

Rio Hondo Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, February 15, 2022
1:00pm - 3:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Tom Love, Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Agency), Co-Vice Chair
Kelly Gardner, Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster (Agency)
Kristen Ruffell, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency), Chair
Brent Maue, City of Pasadena Public Works (Agency)
Thomas Wong, San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Community), Co-Vice Chair
Jill Fosselman, Resident (Community)
Mark Hall, Greater LA County Vector Control District (Community)
Edward Belden, Resident (Community)
Daniel Rossman, The Wilderness Society (Community)
David Dolphin, Alhambra (Municipal)
Vanessa Hevener, Arcadia (Municipal)
Fernando Villaluna, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Gloria Crudgington, Monrovia (Municipal)
Frank Lopez, Monterey Park (Municipal)
James Tong, Pasadena (Municipal)
James Carlson, Sierra Madre (Municipal)
Richard Watson, RWA Planning (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

See attached attendance 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.

Kristen Ruffell, Chair of the Rio Hondo WASC, welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order. District staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 21, 2021 and January 18, 2022

District Staff provided the meeting minutes from the previous two meetings. Motion to approve both sets of meeting minutes by Member Gloria Crudgington, seconded by Member Frank Lopez. The WASC voted to approve the December 21, 2021 and January 18, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District Staff provided an update:

- On February 8th, 2022, 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

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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 (SIP).
- For projects approved in the FY 21-22 SIP, quarterly reports will be due May 15, 2022.
- It is important for the WASC and the work of the Regional Program to remain transparent and fair. These principles are built into the Safe, Clean Water Program (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 SIP 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 full-time job and must advocate for their inclusion during the managed opportunities (the application itself, presentation(s), questions from the WASC, and the public comment period). Ensuring 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.

Member Thomas Wong reported a call with the water leaders working group at the end of January, where they did not discuss any specific voting items, but talked to other WASC members about higher level happenings of the WASCs, including the Rio Hondo WASC's request to the District to post the WASC meeting recordings and the District's response. Member Wong understood that recording is not a substitute to participating in the WASC meetings but continues to believe that the District should have recordings available online. Member Wong requested to agendaize for a future meeting, a discussion regarding how WASC members should be engaging community members and having opportunities available for the community to engage with the WASC.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Richard Watson provided a presentation summarizing the latest quarterly report (refer to the Watershed Coordinator Update).

Member Mark Hall referenced a reported surplus in the California State budget and asked if the watershed coordinator was tracking the potential of State resources being available for SCWP projects. Watershed Coordinator Watson described a potential new bond measure that could deliver resources but suggested there may only be \$200M statewide for stormwater management projects. The watershed coordinators are tracking available state funding and will share as opportunities become available.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

No ex parte communication disclosures.

6. Public Comment Period

Nature For All requested the District Staff to share the District's response to the Rio Hondo WASC's request for the public release of WASC meeting recordings.

District staff shared that the District has elected to continue sharing the recording upon a public records request, as permitted under the Public Records Act 54953.(b). The intention is to foster engagement during WASC meetings, as opportunities to participate in the meetings are not available with the recordings.

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Bryan Matsumoto, a representative from Nature for All, expressed gratitude to the WASC for submitting a request to publicly release the recordings and expressed frustration with the District's response. Nature for All attends the meetings for community members who cannot make the meeting. Nature for All noted that the District does hold public events outside of work hours to allow for greater public participation, yet they apply the opposite logic by holding WASC meetings during regular work hours. Nature for All encouraged the District to publicly release the recordings, and stated that making public records requests on a regular basis is ridiculous. They should take necessary actions to engage the community.

Chair Ruffell noted that the District's response to Nature for All's public comment will be agendized in a future meeting.

7. Discussion Items:

a) Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary

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

District staff has invited Scientific Study project proponents to speak on behalf of the projects that were not discussed in the prior meeting. They also presented a summary of the Rio Hondo Quarterly Report.

Brad Wardynski spoke on behalf of preSIP: A Platform for Watershed Science and Project Collaboration. Transfer Agreements were processed but completed later than planned, so the schedule was pushed back, including the first deliverable which was submitted in May instead of March. The following deliverables and schedule are proceeding as planned.

Dawn Petschauer and Brianna Datti spoke on behalf of LRS Adaptation to Address the LA River Bacteria TMDL for the ULAR Watershed Management Group. Datti noted that the Adaptation plan was originally scheduled to be submitted in June 2021, but there was a delay to provide adequate time for the group to review it. The plan was submitted to the Regional Board in August 2021. The schedule was pushed slightly but is now proceeding as planned.

Chair Ruffell confirmed with District Staff that some of the projects submitted a multi-year funding request and that the WASC needs to confirm their additional funding requests for this funding cycle. District staff reminded the WASC members that they should be reviewing the quarterly reports and the funding requests posted on the SCWP website.

b) Rio Hondo (RH) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan

District staff facilitated a discussion around the Rio Hondo WASC's Stormwater Investment Planning Tool and invited project applicants to discuss any updates to their funding needs.

Eric Shen (San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG)) spoke on behalf of the Alhambra Wash Dry Weather Diversion, Eaton Wash Dry Weather Diversion, and Rubio Wash Dry Weather Diversion projects. There have been no changes to what is shown on the SIP. The governing board recently completed the Transfer Agreements. The consultants have completed roughly 65% of the design thus far. SGVCOG has issued letters in accordance with AB 52

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compliance and did not receive any requests for Tribal consultation. They plan to submit an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Chair Ruffell pointed out that the Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project proposed for this funding year uses the same source water as the SGVCOG projects. She said they would follow up with the WASC after conferring with their consultant and acknowledged that Sophia Sousa is also supporting coordination with the consultant design team.

Watershed Coordinator Watson referenced meeting with staff from the engineering firm CWE regarding the impacts of the Vincent Lugo Park project on the Alhambra Wash Dry Weather Diversion project. The Alhambra Wash has a tributary area of 11,000 acres, and the Vincent Lugo Park project collects dry weather runoff from 5,800 of those 11,000 acres. Watershed Coordinator Watson suggested to CWE that the Vincent Lugo Park project take more of the first flush runoff since more of the dry weather runoff will be captured upstream, by the Alhambra Wash project.

Chair Ruffell highlighted that the real-time flow systems being used at the three dry weather diversion projects are specific to diverting dry weather flows. The Vincent Lugo Park project would take dry weather flow away from the other dry weather diversion projects and reduce their benefits. Chair Ruffell expressed concern that adding the Vincent Lugo Park project will not contribute water quality benefits. Chair Ruffell concluded that a better understanding how the projects will interact with each other is needed, in order to determine whether the Vincent Lugo Park project should be funded.

Member Daniel Rossman asked the WASC whether there are tools available to help evaluate how the projects would interact with each other. Chair Ruffell referred to the Safe Clean Water Portal, which displays the projects on a map. Watershed Coordinator Watson noted that there is a visual tool under development which would show the projects in each Watershed Area and illustrate their interactions with one another. The Watershed Coordinator will follow up once the tool is available.

The representative for the Plymouth School Neighborhood Stormwater Capture Demonstration Project was not present at the meeting. Chair Ruffell asked to agendize a discussion with them so that the WASC can make a determination for the SIP.

The representative for the East Los Angeles College Northeast Drainage Area and City of Monterey Park Biofiltration Project was not present for the meeting. Chair Ruffell asked to agendize a discussion with them so that the WASC can make a determination for the SIP.

Jason Casanova spoke about the Merced Avenue Greenway Project. The city needs to submit a budget update to reflect that expenditures for the funding allocated the current fiscal year has been moved to Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Groundbreaking will be take place in May or June of this year. Chair Ruffell asked if the project received funding for this fiscal year. Casanova responded that the project has not received funds as the Transfer Agreement is still in progress. Chair Ruffell pointed out that the funds were allocated previously, so the WASC does not have to allocate additional funds for the next Fiscal Year. District Staff clarified that the funds should be used within 5 years after executing the Transfer Agreements. Chair Ruffell concluded that additional funding does not need to be allocated for this year and that the SIP represents what will be needed for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 for the project.

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Chair Ruffell clarified that the WASC won't be ranking the projects since only one project was submitted. The WASC will instead focus their work on developing the SIP scenarios.

Chair Ruffell noted that although the Merced Avenue Greenway Project is good, its source water is treated by other dry weather diversion projects.

Member Dolphin asked whether funding the Vincent Lugo Park project will affect funding for the other projects. Chair Ruffell said it will not decrease funding for other projects, but will take half the flows from the Alhambra Wash Project's tributary area. The Alhambra Wash project is a treat and release project. Watershed Coordinator Watson noted that the Vincent Lugo Park project will include an on-site decorative stream, a swale, and a storage tank with circulation prior to discharge into the channel.

i. Infrastructure Program

(1) Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project – City of San Gabriel

Laureen Abustan (Brown & Caldwell) confirmed there is infiltration on the park property. Taylor McCauley (Brown & Caldwell) confirmed Watershed Coordinator Watson's description of the project.

Chair Ruffell asked what percentage of the water will be infiltrated versus used at the park. McCauley responded that the specific percentage is unknown, but the project was designed based on the assumption of 0.5 cfs flowing through the Alhambra Wash annually during dry weather.

Member Gardner asked whether the project has considered the downstream dry weather projects that have already been considered under the SCWP and asked the proponent to explain how that consideration affected plans for the Vincent Lugo Park project. Abustan responded that the downstream projects were not considered, but they are open to coordinating with the project teams and the City of San Gabriel to better integrate the Vincent Lugo Park project with those.

Member Dolphin suggested the conversation should be with the City of San Gabriel since they have already supported the project downstream of the Vincent Lugo Park Project, and it seems counterintuitive for the WASC to fund both.

McCauley asked who the project proponents are for the Alhambra Wash Dry Weather Diversion project. Chair Ruffell confirmed that the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments is the proponent for the project.

Chair Ruffell reminded the WASC that the question at hand is whether funding the Vincent Lugo Park project is the best use of SCWP funds, as funding this upstream project it will deprive flows from a downstream project.

Watershed Coordinator Watson expressed that the Vincent Lugo Park Project site is a "good site" and noted that the original concept was for a water capture project. The Watershed Coordinator suggested the Vincent Lugo Park Project proponents come back with a new project

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that addresses water capture and wet weather flows. Chair Ruffell called attention to the fact that a wet weather capture and treatment project makes more sense for a city parcel.

Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) added that there are efforts to distribute benefits and funding across the Watershed Area. Community investment benefits and water supply benefits are both needed across the area, along with the water quality benefits.

Chair Ruffell agreed and elaborated: making the Vincent Lugo Park project a wet weather project would balance the community investment benefits and provide a benefit that is not already handled by a downstream project.

Member Edward Belden asked if the Vincent Lugo Park project's impacts on the confluence of the Alhambra Wash and Rio Hondo channel have been addressed. Chair Ruffell proposed agendizing the discussion for the next meeting. Abustan agreed to add a discussion item to the next meeting and clarified that the project proponent is here to collaborate. They support the WASC's intentions to evaluate the project in the context of the SCWP, holistically.

Member Jill Fosselman referenced previous discussions about specific project details and requested clarification on the status of those lingering questions. Abustan responded that they had not yet reviewed the previous meeting minutes for details on the discussion and resulting project questions.

Chair Ruffell asked to agendize future discussion on whether the Vincent Lugo Park project belongs on this SIP or whether it should return as a different project.

District Staff reminded the WASC of the SIP development requirements. Allocations for Infrastructure Program (IP) projects should comprise more than 85% of funding; Scientific Studies (SS) should receive less than 5%; and Technical Resources Program (TRP) projects should receive less than 10%.

Watershed Coordinator Watson asked for information about the time period for which the SIP requirements apply. District staff responded that the requirements apply to the 5-year SIP and are inclusive of previously funded Projects, studies, and concepts.

District Staff noted that they are waiting for the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project scientific study reviews before discussing the Scientific Studies for the SIP. The District is expecting the reviews by the end of February and they will be available for the WASC to review prior to the next meeting.

Member Dolphin asked whether the allocation distribution shown on the SIP tool is for the current fiscal year. District Staff responded that it is for the 5-year duration. Member Dolphin asked which scenario has the allocation distribution of 82%:12%:6% (IP:SS:TRP). District Staff clarified that the scenario excludes the Vincent Lugo Park project, whereas the allocation distribution of 86%:10%:4% includes the Vincent Lugo Park project. Both scenarios assume all of the Scientific Studies will be funded. Based on the SIP development requirements and current guidance, the WASC will not be able to fund all of the Scientific Studies as they will not receive less than 5% of the funding allocated over the 5 year SIP.

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Chair Ruffell asked to agendize (1) discussion with the Vincent Lugo Park project proponents on their response to the WASC's questions and (2) a voting item to preliminarily include the Vincent Lugo Park project in the current SIP.

Member Rossman asked if funding the Scientific Studies earlier in the program would provide more flexibility in programming future SIPs. District Staff responded that the Program Ordinances and Guidelines apply the requirements on a rolling 5-year timescale, which is reflected in the SIP tool. Member Rossman asked whether the tool will reflect funding for potential future projects. District Staff responded that the tool only includes projects that have been approved and proposed in the current and previous cycles. Member Rossman pointed out that this approach may be limited because additional projects may be included in future years which would not be captured in the current calculation.

Antos suggested that the Vincent Lugo Park project proponents refer to the December Meeting Minutes, which capture the WASC's dialogue in extensive detail and include the Committee's questions about the project. Antos further noted that the formula for the SIP will recalculate every year, but the math is done on the numbers now. The SIP modifications do not impact the math from previous years.

Member Rossman asked whether the limited nature of the tool will limit the ability of the WASC to fund the Scientific Studies. Antos responded that the tool reflects the WASC's constraints defined under the Programs Ordinance. Member Rossman disagreed, noting that if there were projects that had greater spending allocated for future years, they should change the formula and not change the amount of revenue received. Total annual Regional Program funds available would not be impacted by or used in the allocation distribution calculation. Per current ordinance and guidance language, the calculation looks at the distribution of funding for Projects in the 5-year SIP which only includes projects that have been approved and proposed in the current and previous cycles. The SCWP cannot anticipate how the WASC will choose to allocate future funding. The Member requested District Staff take a closer look at the SIP tool. Chair Ruffell asked to agendize discussion of the SIP tool and the Scientific Study review to a future meeting.

Member Wong expressed interest in better understanding how the Program Ordinance limits expenditures for IP, SS, and TRP projects at the WASC-level as opposed to program-wide. Member Wong is also interested in seeing if the WASC is limited from investing in TRP and SS projects if there aren't any IP submittals. The Member observed that it seems like investing in TRP nonetheless would be smart.

8. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

9. Voting Items

No voting items.

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10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, March 15, 2022, from 1:00 – 3:00 PM.

- a) Rio Hondo (RH) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan (SCW Portal)

District Staff will provide an update on the SIP allocation requirements and invite the project proponents back.

Chair Ruffell requested to add a voting item to collect the committee's opinion to include the Vincent Lugo Park project in the SIP. Scientific Studies will be evaluated at the next meeting for inclusion in the SIP.

11. Adjournment

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

Attendance
RH WASC - February 15, 2022

Edward Belden	Enrique Baul
Council for Watershed Health Gust	Sophia Sousa
Brent Maue	Daniel Rossman
Upper District Love	Alex Tachiki
Nature for All Matsumoto	Kelly Gardner
Carrie Morris	Jill Fosselman
Melanie Morita	Julian Juarez
Stephanie Tong - LACFCD	LACPW Hamamoto
Brianna Datti	Kristen Ruffell
Eddie Chan	Eric Shen
San Gabriel Valley Council of Go Logasa	Fernando Villaluna
Brad Wardynski	James Carlson
David Dolphin	Ruby Wang
Oliver Galang (Craftwater)	Trevor Davis
City Of Pasadena Public Works Tong	Dawn Petschauer
Darin Son	Mark Hall
Gloria Crudgington	Thomas Wong
Frank Lopez	Mike Antos (Regional Coord)
Laureen Abustan	Aric Torreyson
Tammy Takigawa	Drew Ready
Jason Casanova	Los Angeles County Public Works Verdiner
Katie Harrel	Taylor McCauley
Bridget Childs	Vanessa Hevener
Larry Tran	Chris Lee
Richard Watson	