

Santa Clara River Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Thursday, July 7th, 2022
3:00pm - 5:00 pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Dirk Marks, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (Agency)
Steve Cole, Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agency)
*Christopher Lapaz, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Janine Prado, City of Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services (Agency)
Hunt Braly, Poole & Shaffery (Community)
Mary Johnson, Agua Dulce Town Council (Community)
Sandra Cattell, Sierra Club (Community)
Ivan Volschenk, Evolve Business Strategies (Community)
Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, Santa Clarita Valley Community Hiking Club (Community)
Bruce Hamamoto, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Jason Gibbs, Santa Clarita (Municipal), Chair
Heather Merenda, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Mike Hennawy, Santa Clarita (Municipal)
Peter Massey, TreePeople (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Absent:

Tom Cole, Santa Clarita (Municipal), Vice Chair

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jason Gibbs, Chair of the Santa Clara River (SCR) WASC, welcomed Committee Members and gave a brief WebEx tutorial, then called the meeting to order.

The Los Angeles County Flood District (District) staff 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 3rd, 2022

District Staff presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve meeting minutes by Member Sandra Cattell, seconded by Member Dirk Marks. The Committee voted to approve the March 3, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Member Hunt Braly asked District Staff to include previous meeting minutes as part of the upcoming meeting's materials. Member Braly also requested vote totals be included as part of the minutes in addition to being included in the vote tracking sheet.

3. Committee Member and District Updates

Member Chris Lapaz announced that the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts (LACSD) is conducting a temperature study of the Santa Clara River to determine the relationship between water temperature

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discharge from two of their reclamation plants (Saugus Water Reclamation Plant and Valencia Water Reclamation Plant) and the health of the biological communities in the River. Currently, the facilities are out of compliance with temperature limits recently set by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. The temperature study is part of LACSD's plan to reach compliance. The study will be informed by a technical committee as well as a stakeholder-involved process facilitated by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP). Anyone interested in joining the stakeholder group this fall may reach out to Member Lapaz for more information or Erika Bensch (LACSD). Several Committee Members expressed interest in participating; District Staff offered to distribute information following the meeting.

The Committee discussed whether WASC meeting recordings would be posted on the website. Meeting recordings are currently available upon request (interested parties may request the recording during the meeting or via email). Several Committee Members expressed disappointment with the policy, believing it impairs the Program's transparency, and called for further discussion at a future WASC meeting, noting that it was meant to be discussed earlier in the Spring but was not due to meetings being cancelled. Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) shared that other WASCs have also made similar requests. Those WASCs added a voting item to their Agendas to make a formal recommendation to the District and submitted a signed letter from the Chair and Vice chair on behalf of their Committee. Following this process encourages the District to respond in a formal manner. Committee Members expressed concern that the District had not already reconsidered their position on the issue and concluded that the August WASC meeting would include discussion on the issue. They requested District Staff not cancel the meeting without consent of the Committee. The Committee also requested that District Staff with decision-making authority on the matter be present to explain the policy and hold space for a question-and-answer session.

Chair Gibbs shared that the City of Santa Clarita will be hosting a Community Engagement Open House for the Via Princessa Project (funded FY21-22) on Thursday July 14 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM. Interested Committee Members may request additional information on how to attend.

District Staff provided an update, noting:

- The Round 4 Call for Projects closes on July 31. Information sessions were held on June 22 and June 29. Certification of attendance is required for all project applicants. Recordings of the sessions are available on the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) website.
- SCWP 2022 Interim Guidance was finalized following public review. The document includes four subject areas: strengthening community engagement and support, water supply, programming nature-based solutions, and implementing disadvantaged community policies in the regional program.
- All nine Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs) were approved by the Regional Oversight Committee on June 16 for advancement to the Board for approval, which is anticipated to be received in early October.
- The Regional Pathogen Reduction Study was approved for funding in five of the nine WASCs: Lower Los Angeles River, North Santa Monica Bay, South Santa Monica Bay, Upper San Gabriel River, and the Santa Clara River.
- Transfer agreement recipients should continue their quarterly reporting.
- Undesignated municipal member seats are going through their self-selection process. The Santa Clara River WASC will continue to have four seats designated for the City of Santa Clarita and three seats for the unincorporated area (represented by Los Angeles County Public Works).
- Annual plans (required to receive municipal funds) were due on April 1. Several updates have been made to the reporting module. There is now a handbook available to municipalities to provide extra guidance on the district program's process.

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- Stakeholder meetings were held on June 13 and 20 to develop the Credit Trading Program. More information about this program is on its way.
- The Metrics and Monitoring Study (MMS) Equity and Community Enhancement White Paper is in draft form and will be shared publicly later in the summer. As part of the development process, there have been public workshops and stakeholder advisory committee meetings. The MMS is planned for completion in late 2023. Additional metrics and tools will be made available to support decision-making, project tracking, and meaningful planning. District Staff asked Committee Members to be prepared for upcoming opportunities to engage. Public workshops will also be in the coming months.
- On June 14, 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 its position every 30 days. It is expected that the WASC may meet in person once COVID transmission levels are low and the County Board Room is open.
- The executive office released an updated mandate on June 27 that Committee Members who have not submitted vaccination paperwork may continue to serve in their positions. Once in-person meetings resume, members who have not submitted vaccination paperwork will be required to submit either a negative COVID antigen test within 24 hours of the meeting or a negative PCR test within 48 hours of the meeting.

It was clarified that proof of vaccination must be submitted to the SCWP in addition to any other County Programs that have requested proof of vaccination.

Member Cattell asked if there have been any community meetings held associated with the Newhall Park Infiltration Project (funded FY20-21). Member Heather Merenda replied that community meetings have not yet been held.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Peter Massey gave a presentation on the Watershed Coordinator Year One Review. The presentation included highlights from the first year (through April), during which the Watershed Coordinator held 68 Meetings/Interviews, 28 Site Visits, and 17 Funder Meetings, engaging over 750 people total. A total of \$1.7 million of funding was leveraged through the WaterTalks Program and the Drought Relief Program. Watershed Coordinator Massey provided an update for May/June, noting:

- Participated in a 2-day Home & Gardens Show and provided guidance to a potential project applicant,
- Distributed surveys to the public on desired educational topics,
- Added a community organizer, Heather Turpin, to this area who will be sharing SCWP information at events and meetings, and
- Will be supporting WaterTalks in launching a series of upcoming workshops.

Committee Members expressed gratitude for the Watershed Coordinator's work in Acton and Agua Dulce, particularly.

The Committee discussed Measure W tax relief benefits available for properties with existing stormwater improvement as well as similar benefits which may be realized through the Credit Trading Program.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Member Cattell disclosed ex parte communications with Member Merenda.

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6. Public Comment Period

Jacqueline Ayer (Acton Town Council) commented on the Committee's earlier discussion related to posting recordings of the WASC meetings, expressing that it is not sufficient for the SCWP to explain the policy; rather, the District should identify the specific provision of the Safe, Clean Water Ordinance in which the policy is rooted.

Roy Marson (Bouquet Canyon Network and Watershed Committee) shared that there is an intense need to work on water challenges in Bouquet Canyon which contains a community of approximately 2500 people. The community is dependent on release and runoff from the Bouquet Canyon Reservoir which is managed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Release has not happened very frequently due to flood risk and impacts to traffic. Marson would like to collaborate and coordinate government agencies to address this issue.

Chair Gibbs shared that they participate with other workgroups where the Bouquet Canyon issue is being addressed. Member Steve Cole volunteered to connect Roy Marson and Watershed Coordinator Massey with those discussions.

7. Discussion Items

a) Updated SCR Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan (SOEP)

Watershed Coordinator Peter Massey gave a presentation on the updated SCR SOEP. The Draft SOEP is available on the SCWP website, and any changes made are denoted with red text. The WASC provided the following feedback on the Draft:

- Allanthus, Arrundo, and Tamarisk, should be listed in the invasive species section,
- Include mention of how northern tributaries primarily flow south and southern tributaries primarily flow north in the Santa Clara River Watershed,
- Revise Page 14 to remove "Public Works" from "Los Angeles County Public Works" since Los Angeles County is technically receiving the municipal funds instead,
- Include a legend in the newly added Tribal Communities and SCWP boundaries map on Page 17.

8. Public Comment Period

Jacqueline Ayer noted that the Bouquet Canyon Reservoir and Bouquet Canyon Community are not within the SCR Watershed Area. There was discussion amongst the Committee, which concluded with agreement that the WASC should hold further discussion at a future meeting, on whether they could address this issue as it is upstream of their Watershed Area.

9. Voting Items

a) Approve the Updated SCR SOEP

Member Braly motioned to approve the updated SCR SOEP with feedback addressed, which was seconded by Member Dianne Hellrigel. The committee unanimously voted to approve the updated SCR SOEP (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

10. Items for Next Agenda

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The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 4, 2022, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM. See the SCWP website for details.

Member Braly asked that discussion of publicly posting the WASC meeting recordings be placed on the August meeting's agenda.

Member Cattell and Member Hamamoto asked for future discussion related to the WASC's ability to address the Bouquet Canyon Reservoir issue.

11. Adjournment

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

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		Quorum Present				Voting Items (see meeting minutes for additional details)	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 3-3-2022 Meeting Minutes	Approve the Updated Santa Clara River Strategic Outreach and Engagement Plan (SOEP)
Agency	District	Julian Juarez	x	Ramy Gindi		Y	Y
Agency	Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency	Dirk Marks	x			Y	Y
Agency	Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency	Steve Cole	x	Rick Viergutz		Y	Y
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Christopher Lapaz	x	Y	Y
Agency	Santa Clarita Recreation & Community Services	Janine Prado	x	Amy Seyerle		Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	Poole & Shaffery	Hunt Braly	x			Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	Agua Dulce Town Council	Mary Johnson	x			Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	Santa Clarita Sierra Club	Sandra Cattell	x	Diane Trautman		Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	Evolve Business Strategies	Ivan Volschenk	x			Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Foundation	Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel	x	Heidi Webber		Y	Y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		A	Y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		A	Y
Municipal Members	LA County Public Works	Bruce Hamamoto	x	Allen Ma		A	Y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Jason Gibbs	x	Darin Seegmiller		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Heather Merenda	x	Oliver Cramer		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Mike Hennawy	x	Jerrid McKenna		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Santa Clarita	Tom Cole		David Peterson			
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	TreePeople, Inc.	Peter Massey	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	13	16
Total Voting Members Present		16			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	3	0
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	16	16
Municipal Members		6				Approved	Approved

Attendees
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BCN Member	Amanda Begley	Steve Cole	Mayra Cabrera
Bridget Childs	Julian Juarez	Hunt Braly	CJ Caluag - LACFCD
Mary Johnson	Jacqueline Ayer	Justin Jones - (LACFCD)	Mike Antos
Roland Pacheco	Kirk Allen	Lauro Alvarado	Ivan Volschenk
Kayla Kilgo - CWE	Adam Taing	Hayat Rasul	Bruce Hamamoto
Chris Lapaz	Uriel Cobian - LACFCD	Oliver Cramer	Jason Gibb
Chris Yewdall	Ryanna Fossum	Heather Merenda	Dianne Hellrigel
Darin Seegmiller	janine prado	Dirk Marks	Peter Massey
Mike Hennawy	Sandra Cattell	Josafat Flores	lynne Plambeck