric](#)

District Staff said that a vote will not take place today because the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) review of the scientific study submissions have not been received. District staff noted that the SIP tool may be used for various funding scenarios. Vice Chair You requested that District staff show the rankings for the projects based on the 14 responses received from the 17 WASC members. District staff presented the ranking spreadsheet. Vice Chair You opened the floor to discussion.

Member Dylan Porter expressed concern about the future of the funding request for the Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern project. If there is not an option to partially fund, they would have concerns

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about approving the full amount of \$29 million. Porter ranked that project lower than the other two based on their concern about putting funding aside and not being able to use it in future years.

Cesar Roldan (Director of Public Works, City of Huntington Park) shared several discussions with the Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies. The project is of extreme importance to the region. They would like to receive partial funding so that the funding burden does not fall on a single agency. The goal is to receive federal funding as well. The City is asking for \$4.5 million for design and environmental and would obtain the remaining funding elsewhere. Project construction would commence in three years. Member Figueroa asked for confirmation that requesting federal funding would trigger National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. Cesar Roldan confirmed they would need to comply with NEPA to receive federal funding. Member Figueroa asked if a Mitigated Negative Declaration would be possible for CEQA because it is an existing park. Cesar Roldan said it might, but there are concerns about the park's subsoil. District staff said that there is a partial funding request form that the applicant may fill out at the Committee's request.

Member Figueroa asked what was previously included for FY 23-24 that brings the budget allocation to 143%. District staff said a scenario was created after asking applicants and developers about assumed future construction costs. The displayed scenario in the SIP tool factors those assumed costs, even though not committed to by the WASC, to reveal potential future demands on SIPs. However, the WASC can choose to allocate funds differently. Partial funding scenarios can be created. The 143% over-allocation is because all projects being considered are included in the SIP right now. These numbers can be turned on and off in the SIP. Funding scenarios can be projected in the SIP tool.

Vice Chair You suggested focusing on the Infrastructure Program (IP) projects because the SCCWRP reviews have not been received for the Scientific Studies Program (SS) projects. District staff turned off assumed construction costs and SS numbers in the SIP tool, but the WASC budget was still overallocated. Member Figueroa suggested including only projects that the WASC member ranking suggested were first and second highest priority for the WASC. Member Figueroa noted that the SS project budgets do not amount to much compared to the IP projects and suggested including only the top ranked project in a SIP scenario. The budget was still overallocated.

Member Gonez asked if the Huntington Park project will submit a formal, updated funding request and asked whether SS projects will go through a pass/no-pass evaluation rather than being ranked. District staff said for the Huntington Park project, a partial funding form could be sent to the applicant. District staff also said that rather than Scoring, SS projects undergo review by SCCWRP, the findings of which are presented to the WASC. The WASC has a preliminary ranking of the SS projects right now, without SCCWRP input.

Member Gonez asked how to the WASC can fairly assign funding for SS projects that span multiple Watershed Areas. Vice Chair You suggested asking the SS project applicants how their funding requests would change if other WASCs did not approve their funding requests. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh (SEITec) spoke on behalf of the Gaffey Nature Center Facility project, sharing that they would accept partial funding and downsize the scope of work accordingly if other WASCs did not provide funding. Member Figueroa asked if the cost for this WASC would go up if other watershed groups did not fund their application. Eftekhazadeh said if the budget is reduced, they will update the project scope rather than ask for more money, even though some of the original goals would not be accomplished. They would not increase their request to the WASC if other

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WASCs did not contribute funding. Member Porter asked if the applicant had reviewed the letter that the City of LA provided. Eftekharzadeh said yes, although they have not yet discussed it with LA Sanitation and Environment. Eftekharzadeh said that a letter of support was received from the project manager of the original facility. They were surprised to receive the letter from the City of LA and don't believe there was enough detail specifying what part of the process was not followed. The project manager of the facility provided full support, and the applicant consulted with community members.

For the Microplastics in LA County Stormwater Study, Andrew Gray (UC Riverside) said that the study is modular. It includes one mass emission station within each of the four watershed areas where funding was requested, so their funding request would not change. If a WASC chooses not to fund the project, then the mass emission station in that WASC would not be included.

John Hunter (John L Hunter & Associates) said the Regional Pathogen Study project can be conducted for however many WASCs approve funding. Hunter noted, however, that they believe at least five watersheds may need to participate for the Regional Water Quality Control Board to consider accepting the conclusions of the research. Nevertheless, the cost per WASC will not change. They applied for funding from seven WASCs.

For the Gateway Area Pathfinding study, Brad Wardynski (Craftwater) confirmed that the funding request to the WASC would not change.

No applicant for the Community Garden Stormwater Capture project was in attendance. Vice Chair You noted that this study includes seven watersheds. Mike Antos (Stantec) asked if Watershed Coordinator Dales has worked with the applicant. The Coordinator said it is their understanding that their funding request would not change based on funding from other WASCs.

Member Porter asked if the Apollo Park project was requesting \$2.8 million through the life of the project or only the first year. Applicant is not requesting \$2.8 million for the first year. Member Figueroa shared an interest in approving funding for infrastructure projects but is struggling with the costs. The Member asked whether cost savings for the Huntington Park project are possible, considering the numbers for the scope seem high compared to prior projects. Cesar Roldan suggested inviting the City to present on the actual construction costs. Cesar Roldan suggested the cost estimate may go down because the cost of materials was particularly high when the estimate was calculated.

Member Melissa Bahmanpour requested information about why the Salt Lake Park requested \$4.5 million for planning and design or just planning. Cesar Roldan confirmed it is for planning, environmental, and everything else prior to construction. District staff reminded the Committee that any partial funding requests need to be initiated by the WASC. The District would send the partial funding form to the applicant, and it would be sent back to the WASC. Member Deras said that if they request partial funds, perhaps they can ask the applicant to find other funding for the \$16 million in future funding. Cesar Roldan said that would be fine. The additional \$4.5 million would be spread out over the next three years, so they would have time to look for funding elsewhere. The goal is to complete the design so that they can determine exactly what funding will be needed in the future. Vice Chair You recommended partially funding the project with \$4.5 million for design through the next three years. Antos noted that as part of the partial funding request, the applicant must demonstrate where the additional funding will come from so the WASC can be assured that

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the project will be executed as submitted. The applicant may indicate that they will come back to the WASC for additional funding, or they can indicate that they will pursue other funding options. Member Figueroa pointed out that \$4.5 for design and environmental seems excessive. Member Gonzalez added that there are advantages to funding design for as many projects as possible. There are funding matching options available for grantees. Member Gonez echoed this sentiment but said the WASC needs to understand the challenges that will come with building a pipeline of projects. Member Bahmanpour said they support partially funding the Salt Lake Park project, which is located in a disadvantaged community. Member Figueroa noted that design and planning are crucial so that the applicant can be ready for when other funding options come along. District Staff confirmed that the form will be sent to the applicant and reminded the WASC that one of the intentions of the program is to see projects through to completion.

Member Porter asked to see the SIP tool scenario with the partial funding of the Salt Lake project with the other two IP projects. District staff showed the scenario with the assumed construction costs for this year's applicants. The total amount was 130% of the WASC's budget under Total and 115% for FY 2023-2024. A scenario showing the IP projects without assumed construction costs for previously approved projects was 47% under Total and 21% for FY 2023-2024. Member Deras noted that they have previously encouraged proponents to look for other funding sources. They asked if conceptual construction costs consider the Measure R costs because that cost may be reduced. Member Figueroa said on behalf of Spane project that they are considering funding through the LA River as an option. Watershed Coordinator Dales said that when they previously reached out to Lynwood, they did not have information about cost share options. Hunter said they are sure Lynwood would actively seek other funding sources, but not until after design is underway. Nancy Villasenor spoke on behalf of the Willow Springs project. They plan to come back for construction funds and also plan to use whatever resources are available to them to leverage funds. At Vice Chair You's request, Villasenor confirmed that \$8.6 million is needed for FY 2023-2024.

Antos reminded that in the SIP scenarios with expected future costs, each project described as having future needs must re-apply and demonstrate costs and benefits, be judged eligible, and come before the committee in a future program year.

Member Laura Ochoa spoke on behalf of the City of Lynwood. Their project is requesting full funding for design and will return in FY 25 to request construction funds.

Member Ernesto Rivera asked if the \$8.6 million requested for the second year of Willow Springs was for implementation. Villasenor confirmed it is. Vice Chair You asked if that number is specifically for FY 23-24 or whether it could be spread out. Villasenor said they do not know if the dollars would be spread out in future years. They believe there may be a possibility for spreading the costs. Vice Chair You said if the full \$8.6 million is not all needed in 2023-2024, they can ask for that money to be allocated through future years. Antos clarified that the project has requested \$1.2 million right now, and \$8.6 million is expected to be requested in the future. Villasenor said they are willing to explore other funding options in the future. District staff said that number is factored into assumed construction costs in the SIP tool scenarios.

Watershed Coordinator suggested running a scenario using 75% of future cost assumptions. Member Gonzalez agreed with the idea and suggested a goal of a 20% implementation match. The 75% future cost assumption scenario used 101% of the WASC's budget for FY23-24. Antos noted that this scenario does not include the projects that will be submitted in future program years.

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Watershed Coordinator suggested to create another scenario that contains the 75% of future cost assumptions and not including the SS projects. Member Figueroa requested to see a scenario with 50% future funding. A scenario with 50% future funding, SS projects, and no future projects used 76% of the budget for FY23-24. Vice Chair You asked if they can ask applicants with approved funds if they can push that funding back. District staff said yes.

District Staff will ask WASC members who have not yet ranked the projects to do so before the next meeting.

i) Infrastructure Program (IP)

- (1) [Apollo Park Stormwater Capture Project](#)
- (2) [Willow Springs Park Wetland Restoration and Expansion](#)
- (3) [Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern](#)

ii) Scientific Studies Program (SS)

- (1) [Community-Centered Optimization of Nature-Based BMPs Starting with the Gaffey Nature Center Facility](#)
- (2) [Microplastics in LA County Stormwater](#)
- (3) [Regional Pathogen Reduction Study](#)
- (4) [Gateway Area Pathfinding Analysis \(GAP Analysis\) – Phase 2](#)
- (5) [Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation](#)

8. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

9. Voting Items

- a) Reselect the current Lower Los Angeles River Watershed Coordinator for the next term.

Motion to reselect the current Watershed Coordinator for the next term by Member Figueroa. Member Gonzalez seconded the motion. The Committee voted to reselect the Watershed Coordinator. (Approved, see Vote Tracker sheet)

10. Items for Next Agenda

Vice Chair You suggested making the next meeting three hours. The next meeting of the LLAR WASC is Tuesday March 22, 2022 from 1 – 4 PM. See the SCWP website for meeting details.

Items for the next meeting include:

- a) Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan.

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 01-25-2022 Meeting Minutes	Reselect the current Lower Los Angeles River Watershed Coordinator for the next term
Agency	District	Ernesto Rivera	x	Ramy Gindi		y	y
Agency	Central Basin	Alex Rojas		Everardo Trujillo	x	y	y
Agency	Water Replenishment District	Rob Beste		Aimee Zhao	x	y	y
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Dr. Quynh Tran	x	y	y
Agency	Port of Long Beach	James Vernon		Dylan Porter	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	Conservation Corps of Long Beach	Kedrin Hopkins		David Sall			
Community Stakeholder	Rivers & Mountains Conservancy	Mark Stanley		Joe Gonzalez	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	TreePeople	Cindy Montanez		Manny Gonez	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	City of Long Beach Parks & Recreation	Stephen Scott	x			y	y
Community Stakeholder	River in Action	Melissa Bahmanpour	x	Erica Maceda		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Commerce						
Municipal Members	City of Bell Gardens	Gina Nila					
Municipal Members	City of Downey	Dan Mueller	x	Delfino Consunji			y
Municipal Members	City of Long Beach	Melissa You	x	Cecilia Salazar		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Lynwood	Laura Ochoa	x	Noe Martinez		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Paramount	Adriana Figueroa	x	Sarah Ho		a	y
Municipal Members	City of Signal Hill	Cecil Looney		Thomas Bekele	x	a	y
Municipal Members	City of South Gate	Gladis Deras	x	Clint Herrera		y	y
Watershed Coordinator							
Non-Voting Member	SGA Marketing	Tara Dales	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	12	15
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	2	0
Community Stakeholder		4			Total	14	15
Municipal Members		6				Approved	Approved

Attendees
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February 22, 2022

Adriana Figueroa	Diana CamposJimenez	Melissa Bahmanpour
Aimee Zhao	Dylan Porter	Melissa You
Alexander Chin	emily ramos	Michelle Kim
Amanda Begley	Ernesto Rivera	Mike Antos (Regional Coord.)
Andrew Gray	Everardo Trujillo	Nancy Villasenor
Arnold Alvarez-Glasman	Fiona McHenry-Crutchfield	Nate Schreiner - Tetra Tech
Arturo Gonzalez	Gladis Deras	Oliver Galang (Craftwater)
Belen Bernal	Jason Casanova	Quynh Tran
Brad Wardynski	John Hunter	Raul Alvarez
Brittany Rivas	Joseph Gonzalez	Robert Beste
Bryce Lee	JUAN Diaz-Carreras	Ryan Edgley
Cameron Castillo	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Safe Clean Water LA
Carline Hua	Larry Rich	Shahriar Eftekharzadeh
Cecilia Salazar	Laura Ochoa	Stephen Scott
Cesar Roldan	lorry hempe	Tara Dales Watershed Coordinator
Cindy Donis	Manny Gonez	Thomas Bekele
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Marcela Benavides	Uriel Cobian - LACFCD
CWE	Mayra Cabrera - LACFCD	
Dan Mueller	Mayra Martinez	