

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



Wednesday, February 2, 2022
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)
Paul Liu, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
Alfredo Magallanes, LA Sanitation & Environment (Agency)
Cathie Santo Domingo, LA Recreation & Parks (Agency)
Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)
John Luker, Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (Community)
Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)
Yazdan Emrani, Glendale (Municipal)
Patrick DeChellis, La Cañada Flintridge (Municipal)
Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair
Max Podemski, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice Chair
Christine Peters, Los Angeles (Municipal)
Mark Lombos, 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:

Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)
Max Liles, NBCUniversal, Inc. (Community)

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Teresa Villegas, Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) 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 January 20, 2022

The District presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes, by Member Yazdan Emrani. Member Patrick DeChellis seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the January 20, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no committee member updates.

District staff provided an update:

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- On January 11, 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 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.
- The District is finalizing proposals to develop feasibility studies for the Technical Resource Programs (TRP) that were approved in the Stormwater Improvement Plan (SIP) in the last round.
- The District is continuing to process transfer agreements for Addendums for Year 1 Call for Projects and initial Transfer Agreements for Year 2 Call for Projects.
- Quarter 3 Quarterly Reports are due May 15, 2022. This applies for projects that were approved in the 2021-2022 SIP.
- The ULAR WASC received 12 Infrastructure Program (IP) projects, 5 Scientific Study projects, and 2 TRP projects. Four IP projects did not pass through the Scoring Committee. Today's meeting will cover two IP project presentations.
- The Stormwater Investment Planning (SIP) tool data has been updated for WASC review. Please review the live beta version and provide feedback as needed.
- 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

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

- Watershed Coordinator Liberman provided a presentation to the environmental commission, where they saw good attendance from the community, including Senator Henry Stern. A meeting was also held with a project proponent.
- Watershed Coordinator Moran held coordination meetings with the City of San Fernando for a green streets project that is applying to the TRP and had successful discussions around leverage funding opportunities with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). Watershed Coordinator Moran has also been supporting coordination between the City of Los Angeles and Promesa Boyle Heights about projects and potential project locations.
- Watershed Coordinator Gust has been supporting funded TRP projects. Watershed Coordinator Gust connected the Alhambra Main Street Green Streets Project with community-based organizations and provided support for its application for Round 4. They also worked with the City of South Pasadena's Arroyo Seco Projects, connecting the project proponent with community stakeholders and addressing concerns brought about in community meetings.
- The Watershed Coordinators will organize education events in the next quarter.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Chair Villegas received an email from Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh regarding the North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project.

6. Public Comment Period

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District staff will compile all public comment cards received and include them in the meeting minutes that will be uploaded to the SCWP website as “Meeting Minutes Attachment”. During the meeting, District staff will share on the screen those public comment cards that were received prior to the deadline of at least 5:00pm the day prior to the meeting.

Dr. Shahriar Eftekharzadeh (SEITec) presented and read verbatim a comment card regarding the North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture Project.

Michael Scaduto (City of LA) presented a comment card but declined to make spoken comments.

Manuel Aguilar (Water Rights and Water Management Group, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power) made spoken comments about the North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture Project and referred to a letter that was sent to the SCW email on February 2, past the deadline for the letter to be shared on the screen during the meeting. The public comment card will be included in the meeting minutes attachment that will be uploaded to the SCWP website. Aguilar spoken comments expressed the LADWP objection to the ULAR WASC considering support for the North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture Project. Aguilar reminded that LADWP previously submitted the same project for funding in Round 2 but was not awarded funding. Since, LADWP has sought funding from other sources for the project LADWP designed. Aguilar objected to SEITec resubmitting aspects of LADWP’s proposal for funding considerations without authorization from LADWP, and that SEITec will not be able to complete the project because City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks did not grant permission to access the site. Further, LADWP manages water rights under LA charter, and based on a court adjudication only the City of Los Angeles has the right to water in the San Fernando Valley; the project as proposed would violate those water rights. Aguilar ended by urging the WASC to decline funding for the North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project.

7. Presentations and Discussion Items:

a) Infrastructure Program (IP) Presentations

i. Watts Civic Center Serenity Greenway

Presentation by Aksel Palacios, David H. Pohl, Ashley Lozada, Crystal Chang. The Serenity Greenway transforms a concrete alley to provide dry weather and stormwater infiltration through a dry well system and a green and safe corridor to the community park.

Member Veronica Padilla-Campos asked for information about how the alley is currently used and whether the project will encourage multimodal transportation methods. The Member Padilla-Campos also asked if there is a contingency plan for blocking entrances. Pohl and Lozada replied that service vehicles use the alley as well as pedestrians to access neighboring facilities via multimodal transportation methods. The project will coordinate with the Civic Center to block a portion of the entrance to create a safer pedestrian path while maintaining access to the alley.

Member Max Podemski commented that there are many city-owned facilities surrounding the project site and asked if there were conversations around having future projects help direct traffic towards the alley. Lozada responded that the construction is for a future Kaiser Clinic. Surrounding facilities support the proposed project and are open to helping attract traffic flow to the project. Pohl commented that they are looking to add amenities and artwork through private funds and neighboring facilities support.

Member Genevieve Osmena asked whether the project will capture flows from on-site and the upstream drainage area. Member Osmena also asked whether there had been reports

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of local flooding, given the project's role in flood management and requested clarification about whether the storm drain is the City's or County's. Pohl responded that the storm drain is part of the City's system and the project will collect dry weather flow from the drainage area. A preliminary geotechnical investigation showed that the project has the capacity to capture higher flows, possibly the 85th percentile storm from a portion of the 73-acre drainage area. The project proponent would need to conduct additional testing to verify the feasibility, but they hope to collect flows beyond the alleyway. Pohl also responded that there have not been specific reports of local flooding.

Member Padilla-Campos encouraged community participation in the design process to make sure that the design incorporates features that address their needs. Pohl agreed and mentioned that the project concept began with community input and that they will work towards making it a community-based project.

ii. **North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture Project**

Presentation by Shahriar Eftekhazadeh, PhD, PE, PMP. Captures 100% of 85th percentile storm from 2,045 acres net drainage area and provides 1,378 acre-feet of water supply benefits with minimal excavation and public impact.

Dr. Eftekhazadeh referred to the public comments that were shared in Agenda Item 6. Dr. Eftekhazadeh clarified that SEITec had repeatedly requested LADWP's support for the alternative proposed project but did not receive a reply. Dr. Eftekhazadeh clarified that the project will not claim water that is by right the City of Los Angeles's, stating that it infiltrates water into the San Fernando Basin which is what the original project (which LADWP submitted) proposed to do. Regarding the authority to use the LADWP feasibility study, SEITec used the application materials which were made publicly available. Dr. Eftekhazadeh also asserted that the SCWP application process is unfair towards non-municipal applicants.

Following the presentation, District staff provided additional context on the project situation. The project was submitted with a different design configuration by LADWP but was not awarded funding in the fiscal year 2021-2022 Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP). The currently submitted project from SEITec has not received a letter of support from the municipality (City of Los Angeles) nor a conceptual design approval from the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. This situation is the first of its kind in the ULAR WASC, and the District recognizes that there is a disconnect between the ordinance and the [Feasibility Study Guidelines](#), and the District will be updating the guidelines to provide clarity to what support and approvals are required and at which point in the process. The ordinance requires non-municipal applicants to have a letter of support prior to disbursement of funds ([Chapter 16](#)). The District does perform completion checks on applications, but only for readiness for scoring. The proposed project application passed the completion check to be scored and be considered by the WASC. If the project is desirable, the WASC can ask the City of Los Angeles to reconsider the support for the project with an application. If the project did not receive a letter of support, then it would not be eligible to receive funding via the SIP.

Chair Villegas asked whether the correction in the Feasibility Study Guidelines will prevent a situation like this from happening again in the future. District said the Feasibility Study Guidelines will be updated to specify what needs to be submitted and by when.

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Dr. Eftekhazadeh commented that it is not clear in the Feasibility Study Guidelines what the non-municipal applicant should do if a letter of support is not received or if the municipality does not respond to the applicant.

Chair Villegas commented that, when working with nonprofits or engineering firms, there is a partnership with government if the project will be on government property or located within the public right of way. Chair Villegas shared that from personal experience, it is helpful for a project to have a good partnership with the government from the beginning and observed that it does not seem to be that way for this project.

Member Padilla-Campos said the park is used heavily by the community, but the project proponent has not demonstrated community support and no community outreach has been conducted. Member Padilla-Campos also mentioned that if the Pacoima Beautiful letter of support was recycled, it would be a red flag in the application, but noted that that would need to be confirmed.

Dr. Eftekhazadeh noted that the project employs an almost entirely closed excavation method with minimal open excavation, resulting in minimal disruptions to the community's access to the park during construction. Dr. Eftekhazadeh asserted that when the project was presented to the North Hollywood Neighborhood Council, LADWP pressured them into not providing a letter of support. SEITec's proposed project would not close the park, unlike the initial plan submitted by LADWP.

Member Padilla-Campos recommended community outreach should be conducted if the project proposes any changes to the park.

Dr. Eftekhazadeh emphasized that the application does not claim to have received letters of support and acknowledges that reference to letters of support were included as part of the material from the previous application submitted by LADWP. SEITec believes that the community would more strongly support this project given its less disruptive nature. SEITec also wrote to multiple community-based organizations to collect letters of support which Dr. Eftekhazadeh believes they did not receive because SEITec is a non-municipal applicant. Dr. Eftekhazadeh urged the WASC to consider the engineering details behind the proposed feasibility study to determine if the proposed alternative is feasible and less invasive than the originally proposed project by LADWP.

Member Cathie Santo-Domingo noted that dry wells are proposed under this project and an opening of any size in the park can be problematic. Member Santo-Domingo referenced an incident where a child fell into a storm drain and asked how the project envisions the dry well. Member Santo-Domingo also asked for information about the maintenance requirements for the underground piping. Dr. Eftekhazadeh replied that the dry wells would only be open during construction, not need an access point at every dry well and be accessible via manholes. Dr. Eftekhazadeh shared that there is minimal maintenance required for the underground piping as compared to a typical infiltration gallery which would be prone to clogging.

8. Public Comment Period

Dr. Eftekhazadeh reiterated that for innovation to occur, as is encouraged by the SCWP, non-municipal applicants need support. The ordinance foresees this and believes that it tasked the WASC and District to provide assistance with letters of support. Dr. Eftekhazadeh noted that SEITec proposed this alternative to the LADWP, but SEITec's outreach was not accepted by the LADWP.

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Chair Villegas expressed belief in importance of innovation and receiving proposals from non-municipal applicants, but that the process for considering projects is different than repackaging of a pre-existing project application that did not receive funding and presenting it to the WASC. The Chair encouraged all applicants to follow the process.

9. Voting Items

There were no voting items.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 2, 2022, from 2 – 4 PM. See the SCWP website for meeting details.

- a) Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary
 - i. Quarter 3 (January – March 2021) and Quarter 4 (April – June 2021)
- b) Reselect the current Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Coordinators for the next term
- c) Upper Los Angeles River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan

District staff will be sending out a summary of resources available for the SIP and a request to submit preliminary project rankings to the WASC members. District staff also noted that for future WASC WebEx meetings, attendees will need to provide their affiliation.

The February 17th meeting will be cancelled.

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 1-20-2022 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	x	John Huynh		a
Agency	Sanitation	Alfredo Magallanes	x	Michael Scaduto		y
Agency	Open Space	Cathie Santo Domingo	x	Javier Solis		
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Ernesto Pantoja	x	Sergio Rascon		y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Miguel Luna		Yvette Lopez-Ledesma		
Community Stakeholder	Environment	John Luker	x	Wendi Gladstone		y
Community Stakeholder	Business	Max Liles				
Community Stakeholder	EJ	Veronica Padilla-Campos	x	Felipe Escobar		y
Municipal Members	Glendale	Yazdan Emrani	x			y
Municipal Members	La Canada Flintridge	Patrick DeChellis	x	Maged El-Rabaa		y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Teresa Villegas	x	Barbara Romero		y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Max Podemski	x	Ackley Padilla		a
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Christine Peters	x	Rafael Prieto		a
Municipal Members	Los Angeles County	Mark Lombos	x	TJ Moon		a
Municipal Members	Pasadena	Kris Markarian	x	Brent Maue		y
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)	10
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	4
Community Stakeholder		3			Total	14
Municipal Members		7				Approved

Attendees

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Seta Marjanian	Dawn Petschauer	Shahriar Eftekhazadeh	cathie Santo Domingo
Ryan Jackson	William OBraitis	Kris Markarian	Jeannette Hernandez
christine peters	Carmen A	susie santilena	Paul Liu
Mark Lombos	Francisco Romero	Arlene Guzman	Amanda Zeidner
Patrick DeChellis	CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Crystal Chang	Carlos Moran
Ashley Lozada	max Podemski	Kirk Allen	Alfredo Magallanes
Luis Garcia	Isabelle Russell	Alynn	Darin Son
Thuan Nguyen	Drew Ready	Sarai Bhaga	Jason Casanova
Michael Scaduto	Azita Mehrad	Phuoc Le	David Pohl
Rafael Prieto	Jeseya Maldonado	Art Castro	Maria Ramirez
Justin Jones LACFCD	Manuel Aguilar	Mike Antos (Regional Coord	Lauro Alvarado
Pamela Dreyfuss	Johanna Chang	Joyce Amaro	Kelsey Reed
Clarasophia Gust	Melanie Winter	Christine Corporation	Shona Ganguly
Melanie Tory	Teresa Villegas	Lorena Matos	A C
Pablo Forni	brett perry	Rafael Piamonte	Genevieve Osmena
Wendi Gladstone	Veronica Padilla	Yaz Emrani	Dawn Petschauer
Sheila Brice	Brianne Logasa	Nooshin Eftekhazadeh	Ted Gerber
Katie m	Adi Liberman	TJ Moon	
Mayra Cabrera - LACFCD	Conor Mossavi	Alexander Chin	
Ernesto Pantoja	john luker	Jennifer Amarant	