

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



Wednesday, April 6, 2022
2:00pm - 4:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Genevieve Osmena, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*John Huynh, 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)
*Wendi Gladstone, Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (Community)
Max Liles, NBCUniversal, Inc. (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:

Delon Kwan, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Max Podemski, Vice Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) WASC, welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order. District staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx in both English and Spanish.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 2, 2022

District staff presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes, by Member Cathie Santo Domingo. Member Yazdan Emrani seconded the motion. The District facilitated the roll call of Committee Members and the Committee voted to approve the March 2, 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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- Quarter 3 Quarterly Reports are due May 15, which should capture all expenditures through March. This applies for projects approved in Round 2 of the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) (Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022).
- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans were due April 1 to the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP). Annual Plans are required to receive the Municipal Program revenue. The District intends to add functionality to the existing reporting module to streamline the Annual Plan process. A webinar was conducted in March. The recording of the webinar is available here: <https://safecleanwaterla.org/municipalities/>
- Public Review for the Safe, Clean Water Program Guidance ended March 27. The District is now compiling comments and feedback and will present an update on that soon.
- On March 29, 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 will be sending out a survey in preparation for potential in-person WASC meetings. The Executive Office will be sending out letters of resignation for those who did not adhere to the Board's vaccination policy.
- The ULAR WASC now has 8 Infrastructure Program (IP) projects, 5 Scientific Studies (SS), and 2 Technical Resources Program (TRP) projects to consider for the SIP.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinators Clarasophia Gust, Adi Liberman, and Carlos Moran provided an update on watershed coordinator activities (refer to Watershed Coordinators Presentation).

Member Veronica Padilla-Campos asked if the Project Scenario tool, developed by the Watershed Coordinators, is available for other WASCs as well. Watershed Coordinator Gust responded that the tool is being piloted with the ULAR WASC.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Member Padilla-Campos disclosed discussing the next round of projects with the Watershed Coordinators.

6. Public Comment Period

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.

Keith Banks (representative of Los Angeles Council Member Bob Blumenfeld) voiced Council Member Bob Blumenfeld's support for the LA River Green Infrastructure Project. Council Member Bob Blumenfeld has conducted outreach and received positive feedback from community members on the project.

Maggie Gardner (LA Water Keeper) presented a comment card and letter on behalf of the OurWaterLA (OWLA) Coalition in support of Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Project, Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture Project, Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, and Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation study.

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Sean Woods (Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation) expressed strong support for the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project.

Declan Floyd (Office of Senator Anthony Portantino) expressed strong support for the Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse Project.

Shariar Eftekhazadeh (SEITec) commented that the North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project was removed from the SIP tool scenarios during the previous WASC meeting despite the water supply and water quality benefits the project provides. The WASC expressed more support to a project with lower benefits in a previous SIP. Dr. Eftekhazadeh questioned whether the WASC had judged the project based on its merits or its applicant and said SEITec will seek legal remedies should the Committee not consider the proposal in good faith.

7. Presentations and Discussion Items:

a) Upper Los Angeles River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan (SCW Portal & Summary of Resources)

District Staff initiated discussion on the SIP tool scenarios and explained that the Project Scenario tool developed by the Watershed Coordinators can be used to spatially show the SIP scenarios on a map. District staff reminded the Committee of the “FY20-21 and FY21-22 Future Funding Test actuals” and “FY20-21 and FY21-22 Future Funding Test” scenarios.

The District anticipates sending the SIP to the Regional Oversight Committee for review in May. By approving the SIP, the Committee attests that the disadvantage community benefit and funding distribution ratios are met.

The “Top 3 IP, 3 SS, 2 TRP” scenario in the SIP Planning Tool, established in the previous ULAR WASC meeting discussion was shared on screen.

Member Mark Lombos asked to run a scenario where the three subsequent infrastructure projects (La Crescenta Green Improvement, Watts Civic Center Serenity Green Way, and Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse) from the Committee’s preliminary ranking results are added to the “Top 3 IP, 3 SS, 2 TRP” scenario. The total percent allocated for FY22-23 resulted in 99% and the scenario was saved as “Top 6 IP, 3 SS, 2 TRP” in the SIP tool. Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) reminded the WASC to be consider leaving funding for projects that may be submitted in future fiscal years. Member Padilla-Campos commented that using 99% of the FY22-23 budget is not acceptable.

Member Alfredo Magallanes urged the WASC to prioritize projects that improve water quality. Antos noted that the projects under consideration have been judged as eligible for the program through the Scoring Committee, which prioritizes water quality, water supply and community investments. The projects provide water quality benefits that are eligible for funding and are either included in the Watershed Management Plan or the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

Member Padilla-Campos asked why the LA River Green Infrastructure Project was ranked low in the WASC’s preliminary ranking of projects. District Staff created a “LA River Green Infrastructure” scenario to only include the project. The total percent allocated for FY22-23 resulted in 94%. District Staff noted that WASCs have the option to award partial funding for projects with large funding requests. A subsequent meeting would be held where the project proponent would present a new request for partial funding to the WASC. Other WASCs have provided partial funding for specific phases of a project and the project proponent would provide a list of other funding sources.

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Mike Scaduto (LASAN) provided more information about the LA River Green Infrastructure Project's funding request. The requested funding was packaged to keep the costs down during first few years of design and planning; construction would incur heavy costs in later years. If operations and maintenance (O&M) is not funded, the City can use the Municipal Return Funds.

Member Patrick DeChellis commented that "mega-projects" such as the LA River Green Infrastructure Project are consuming a large portion of the allocated budget, and that the on-going request for O&M funding will also consume a large portion of the allocation in future fiscal years. Member DeChellis recommended the WASC fund many small projects, rather than few large projects. Member DeChellis suggested a scenario with the top 6 IP, top 3 SS and the top TRP, but it did not significantly affect the budget allocation since each TRP allocation is \$300,000.

Chair Villegas asked whether the selected scientific studies (i.e., the top 3 SS) were approved by the SCCWRP review. District Staff showed the SCCWRP reviews for the two studies on the screen. All SCCWRPs are linked in the ULAR WASC webpage.

Member John Huynh proposed going with the Top 2 IP, Top 3 SS, 2 TRP projects to reduce the budget allocated for the current fiscal year. District Staff saved the "Top 2 IP, Top 3 SS, and All TRP" scenario. The total percent allocated for FY22-23 resulted in 95%.

Member Padilla-Campos asked if there was discussion around modifying the funding request from the LA River Green Infrastructure Project. Scaduto responded that the application does reflect the O&M estimate in the total project costs, but is not part of the funding request. The way that the funding request is packaged has a lot of history with it. As part of the CREST study, various agencies have committed to the Regional Board to remediating discharges to the LA River by a certain date. The Regional Board has deemed municipalities to be out of compliance.

Chair Villegas asked the District how asking for different funding requests would impact the projects and the SIP tool scenarios. District Staff responded that the applicant to repackage and reapply for the next call for projects or can move the funding request from one program year to another. Another option is partial funding as mentioned earlier where the WASC would define what partial funding they would make to specific project applicants to review and consider accepting the partial funding offer. Chair Villegas asked Scaduto to come back with a different funding request over the program years.

Member Max Liles noted that keeping it simple and taking the top two IP projects is the cleanest solution, given the complexity of the scenario.

District Staff reminded the WASC that the meetings are likely going to be in-person in May. Additional meetings are required to meet the May deadline for approval of the SIP for Regional Oversight Committee review. The WASC proceeded to the next Agenda Item.

8. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

Member Ernesto Pantoja recommended a venue at the Pico Union for future WASC meetings.

District Staff suggested to add an additional 3-hour meeting for the ULAR WASC on April 21. The committee agreed.

9. Voting Items

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- a) Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the ULAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review**

Member Huynh asked if a motion can be made. Chair Villegas said a motion can be made, but WASC members are not required to vote until they feel comfortable approving the SIP.

Member Genevieve Osmena suggested voting for smaller subcomponents of the SIP scenario. Chair Villegas agreed and pointed out that the WASC can vote on SS and TRP projects first. Chair Villegas asked how the long the TRP projects will be and whether they will eventually become IP projects.

Ted Gerber spoke on the Camino Verde Pocket Park Regional Stormwater Capture Demonstration TRP Project and shared that the intent is to submit the project for IP funding. If the project does not receive TRP funding until FY23-24, it would request funding in the subsequent years. Gerber commented that they are open to negotiations with the other TRP project proponent to ensure they can both be funded in FY22-23.

Vik Bapna (CWE) spoke on the San Fernando Calles Verdes TRP Project and shared that several projects are expected to result from it.

No motion was made.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, April 21 from 2:00pm - 5:00pm. See the SCWP website for meeting details. Topics will include:

- a) Upper Los Angeles River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan
- b) Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the ULAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review

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 3-2-2022 Meeting Minutes
Agency	FCD	Genevieve Osmena	x	Ramy Gindi		y
Agency	Water Agency	Delon Kwan		Art Castro		
Agency	Groundwater / Water Agency 2	Paul Liu		John Huynh	x	y
Agency	Sanitation	Alfredo Magallanes	x	Michael Scaduto		y
Agency	Open Space	Cathie Santo Domingo	x	Javier Solis		y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Ernesto Pantoja	x	Sergio Rascon		
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Miguel Luna		Yvette Lopez-Ledesma		
Community Stakeholder	Environment	John Luker		Wendi Gladstone	x	a
Community Stakeholder	Business	Max Liles	x			y
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		
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Max Podemski	x	Ackley Padilla		y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Christine Peters	x	Rafael Prieto		y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles County	Mark Lombos	x	Jalaine Q Verdiner		y
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)	12
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0
Agency		4			Abstain (A)	1
Community Stakeholder		4			Total	13
Municipal Members		7				Approved

Attendees

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8185504511 Oillataguerre	Danielle Chupa	Juliann Rooke	Pablo Forni
Adi Liberman	Declan Floyd	Justin LACFCD	Patrick DeChellis
Alexander Kasendorf	Donald Voss	Keith Banks	Peter Tonthat
Alfredo Magallanes	Eric Bonilla	Kelsey Reed	Rafael Piamonte
Alynn Sun	ERNESTO PANTOJA	Kris Markarian	Ruth Siegel
Anish Saraiya	Genevieve Osmena	L.A. County Public Works Wilson	Ryan A
Atley Keller	Geosyntec Consultants Rudd	LA County Public Works Nguyen	Ryan Jackson
Brenda Ponton	Gustavo Orozco	Larry Tran - LACFCD	Sean Woods
brett perry	H. Ted Gerber	Lauro Alvarado	Seta Marjanian
Brianne Logasa	Helene Rotolo	Lidia Rivera	Shahriar Eftekharzadeh
Carmen Andrade	Horacio Urias	Lorena Matos	sheila brice
Cathie Santo Domingo	Isabelle Russell	Los Angeles County Public Works Verdiner	Somer Sherwood-White
Christine McLeod	Jason Casanova	Maggie Gardner	Sonali Abraham
christine peters	Jeannette Hernandez	Maria Murillo	Stantec (Pasadena) Son
City of Los Angeles Board of Pub Villegas	Jennifer Amarant	Marisol Ibarra IBARRA	Susie Santilena
City of Los Angeles Scaduto	Jesenia M	Mark Hall	Veronica Padilla
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Jessica Medina	MARK LOMBOS	Vik Bapna (CWE)
Clarasophia Gust	Johanna chang	Max Liles	Wendi Gladstone
Conor Mossavi	john huynh	max podemski	wendy Dinh
Council for Watershed Health Moran	John Luker	Mayra Cabrera - LACFCD	William OBraitis
Council for Watershed Health Zeidner	John Robinson	Melissa Guerrero	Yaz Ernrani
Craig Doberstein	Joyce Amaro	Mike Antos (Regional Coord.)	