

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



Tuesday, March 22, 2022
1:00pm - 4:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

*Aimee Zhao, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
*Dr. Quynh Tran, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Ernesto Rivera, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Irene Lopez-Muro, Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Community)
*Joe Gonzalez, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (Community)
*Manny Gonez, TreePeople (Community)
*Dylan Porter, Port of Long Beach (Community)
Melissa Bahmanpour, River in Action (Community)
Gina Nila, Commerce (Municipal), Chair
Dan Mueller, Downey (Municipal)
Melissa You, Long Beach (Municipal), Vice Chair
Laura Ochoa, Lynwood (Municipal)
Adriana Figueroa, Paramount (Municipal)
Gladis Deras, South Gate (Municipal)
*Thomas Bekele, Signal Hill (Municipal)
Tara Dales, SGA Marketing (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Alex Rojas, Central Basin (Agency)
Stephen Scott, City of Long Beach Parks and Recreation (Agency)

See attached sign-in sheet for full list of attendees

1. Welcome and Introductions

Gina Nila, Chair of the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) 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.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 22, 2022

District Staff presented the meeting minutes from the February 22, 2022 meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member Manny Gonez, seconded by Member Thomas Bekele. The Committee approved the meeting minutes from February 22, 2022. (Approved, see vote tracking sheet)

3. Committee Member and District Updates

Member Joseph Gonzalez mentioned that during the past San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) Board meeting, the RMC Board approved a new, non-bond, priority grant program using funds from the State budget. The approval allocated an additional \$10 million for the Lower LA River Grant Program. Member Gonzalez highlighted that while the SCWP's Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) is competitive this year, there are opportunities for planning and implementation dollars available through the RMC.

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District Staff provided an update:

- On March 1, 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.
- 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. If any municipality has not submitted their Annual Plan, please do so promptly. The reporting module has been updated to add functionality and streamline the Annual Plan process. The District hosted an information session on March 7 and the recording is posted on the SCWP website. The Q&A portion will be made available within a few days.
- The SCWP Interim Guidance document is available for public review on the SCWP website. The public review period has been extended to March 27, 2022. Details on how to provide comments were sent via email.
- WASC members should complete their Annual Statement of Economic Interest, Form 700, by April 1. Late statements are subject to a fee of \$10 per day, up to \$100. Committee members should have received a reminder email about this.
- Round 3 projects for the LLAR WASC's consideration include: 3 Infrastructure Program (IP) projects, 5 Scientific Studies (SS), and 0 Technical Resources Program (TRP) projects.
- The SIP tool has been updated with actual collected revenue and unused funds from Technical Resources Projects that have used less than the \$300,000 allocated towards these projects.
- The District reminded the Committee members that partial funding is available to the WASC. The intent of the Safe Clean Water Program is to ensure project completion so the benefits claimed would be realized. District Staff stated that partial funding in phases without secure funds and a clear path to completion is highly discouraged, whether it be structured accordingly in the initial request or considered during the development. This message will be conveyed during mandatory information meeting for Round 4 Call for Project. District Staff said that if the WASC decides to consider partial funding in phases such that future phases are dependent on SCWP funding requests, the WASC must consider anticipated future costs during deliberations, even if not formally earmarked.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Tara Dales provided the following update:

- The March 24, 2022 meeting of the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) Lower San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Steering Committees will include information about SCWP.
- A free Water-Wise Gardening webinar will be held on March 26. The webinar teaches viewers how to conserve water in their garden through rain harvesting and planting the correct plants for their microclimate.
- Community engagement draft guidance has been released for this year and the Metrics & Monitoring Study is developing a community engagement white paper in collaboration with the University of California, Los Angeles.
- The following funded projects intend to resubmit applications for construction funding in upcoming years:
 - Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment (LB MUST) - Phase 1

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- Spane Park
- Lynwood City Park Stormwater Capture Project
- The Round 4 deadline for funding is in July. The following are examples of projects that may submit in Round 4:
 - Maywood Riverfront Park intends to submit an IP in Round 4
 - The IRWM Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program may submit a TRP in Round 4 to either LLAR or LSGR watershed areas.

Member Gonzalez conveyed that Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (RMC) was contacted by the Lower San Gabriel River watershed coordinator, OhanaVets, who wanted to provide an update on the SCWP to their Board in March. RMC asked that the watershed coordinators across their authority area (Rio Hondo, Upper San Gabriel, Lower San Gabriel, Lower Los Angeles, and South Santa Monica Bay watershed areas) to collaborate on the update. Member Gonzalez asked if Watershed Coordinator Dales would work with OhanaVets on a presentation to the Board in May or June. Watershed Coordinator Dales agreed to reach out to other watershed coordinators to coordinate on an update.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Chair Nila disclosed a phone call with representatives from the City of Huntington Park to discuss the changes to the Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern Project application, since Chair Nila was not present at the previous WASC meeting. Chair Nila stated that changes to the project application included changing the project to design-only funding Round 3 and reducing cost estimates for design.

Member Gladis Deras disclosed meeting with the project proponents for the Gateway Area Pathfinding Analysis (GAP Analysis) Scientific Study.

6. Public Comment Period

Cindy Donis (organizer, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice) offered to answer questions or hold follow-up discussions on the Maywood Riverfront Park Project. Donis shared that they grew up in Maywood and the effort that has gone into the project is beautiful to see. Donis expressed support for the benefits the project would provide for the community, river, and water systems. Donis commented that the project has provided opportunities to work collaboratively with the indigenous community and reestablish a relationship with the land.

7. Discussion Items

a. Summary of Scientific Studies from the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP)

District Staff summarized the SCCWRP's review of the Scientific Studies, which is intended to help Committee members' decision-making.

Member Gonzalez asked if the scope of the GAP Analysis Scientific Study includes community gardens. If community gardens were included, the WASC could use the study's findings to inform future funding decisions for the Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation Study. Grace Kast (GAP Analysis study representative) stated that the GAP Analysis will focus on areas of less than one acre, which could include community gardens. Kast also stated that the study will investigate how to include green, nature-based solutions of various scales in the study.

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b. Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Stormwater Investment Plan. SCW Portal & LLAR Scoring Rubric

i. Infrastructure Program (IP)

- (1) [Apollo Park Stormwater Capture Project](#)
- (2) [Willow Springs Park Wetland Restoration and Expansion](#)
- (3) [Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern](#)

ii. Scientific Studies Program (SS)

- (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 provided a walkthrough of the SIP tool and emphasized that disadvantaged community benefit claims cannot be less than 110%, the required ratio, as displayed in the SIP tool. District Staff clarified that no less than 85% of the budget must be allocated to Infrastructure Program projects, no more than 10% of the budget may be allocated to Technical Resources Program, and no more than 5% of the budget may be allocated to Scientific Studies. Lastly, District Staff stated that the approved SIP will not include assumed future construction costs of the projects if those needs have not been formally requested by the project proponent, though these assumed future costs have been gathered to support discussion.

Chair Nila recommended starting by reviewing the funding scenarios in the SIP tool, starting with the scenario that included all three IP projects:

- Apollo Park Stormwater Capture Project: Design-only with funding split over two years and construction costs deferred to future funding.
- Willow Springs Park Wetland Restoration and Expansion: Design-only and construction costs deferred to future funding.
- Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern: Design-only with reduced design costs, costs spread over three years, and construction costs deferred to future funding.

The starting scenario also included the GAP Analysis and the Regional Pathogen Reduction Scientific Studies. With this scenario, it was found that the current fiscal year would spend 82% of its allocated funding. Chair Nila emphasized a desire to see projects be supported to complete their design phase to gain a better understanding of future project costs. Chair Nila stated that completing the design phase also allows applicants more opportunities to seek funds from other sources. If project applicants can find other funding sources, this would help reduce the WASC's future construction fund requests.

Member Adriana Figueroa asked why the design-only Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern Project funding request is \$4.5 million on the SIP tool when the initial project presentation requested \$2.5 million for the design and planning phase. Member Figueroa asked where this discrepancy originated from. Cesar Roldan (Director of Public Works, City of Huntington Park) answered that the additional costs are expected from environmental permitting. Member Figueroa asked for further clarification. Roldan answered that the City of Huntington Park planned on seeking federal funding in addition to the WASC SIP funding. Federal funding would require the project to adhere to NEPA environmental compliance, which is estimated to require \$2 million dollars to complete. Member Figueroa replied that \$2 million seems excessive for a NEPA document and asked what

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was driving the cost. Roldan stated that the site requires extensive soil sampling due to soil contamination issues. The site would also require additional compliance due to its proximity to a train station. Roldan said demonstrating compliance will also help when soliciting state and local agencies for funds.

Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) stated that in the previous meeting, the WASC offered to partially fund the project. The proponent was provided the partial funding document, which District Staff confirmed had been completed and brought up the document for the Committee members to view. Antos reminded that the partial funding guidelines asks the WASC members to evaluate the project proponent's assertion that they will be able to complete the project as it was originally submitted utilizing the partial funding award. If the Committee members believe the assertion, the WASC may move forward with the partial award. Antos noted the explanation is slightly off-topic to the prior conversation but hopes the context will be helpful in the discussion to follow. Chair Nila stated that future project funding can be updated. Antos agreed and cautioned the Committee members to be aware of future changes in scope that would make projects ineligible for SCWP funding. Antos said that project benefits must be sustained to maintain eligibility for SCWP funding.

Member Melissa Bahmanpour asked District Staff if "Percent Allocated" amounts displayed in the SIP Tool Preview section included assumed construction costs. District Staff confirmed that the "Percent Allocated" amounts did include assumed construction costs. Member Rivera asked if approving this SIP would include approving the assumed construction costs in future years. District Staff answered that approving the SIP would not include approving assumed construction costs in future years. Member Rivera stated that since the WASC was not committing to providing future costs and future funds to project applicants, the WASC can reassess funding in future years.

Chair Nila stated that project implementation will occur over a long period of time and therefore the WASC needs to work collaboratively and adjust the SIP as needed to share resources for the benefit of the region. Chair Nila shared a hope to see more projects brought to the table and the WASC should work to prioritize projects that yield the most benefit for the region. Chair Nila expressed interest in funding small projects, in addition to larger projects, and shared a hope that if projects can complete their design phase, they can find other funding sources to reduce the WASC's predicted overages in future fiscal years that result from including assumed construction costs.

Watershed Coordinator Dales asked if District Staff could detail how funds could be spread across fiscal years. District Staff stated that the WASC can change these amounts and if the project proponents approve the changes, adjustments will be made accordingly. Chair Nila added that they expect scheduling will change as projects develop.

Member Dylan Porter expressed support for approving the 3 IPs and shared concerns about the outcomes of the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study, based on comments from SCCWRP. Member Porter is worried the study will not deliver the intended benefits, and Member Gonez agreed. District Staff pulled up the SIP tool and removed the Regional Pathogen Study from the current scenario to reflect how this would affect the SIP's budget. Member Porter recommended the Microplastics in LA County Stormwater Study in place of the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study. Member Gonez agreed with this recommendation. District Staff demonstrated how this would impact the SIP's budget.

Member Figueroa expressed their support for getting projects "shovel-ready" and shared concerns that the WASC is over-allocating their budget. Chair Nila agreed with preparing projects to be "shovel-ready." Chair Nila is not concerned about the future construction funding since the WASC

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is not committing to providing the full cost. Chair Nila added that appropriate tracking methods are in place for funding recipients. Tracking project progress is part of the Watershed Coordinator's responsibilities. District Staff stated that the funded projects must also adhere to quarterly reporting.

Member Figueroa asked if the GAP Analysis Study and Regional Pathogen Reduction Study are requesting funding from other WASCs. District Staff answered that GAP Analysis Study is seeking funding from two WASCs (Lower Los Angeles River, Lower San Gabriel River) and the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study is seeking funding from seven WASCs (Central Santa Monica Bay, Lower Los Angeles River, Lower San Gabriel River, Rio Hondo, Santa Clara River, Upper Los Angeles River, North Santa Monica Bay).

Chair Nila expressed a desire to keep focused on the current year's funding allocations. Chair Nila stated that extra funds from the current fiscal year could roll over to the next year, allowing future projects to apply for Round 4 funding.

Member Porter reiterated their previously stated concern over whether the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study would provide the benefits that the WASC is looking for. Member Bahmanpour echoed Member Porter's concerns and asked whether any Committee members support the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study. Member Figueroa asked if any representatives for the project could speak. Richard Watson (Representative, Pathogen Reduction Study) stated that the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study was initiated due to the region's inability to meet fecal bacteria standards in wet weather conditions. Watson stated that the study has been improved twice since it was initially developed, including language changes and specification of where monitoring would take place. Watson said that 3 WASCs (South Santa Monica Bay, Upper San Gabriel River, Santa Clara) have approved the study. Watson stated that the study would be scaled to eliminate monitoring and analysis for watersheds which do not include the study in the SIP and that the study intends to move forward this year. Watson said that at the Regional Board meeting, while discussing bacteria related to the Los Cerritos channel, staff expressed support for the project. Watson explained that mixed reviews from the SCCWRP reflected the reviewers' backgrounds as academics and argued that negative comments came from the lack of specificity provided in the project's scope of work and team's credentials. Watson stated that the lack of specificity was purposeful, so as to signal to the NGOs that will be part of the decision-making process that the applicants are still open to their input on the scope of work. Watson stated that the Gateway Water Management Authority is the project proponent and will use their procurement policies to select a consultant team. Watson concluded by stating that the project's goals include sharing costs over five years and ultimately involve at least 5 WASCs in the study. Watson believes the project would have a significant impact and would ultimately save millions of dollars.

8. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

9. Voting Items

The WASC voted to approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan recommendations for the LLAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review. Motion was made by Member Dan Mueller, seconded by Melissa Bahmanpour. The motion passed, and the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan recommendations for the LLAR Watershed Area includes funding for the following projects:

- Infrastructure Program (IP)
 - Apollo Park Stormwater Capture Project

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- Willow Springs Park Wetland Restoration and Expansion
- Salt Lake Park Infiltration Cistern (**Partial funded for \$4.5M**)
- Scientific Studies Program (SS)
 - Microplastics in LA County Stormwater
 - Regional Pathogen Reduction Study
 - Gateway Area Pathfinding Analysis (GAP Analysis) – Phase 2

District Staff stated that SIP funding criteria had been met and the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan recommendations for the LLAR Watershed Area will be submitted to the Regional Oversight Committee for review.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting of the LLAR WASC is Tuesday April 26th, 2022. See the SCWP website for meeting details.

12. Adjournment

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

LLAR WASC - March 22, 2022

		Quorum Present				Voting Items	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 02-22-2022 Meeting Minutes	Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan
Agency	District	Ernesto Rivera	x	Ramy Gindi		y	y
Agency	Central Basin	Alex Rojas		Everardo Trujillo			
Agency	Water Replenishment District	Rob Beste		Aimee Zhao	x	y	y
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Dr. Quynh Tran	x	y	y
Agency	Port of Long Beach	James Vernon		Dylan Porter	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	Conservation Corps of Long Beach	Irene Lopez-Muro	x	David Sall		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Rivers & Mountains Conservancy	Mark Stanley		Joe Gonzalez	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	TreePeople	Cindy Montanez		Manny Gonez	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	City of Long Beach Parks & Recreation	Stephen Scott					
Community Stakeholder	River in Action	Melissa Bahmanpour	x	Erica Maceda		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Commerce						
Municipal Members	City of Bell Gardens	Gina Nila	x			a	y
Municipal Members	City of Downey	Dan Mueller	x	Delfino Consunji		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Long Beach	Melissa You	x	Cecilia Salazar		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Lynwood	Laura Ochoa	x	Noe Martinez		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Paramount	Adriana Figueroa	x	Sarah Ho		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Signal Hill	Cecil Looney		Thomas Bekele	x	y	y
Municipal Members	City of South Gate	Gladis Deras	x	Clint Herrera		a	y
Watershed Coordinator							
Non-Voting Member	SGA Marketing	Tara Dales	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	13	15
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0	0
Agency		4			Abstain (A)	2	0
Community Stakeholder		4			Total	15	15
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

Attendees
Lower Los Angeles River WASC Meeting
March 22, 2022

Adriana Figueroa	Irene Lopez-Muro	Melissa You
Aimee Zhao	James N	Michelle Kim
Amanda Begley	Jason Casanova	Michelle Staffield
Andrew Gray	John Hunter	Mike Antos (Regional Coord.)
Brad Wardynski	Joseph Gonzalez	Nancy Villasenor
Bridget Childs	Joshua Felton	Nate Schreiner
Bryce Lee	Jud warren	Nate Schreiner
Cameron Castillo	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Quynh Tran
Cecilia Salazar	Kelsey Reed	Raul Alvarez
Cesar Roldan	Larry Rich	Richard Watson
Cindy Donis	Larry Rich	Ryan Kearns
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Larry Tran	Ryan Kearns
Dan Mueller	laura ochoa	Safe Clean Water LA
Dylan Porter	Laura Ochoa	Tara Dales Watershed Coordinator
Eric Bonilla	LORRY HEMPE	Thomas Bekele
Ernesto Rivera	Manny Gonez	Thomas Hoang
Ernesto Rivera	Marcela Benavides (LACFCD)	Travis Diaz
Gina Nila	Mark Hall - GLACVCD	Uriel Cobian - LACFCD
Gladis Deras	Mayra Cabrera	wataru kumagai
Grace Kast	Melissa Bahmanpour	Zeke Okoya
I EC		