



Public Comment Form

Name:* Ron Bitzer _____ Organization*: LA City Park Advocate _____
Email*: ronbitzer49@gmail.com _____ Phone*: 310-415-2796 _____
Meeting: ULAR WASC _____ Date: 03/28/2022 _____

LA County Public Works may contact me for clarification about my comments

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Please complete this form and email to SafeCleanWaterLA@dpw.lacounty.gov by at least 5:00pm the day prior to the meeting with the following subject line: "Public Comment: [Watershed Area] [Meeting Date]" (ex. "Public Comment: USGR 4/8/20").

I, Ron Bitzer, have served on the Park Advisory Board of Valley Plaza Park & Recreation Center, and currently study park equity issues City-wide for Coalition for a Scenic Los Angeles. I am commenting on the proposed North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project --- one of nine stormwater capture projects running north to south in public parks along the orphan branch of the Tujunga Wash (see attached photo taken during a March 2022 storm).

Do not disqualify candidate SEITec from consideration for the North Hollywood Park project.

It appears to me, a layman in this matter, that the current candidate for stormwater capture projects in all nine North Hollywood locations, the LA Department of Water and Power, will create more havoc in our local parks over a longer period of time at a higher cost of construction and operation than an experienced competitor. Funding sources --- especially publicly-funded ones --- should favor the use of a suitable competitive model, especially when variables have been reduced by virtue of the same Tujunga Wash running along most of the 9 project areas. This reality should serve as a potential basis for comparing two very different methods ----with one project using gravity to move water and one using noise and pollution-prone pumping stations. Gravity works well now (see attachment).

Question: Does not the City, and not LADWP, have final water ownership rights as "...the successor to all rights, claims and powers of the Spanish Pueblo de Los Angeles in regard to water rights" Section 5.1.1.1. City of Los Angeles vs. City of San Fernando? The City enters into contracts with private vendors; what does the City Attorney, NOT LADWP have to say about SEITec as a vendor here?

Comments



Orphan Branch of the Tujunga Wash at Valley Plaza Park, 2022



Date: April 4, 2022

To: Upper Los Angeles River Watershed WASC Committee Members
cc: SCWP Staff, Watershed Coordinators

From: OWLA Core Team (Heal the Bay, LAANE, LA Waterkeeper, Nature for All, NRDC, Pacoima Beautiful, SCOPE, The Nature Conservancy, and TreePeople)

RE: Input on Project Prioritization for SCWP SIP

OurWaterLA is a diverse coalition of community leaders and organizations from across Los Angeles County united to create a strong water future for Los Angeles. Our goal is to secure clean, safe, affordable and reliable water for drinking, recreation and commerce now and for the future. We have a deep commitment to uphold the trust that voters had in us when passing this measure and that projects which achieve Safe Clean Water Program objectives of water quality, water supply, nature-based solutions and community investments are prioritized. Your active participation on this body is appreciated and we are excited about the prospects of working together to achieve a better water future for our region.

As we have identified in previous letters to you, this program is dynamic, and based on the first two rounds of project reviews, interested stakeholders such as OWLA, committee members and staff recognize the need for improvements to program metrics. With contributions from various stakeholders we are optimistic that future rounds of program funding will yield projects that not only improve water quality and water supply, but also provide community investments that are developed with community participation from concept to implementation and operations. The priorities for OWLA have always been clear, community led project designs using nature-based solutions. These types of designs will not only address MS4 permit issues but will also result in projects that can meet the multiple priorities for our region including addressing climate change, providing healthy recreational opportunities and developing engagement tools so that water issues are more broadly understood and supported by our communities.

As has been reported by staff to the committee, there is currently an assessment being conducted to determine how investments and "benefits" are attributed to disadvantaged communities. The position of OWLA on this issue is very clear; projects must be located in disadvantaged communities in order to be counted. We are expecting that the reports in development by the SCWP staff working with subject matter experts for Round 4 projects will provide us all with the metrics necessary to plan for and achieve our disadvantaged community investment goals. Until that time, we are urging all WASCs to use only the benchmark of projects located in and providing benefits to a disadvantaged community to count toward the 110% threshold, until new assessment strategies are further refined.

We found most applicants in Round 3 did not provide enough information on both prior and planned engagement to allow a clear assessment on community engagement. For example, in some cases, applicants mentioned community meetings but lacked details on who participated, how many people attended, and whether/how input was solicited and incorporated. We see this as an important area where WASC members can request more information from applicants, especially given they may receive additional feedback from ongoing community engagement while under WASC consideration.

We also found many applicants mainly listed discussions with organizations as part of their outreach/engagement activities. We would like to see more emphasis on direct engagement with community members, especially across a broad cross-section of stakeholders. For example, the City of Lakewood held focus groups with seniors, youth, parents, and center users in addition to two community meetings and a survey with over 1,000 responses to guide Lakewood Equestrian Center renovations. Additionally, Amigos De Los Rios connected with Jackson Elementary students, teachers, admin, parents, and area residents to design its school greening and stormwater project.

For projects claiming to benefit disadvantaged communities, few applicants explicitly outlined targeted and direct engagement with members of these communities which further obscured whose needs are being addressed, who is benefitting, and whether there is local support.

We are encouraged to see more references to project proponents proactively seeking Tribal consultations and cross-agency collaborations as well as reaching out to Watershed Coordinators. We hope to see these efforts lead to more community-driven, multi-benefit projects.

Finally, we want to caution WASC members about efforts to claim prior local support when there have been major changes to project concepts, such as the North Hollywood Park Stormwater Capture Project, or a significant gap in time since the last engagement, such as projects coming from prior Watershed Management Program or Master Plan planning processes.

The task before you is to consider the prioritization of projects for funding in this round for the 2022-23 SIP. After careful review of the project submissions, **OWLA strongly recommends** that you approve only those projects that include strong marks for water quality and water supply and that:

- clearly demonstrate a strong community engagement plan and process took place,
- include a significant community investment element,
- provide benefits to and, as applicable, are located in a disadvantaged community, and
- utilize vegetated nature-based solutions.

For this WASC, the following projects are recommended for approval:

- 1. Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement Project**
- 2. Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture Project**

The elements of the Jackson Elementary School application that OWLA finds commendable include:

1. the location on a school campus exemplifying joint development and helping to serve as a community hub in a park poor area,
2. extensive engagement led by Amigos de los Rios including a focus on benefiting students living in disadvantaged communities,
3. inclusion of a detailed maintenance plan,
4. removal of impervious surface to allow for infiltration,
5. the integration of nature-based solutions including trees, rain gardens, bioswales, planters, and native habitat.

The elements of the Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture Project application that make it stand out include:

1. LADWP committed to matching 50% of the project cost,
2. the project addresses a community need, specifically, the high need of park improvements,
3. the project is located within a disadvantaged community,
4. community engagement that included a variety of techniques such as surveys, virtual meetings, and outdoor signs and banners,
5. a tree list for the “net increase of 16 trees” on the site and a plant palette that includes “California natives and California-tolerant plants” with an objective to promote a diversity of plant species and habitat for pollinators.

While OWLA did like the LA River Green Infrastructure Project, we have some concerns about the cost given how much of the ULAR funding has already been allocated. The LA River Green Infrastructure Project is a good project as it will include bioswales, soil, and native vegetation, is located in a disadvantaged community, converts impervious surface, and will have a Project Labor Agreement. We support the concept, but believe that for a project of this size, the Bureau of Sanitation and the Environment should aim to match part of the cost before reapplying to a future SCWP round of funding. Some of the aspects of the project that we recommend expanding or improving are the joint development opportunities with the adjacent school, more direct community engagement and outreach, and incorporating community feedback into the project plans.

With respect to the special studies presented to this WASC, our recommendation is as follows:

Regional Pathogen Reduction Study – Gateway Water Management Authority:

We recommend that no funding be allocated for the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study.

We have serious concerns about the legitimacy of this proposed study as no scientific professionals were involved in the development of the study, which is required under the SCWP Scientific Studies Program when feasible. We do appreciate the external review conducted by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, but these external experts seem conflicted about how well this study will achieve its proposed goals. OWLA agrees, as we do not understand what new information will be achieved with this study. Additionally, this proposal targets a specific source of a specific pollutant rather than providing multiple benefits and will potentially weaken water quality objectives rather than improving our water quality. This

proposed study therefore will not support many of the program goals. There are already other potential opportunities to conduct a study like this, including through the Stormwater Monitoring Coalition, which already has a similar study in its 5-year plan. Therefore, funding should instead be spent to invest in our communities with multi-benefit stormwater capture projects.

Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation - Los Angeles Community Garden Council

OWLA sees the direct connection between this proposed study and the goals of the Safe, Clean Water Program to provide community investment through multi-benefit projects, with a wide range in project sizes. The acquisition of land comes with a high capital cost, so identifying any opportunities for cost sharing partnerships will provide a benefit to the program. We encourage the Los Angeles Community Garden Council to work in close collaboration with the Watershed Coordinators on this study, if funding is approved. Our only concern with this study is with the lack of accessibility of these community garden green spaces. If public funds from the Safe, Clean Water Program are used in any way in coordination with community gardens across Los Angeles County, there must be public access. Therefore, **we recommend that the WASC include funding for this study in their SIP but require an accessibility assessment to be included as part of the study.**

In addition, we support the ULAR WASC limiting their project approvals this year to ensure that sufficient funds remain for future projects such as those highlighted by the watershed coordinators in their presentation on March 2, 2022. It is preferable for WASCs to maintain their SIP at 70% or below each year; however, in the case of the ULAR WASC, it makes sense for the WASC to remain below 80% allocation at this time.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to continuing our engagement with this committee and the watershed coordinators to ensure a better water future for the region.

Sincerely,
OurWaterLA Core Team



Public Comment Form

Name:* Cecile Salmin Organization*: _____
Email*: cecilesalmin6@yahoo.com Phone*: _____
Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 4/6/2022

LA County Public Works may contact me for clarification about my comments

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Comments

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Cecile Salmin** <cecilesalmin6@yahoo.com>

Date: Sat, Mar 26, 2022 at 11:26 AM

Subject: Letter of support

To: <san.safecleanwater@lacity.org>

Dear sirs:

Yes I support 100 % @LA River project.

Cecile salmi

Sent from my iPhone



Public Comment Form

Name:* Gail Feldman Organization*: _____
Email*: gailfeldman@live.com Phone*: _____
Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 4/6/2022

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Comments

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **gail feldman** <gailfeldman@live.com>
Date: Wed, Mar 9, 2022 at 12:08 PM
Subject: LA River Green Infrastructure Project
To: san.safecleanwater@lacity.org <san.safecleanwater@lacity.org>

Hello City Staffers -

I was unable to attend the meeting you had on the Infrastructure project earlier this month, but I wanted to let you know that I am in support of it.

Thank you for your time, Gail Feldman



Public Comment Form

Name:* Andrew Schwab Organization*: Homeowner

Email*: andrew.w.schwab@gmail.com Phone*: _____

Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 4/6/2022

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Comments

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Andrew Schwab** <andrew.w.schwab@gmail.com>

Date: Sat, Mar 26, 2022 at 7:49 AM

Subject: I support for the LA River Green Infrastructure Project

To: <san.safecleanwater@lacity.org>

I support for the LA River Green Infrastructure Project in the Reseda area.

Andrew Schwab

Homeowner

[17911 Vanowen St, Reseda, CA 91335](#)



Public Comment Form

Name*: Joann Zgonc Organization*: West Hills Resident
Email*: jszgonc@socal.rr.com Phone*: _____
Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 4/6/2022

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Comments

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Joann Zgonc** <jszgonc@socal.rr.com>
Date: Wed, Mar 30, 2022 at 8:25 PM
Subject: LA River Green Infrastructure Project
To: <san.safecleanwater@lacity.org>

I support this project as a wise use of tax funds. It will reuse storm drain water, saving water for our plants and improving our community environment. We need to do this now.

Joann Zgonc
A West Hills resident

Sent from my iPhone



Public Comment Form

Name:* Christine Fitzpatrick Organization*: Resident
Email*: gustafsonchristine@yahoo.com Phone*: _____
Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 4/6/2022

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Comments

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Christine Fitzpatrick** <gustafsonchristine@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri, Mar 25, 2022 at 7:55 PM
Subject: LA RIVER PROJECT
To: <san.safecleanwater@lacity.org>

Hello,

I am a current resident of Canoga Park, CA and I support the LA RIVER PROJECT. I think it is important that we start considering ways to capture water in our drought conditions and creating bioswales is a great start. The project will also help beautify our community and focus on our greenspace for our community mental health. I hope this project will be able to continue.

Best,
Christine Fitzpatrick



Public Comment Form

Name:* David Bower Organization*: BOWER LAW GROUP PC
Email*: dbower@bowerlawgroup.com Phone*: 213-446-6652
Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 04/05/2022

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David Bower, appearing on behalf of SEITec, an engineering firm that has presented a Plan for consideration under the Safe Clean Water Program, following the Feasibility Study Guidelines. I am here in an attempt to ensure that Proposition W, as codified in Chapters 16 and 18 of the LA County Flood Control District Code is followed.

Reviewing the proposals by SEITec and DWP, it is apparent that the SEITec proposal provides actual compliance with the intent of proposition W and it does not appear that the solution proposed by the LADWP comes close, despite LADWP's much higher price tag.

It seems that a letter written by the DWP, on February 2, 2022, attacking SEITec but giving no valid reason for this attack, is being given inordinate weight in the decision-making process. That letter sets forth no valid reason for not considering SEITec's proposal. The DWP makes several assumptions in its letter which are either baseless or patently false.

To the point, there is nothing in the judgment cited by the LADWP of *The City of Los Angeles v. City of San Fernando* (1979) (Case N. 650079) which would in any way prohibit SEITec from performing under its proposed plan. Nowhere is it stated in that case that LADWP is the only entity that can propose plans under The Safe Clean Water Program. LADWP's inference that only its plans can be considered is simply false as a matter of law.

It is telling that the DWP letter mentions nothing about the merits of SEITec's plan, but incorrectly points to a legal decision that has no relevance to this committee's ability to consider SEITec's plan which is far superior to anything proposed by the LADWP.

This committee should be looking at the project proposed and not an ill-conceived letter by the LADWP that improperly attempts to derail a superior proposal for political reasons that don't consider the benefit to the community. Thank you.



Public Comment Form

Name:* Shahriar Eftekhazadeh Organization*: SEITec
Email*: Shahriar.Eftekhazadeh@seitecinc.com Phone*: 310 879 9376
Meeting: ULAR WASC Date: 04/06/2022

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Comments

I am Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh, president and CEO of SEITec.

The preliminary ranking of the projects revealed during the March 2nd meeting, placed SEITec's proposed N. Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project dead last! This is despite the fact that the project has confirmed benefits of 100% MS4 permit compliance for more than 2000 acres DA, 1,400 ac-ft per year water supply benefits, gravity flow operation, extensive community investment benefits, and minimally invasive construction.

What is puzzling is that last year this Committee ranked a much inferior alternative of this same project, with significantly lower benefits at three times the cost, proposed by DWP, amongst its top three projects, the key difference being the Project Applicant?!

So, the question is "what is this WASC voting for?" Is it the Project or the Applicant? The Project is the only thing to be considered. There is nothing about SEITec that should disqualify its proposal from being considered.

Unfortunately, the SCW Program's unequivocal support of questionable Projects with unnecessary and outdated elements such as Lankershim Blvd and Oro Vista funded in Y2020, or the Ballona Creek TMDL Pump Station project funded in Y2021 for which SEITec proposed a gravity alternative, clearly demonstrate that it is the Applicant and not the Project that is getting the Committee votes. This procedure should not and cannot continue.

This public address is to remind the Committee Members of their duty, which is first and foremost to the public, who voted to be taxed to enhance their environment and not to fund inefficient and wasteful pet projects of large institutional players. This is why the SCW Program Ordinance gives equal rights to Non-Municipal Applicants. However, these rights are being blatantly and shamelessly denied through lobbying by the Municipal Applicants and complacency of the WASCs.

Today's meeting is the opportunity for this WASC to demonstrate commitment to integrity and reason. Please be assured that SEITec will seek legal remedies available should this Committee not consider our proposal in good faith.

Thank you,