

Lower San Gabriel River

Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)

Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, April 12, 2022
10:00am – 12:30 pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Aimee Zhao, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
*Quynh Tran, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
*Nancy Villaseñor, City of Long Beach Parks and Recreation (Agency)
Dan Knapp, Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Community)
*Joseph Gonzalez, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (Community)
Gabrielle Weeks, Long Beach Coalition for a Safe Environment (Community)
Mike O'Grady, Cerritos (Municipal)
Delfino Consunji, Downey (Municipal)
Lisa Ann Rapp, Lakewood (Municipal), Vice Chair
Melissa You, Long Beach (Municipal), Chair
Bernie Iniguez, Bellflower (Municipal)
Marlin Munoz, La Mirada (Municipal)
Vicki Smith, Whittier (Municipal)
Kekoa Anderson, OhanaVets (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Alex Rojas, Central Basin Municipal Water District (Agency)
Adam Galia, Resident (Community)

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Melissa You, Chair of the Lower San Gabriel River (LSGR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

District staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx and facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 8, 2022

The District presented meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member Delfino Consunji. Vice Chair Lisa Rapp seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the March 8, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District staff provided an update:

- 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.

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- The County Office issued a memo stating in-person meetings may be returning as soon as May. The District requested that Committee members send their vaccination status in anticipation of in-person meetings.
- Public Review for the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) Guidance ended March 27. The District is now compiling comments and feedback and will present an update on that soon.
- Per Section 16.10.C of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District Code, individuals that both own and reside on a residential parcel within the District, are head of household or are the sole providers of maintaining the costs of the home, and whose household income does not exceed the Very Low-Income or Extremely Low-Income limits, may apply for a reduction from the SCWP Special Parcel Tax. A General Income-Based Tax Reduction Form must be submitted on an annual basis and are due no later than May 1.
- Under the Municipal Program, Annual Plans were due April 1. 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/>
- 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).
- The LSGR WASC has 5 Infrastructure Program (IP) projects, 5 Scientific Studies (SS), and 0 Technical Resources Program (TRP) projects to consider for the SIP.

Vice Chair Rapp is stepping down as the representative from Lakewood and will be replaced by Kelli Tunnicliff Pickler-. Vice Chair Rapp shared a hope to continue to participate on the WASC as a representative of the business community.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinators Kekoa Anderson and Grace Kast provided an update on Watershed Coordinator activities:

- Hosted Joint Watershed Coordinator Meeting on March 23.
- Presented Lower SG/Lower LA IRWM Sub-Region Meeting on March 24.
- Presented at Gateway Water Management Authority Board on April 14.
- Will participate in educational outreach at Downey “Touch a Truck” event on May 7.
- Will present at an upcoming Rivers and Mountains Conservancy meeting.

The Watershed Coordinators provided an overview of the draft 2022 Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan (SOEP) which they plan to distribute on April 13. The comment period will run through April 29. The Watershed Coordinators plan to request approval of the 2022 SOEP on May 10.

The Watershed Coordinators encouraged the WASC members to take the 2-minute Community Needs Survey. The survey link is provided on the Watershed Coordinator Update Slides on the SCWP website.

Watershed Coordinator Anderson shared that the La Mirada Project will likely be submitted this year. The applicant has hired a consultant to help develop a feasibility study for the project.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Member Mike O’Grady disclosed participation in a virtual meeting on March 15 with Craftwater and representatives from the Lower Los Angeles River and LSGR WASCs to discuss the benefits of the Gateway Area Pathfinding (GAP) Analysis Study.

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Member Joseph Gonzalez met with Craftwater to discuss potential funding from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project.

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 5:00 PM the day prior to the meeting. The District received two such comment cards.

Oliver Galang, on behalf of the City of Bellflower, urged WASC members to consider funding the construction of the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture project. The project's design was funded in previous SIPs. Galang stated that Simms Park is located in a highly disadvantaged community and that the City of Bellflower has successfully completed projects of this scale, citing Caruthers Park Stormwater Capture Project. Galang said that if the project's construction funding is not approved, park improvements such as the installation of an artificial turf field could be delayed by over 10 years. Galang said that the City of Bellflower has committed \$2.9 million of local municipal funding for the project's construction.

Steve Baker submitted a comment card in support of funding construction for the Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project. The comment card is available on the SCWP website.

Richard Watson reiterated support for the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project. Watson stated that the need for this project has been magnified by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board approving a bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in the past month with a high flow condition for removal of 85% of bacteria going into the saline portion of the channel. Watson emphasized that if the project is not funded for construction now, construction would be delayed 15-20 years due to the lifetime of the artificial turf that is anticipated to be installed in the park.

7. Discussion

a) Lower San Gabriel River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan. SCW Portal & LSGR Scoring Rubric

i. Infrastructure Program (IP)

- (1) Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project - City of Artesia
- (2) Lakewood Equestrian Center - City of Lakewood
- (3) Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project (Construction) - City of Bellflower
- (4) York Field Stormwater Capture Project - City of Whittier
- (5) Heartwell Park at Clark Channel Stormwater Capture Project - City of Long Beach

ii. Scientific Studies

- (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

District Staff reminded the WASC that awarding partial funding without a clear path to project completion is discouraged. The SIP will be submitted without the inclusion of assumed construction funds, but the assumed construction funds for future years will be flagged for the Regional Oversight Committee. District

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Staff displayed the SIP tool and the updated preliminary rankings of the proposed projects. The first SIP scenario the District Staff displayed included the top 3 IP and top 3 SS, with assumed construction costs.

District Staff shared that they were not able to get an update on the status of Hermosillo Park Project which was funded by the WASC in Round 1, though they believe it is reasonable to push back construction funds at least a year since CEQA still needs to be completed. Vice Chair Rapp recommended pushing construction funding by two years to FY26-27 since the Hermosillo Park Project has not started design yet. District staff noted that this adjustment, for the above scenario, results in an overage in FY26-27. The overage will be flagged to the Regional Oversight Committee but does not necessarily prevent the approval of the FY22-23 SIP.

Vice Chair Rapp shared that Lakewood Equestrian Center Project would provide a 15% local match of construction funds. The Committee observed that this would not resolve the overages in FY26-27. The Committee suggested that project proponents should commit their local match up-front to initiate design and make projects more competitive for funding. The WASC expressed concern for committing funds to larger projects, citing a desire to prioritize smaller, community- and nature-based projects. When asked whether other projects planned to provide a local match, no proponents responded.

The SIP scenario was revised to show construction costs for the Hermosillo Park Project in FY26-27, and a 15% local match of construction costs for the Lakewood Equestrian Center Project.

Vice Chair Rapp asked how the scientific studies affect the bottom line. District Staff showed that removing the Pathogen Reduction Study from the SIP tool would not help prevent the overage in FY26-27. The WASC discussed staggering construction funding and asking larger projects to commit to providing more matching funds, even if they are only requesting design funds. The Committee observed that many projects yield benefits to multiple cities. If those multiple cities were to make funding match commitments, it may allow the WASC to fund more, small, community-based projects. In the future, such discussions should occur at the watershed scale before the projects are proposed to the WASC.

Member Dan Knapp restated concern that funding large projects will prevent funding of smaller, community-based projects. Those projects would be on the scale of hundreds of thousands of dollars rather than millions or tens of millions. Member Knapp added that larger project proponents are more likely to secure matching funds.

The WASC acknowledged that SIP decisions will become increasingly difficult in the future. Chair You suggested that in future years, project applicants should not request their full project budget amount and should come prepared with committed matching funds.

Member O'Grady reminded the WASC that Phase 1 of the Gateway Area Pathfinding (GAP) Study will be completed next year and will highlight areas in the watershed that should be prioritized. The Committee considered approving a thin SIP this year and preserving as much money as possible for future SIPs since the study's results can guide future SIP deliberation.

Okina Dor (City of Artesia) shared support for funding the design phase of projects, so they may be competitive for matching funds. Dor discussed how small cities are challenged to provide large amounts of municipal matching funds and asked that the WASC consider funding the Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project. District Staff asked that Dor wait for the public comment period for these comments. Member Bernie Iniguez shared that since funding the design of the Bellflower Simms Park Stormwater Capture Project, the project has been able to leverage \$400,000 in Municipal Measure W funds, \$500,000 in Measure A funding and \$2 million of municipal funds.

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The SIP tool displayed the top 3 IP and top 2 SS with assumed construction costs. When including the Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project, the SIP tool showed overages in FY24-25, FY25-26, and FY26-27, with 133% total overage for the 5-year SIP budget. Vice Chair Rapp said the WASC needs to make it clear that projects applying for construction must demonstrate substantial match contributions (Measure A, Measure M, Measure R, SCWP Municipal Program, etc.).

Member Consunji suggested funding the top 2 IP and 2 SS since there is a buffer for each year. Chair You said that approving that SIP would result in the same issue next year since projects would reapply in the following year.

The Committee further discussed ways that the WASC could balance the SIP to include small and large infrastructure projects. Among the suggestions were: consideration of schedule and timing of construction, capping the amount of construction funding a project may request, and earmarking future funds for smaller, community-based projects. Vice Chair Rapp urged the WASC consider proportionality (e.g., how smaller projects are considered against larger projects). Member Vicki Smith asked the WASC to clarify what percentage match they expect applicants to provide with future construction funding requests.

Member O'Grady made a motion to not vote on a SIP that exceeds 100% of its budget for any given fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Member Consunji.

District Staff opened a public comment period for the motion.

8. Public Comment Period (moved up on the Agenda)

John Hunter stated that the Artesia Park Stormwater Capture Project is unlikely to move forward with construction soon and asked the Committee to consider funding the project for design. This would allow the project to find construction funding from other sources in the future.

Richard Watson clarified that the earlier motion includes assumed construction costs.

Kyle Cason (Director of Public Works, City of Whittier) asked the Committee to set a concrete standard or goal for matching funds that municipalities which benefit from the project should provide when a project requests construction funding. Setting a concrete metric would help the WASC compare projects.

Vice Chair Rapp noted that the WASC could set a cap on the amount of construction funding a project may request, but noted that a concrete standard may be difficult for smaller projects to achieve. Vice Chair Rapp suggested employing smaller match requirement for smaller projects. The WASC made a note to add an agenda item to the next LSGR WASC meeting to hold a discussion on potential match requirements and other criteria that may be used to evaluate projects submitted in the future.

9. Voting Items (moved up on the Agenda)

Following the motion made in Agenda Item 7, the WASC voted on approving a SIP that would not exceed 100% within any fiscal year budget, including assumed construction costs. The motion was not approved.

7. Discussion (continued)

Tori Klug (Stantec, Regional Coordination) and District Staff clarified that the WASC is not required to vote to approve the SIP during this meeting, but the vote will be more difficult to facilitate at a May meeting since it will likely be held in-person. Holding a second meeting in April is possible.

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Vice Chair Rapp made a motion to approve the top 4 Infrastructure Program projects and top 2 Scientific Studies since only one IP project is asking for construction funds. The motion also included meeting next month to discuss the matching commitment criteria for projects requesting construction funds. Member Smith seconded the motion. Vice Chair Rapp withdrew their motion.

Member Iniguez motioned to include the top three ranked Infrastructure Program projects (Lakewood Equestrian Center, Bellflower Simms Stormwater Capture Project, and York Field Stormwater Capture Project) and the top two ranked Scientific Studies (Microplastics in LA County Stormwater and Gateway Area Pathfinding Analysis - Phase 2) in the SIP, and to discuss the WASC's criteria for cost share for construction at its next meeting. The motion was seconded by Member Smith.

8. Public Comment Period (continued)

Richard Watson shared support for the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, currently ranked third. Watson asked the WASC to consider including this study since it will likely need to be funded at some point in the future at a greater cost. Watson clarified that the proposal requested \$1,007,000 over five years. Watson shared that Southern California Coastal Water Research Project's peer review was similar to the previous year's feedback, summarizing that the reviewers were concerned about the study's incomplete scope. Watson stated this was intentional and would be determined by a selection committee, under the guidance of the Gateway Water Management Authority. Vice Chair Rapp commented that the WASC might be able to join the Regional Pathogen Study in Year 2 of the study if they chose not to fund it this year.

Christine Garibay (Murphy Ranch Little League, City of Whittier) shared support for the York Field Stormwater Capture Project, citing aesthetic benefits, enhanced parks and recreation access for youth, and environmental protection. The project would provide much needed improvements to York Field.

9. Voting Items (continued)

- a) Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-223 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the LSGR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review. The WASC will meet at a future meeting to discuss criteria for matching funds for projects requesting construction funds.

Following the motion made in Agenda Item 7, the WASC voted on including the top three Infrastructure Program projects and the top two Scientific Studies in the SIP, and discussing the WASC's criteria for cost share for construction at its next meeting. The vote was approved.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting of the LSGR WASC is Tuesday, May 10, 2022. See the SCWP website for meeting details, including timing and length.

Items for the next agenda include:

- a) Approve the Updated Lower San Gabriel River Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan
- b) Discuss criteria for matching funds for projects requesting construction funds

11. Adjournment

Chair You thanked Vice Chair Lisa Rapp for contributions on the Committee and offered congratulations for Vice Chair Rapp's retirement. Vice Chair Rapp expressed gratitude and thanked the WASC members.

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