

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



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Wednesday, October 4, 2023

2:00pm - 4:00pm

LA County Public Works Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor (Courtyard), Conference Room C  
WebEx Meeting

## Committee Members Present:

Paul Shadmani, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)

Art Castro, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)

\*John Huynh, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)

Ida Meisami-Fard, LA Sanitation & Environment (Agency)

Cathie Santo Domingo, LA Recreation & Parks (Agency)

Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)

Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)

Max Liles, Michael Baker International (Community)

Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)

Yazdan Emrani, Glendale (Municipal)

Patrick DeChellis, La Cañada Flintridge (Municipal)

Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair

Karo Torossian, Los Angeles (Municipal)

Rafael Prieto, Los Angeles (Municipal)

Mark Lombos, Los Angeles County (Municipal)

Kenneth Jones, San Fernando (Municipal)

\*Arlene Guzman, Environmental Outreach Strategies (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

Carlos Moran, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

\*Alonso Garcia, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

## Committee Members Absent:

No Committee Members were absent.

\*Committee Member Alternate

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

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## **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Teresa Villegas welcomed Committee Members, called the meeting to order, and reviewed today's agenda.

Los Angeles County Flood Control District (District) staff provided a brief WebEx tutorial in both English and Spanish and announced that the meeting was being broadcast live in Spanish. District staff facilitated the roll call of Committee Members and a quorum was established.

## **2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 2, 2023**

Chair Villegas motioned to approve the meeting minutes from August 2, 2023. The motion was seconded by Member Patrick DeChellis. The WASC approved the August 2, 2023 meeting minutes with 10 members in favor, 4 in abstention, 0 opposed, and 2 absent at the time of the vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

## **3) Ex Parte Communication Disclosures**

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There were no ex parte communication disclosures.

## 4) Committee Member and District Updates

District staff provided an update noting:

- The first term for WASC Community Stakeholder seats are up for reappointment for the next 3-year term. The next step is for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to appoint WASC Community Stakeholder seats for the next term.
- On August 8, the Board approved all 9 Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs).
- Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23 Q4 Regional Quarterly Reports (April-June) were due on August 15. FY23-24 Q1 (July-September) Reports are due November 15. Quarterly reports must still be completed even if there was no activity done on the project or if the Transfer Agreement has not been executed.
- Municipal progress/expenditure reports are due on December 31. Municipal Annual Plans are due in April before the fiscal year, and the final report for the fiscal year is due at the end of December.
- Regional Infrastructure Program Project Developers and Municipalities should update the Reporting Module, including adding all phases of the project to the schedule and adding bid and award details for projects. This will allow public to see estimated construction dates and potential future bid opportunities.
- Any public or media events publicizing the accomplishments of the SCW Program should be shared with the District 14 days before the event if District attendance or participation is needed. Project Developers will soon see a “Public/Media Events” phase added to the Reporting Module.
- The Project Modification Guidelines are finalized. The purpose of this document is to provide more specific guidance to WASCs, applicants, recipients, and other interested stakeholders when modifications to a Project, project concept or study are proposed. The deadline to submit the Project Modification Request (PMR) form for the current fiscal year has been extended to November 30. The Project Modification Guidelines can be found in the Adaptive Management section in the Regional Program dropdown of the [SCW Program website](#). The District also plans to host an information session in the future.
- FY23-24 Transfer Agreements and addendums will be distributed in October. An email will be sent with instructions on how to use the transfer agreement functionality now hosted within the Reporting Module. In the meantime, project developers should begin preparing supporting documents for upload (Scope of Work, Authorizations, CEQA documents). Please refer to the sample Transfer Agreement on the SCWP website.
- On July 25, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion authored by Supervisor Horvath, “Accelerate Implementation of the SCW Program.” The three actions in the motion include 1) watershed planning, 2) simplified application process, 3) resources and staffing for dedicated adaptive management. The report back to the Board is currently being drafted in parallel with the Regional Oversight Committee’s (ROC) Biennial Report.
- The ROC has been meeting to discuss the draft Biennial Report and initiate public comment period. The next ROC meetings are on October 26 and December 7, and all Committee members are invited to attend to provide input. Meeting details can be found on the SCW Program website.
- SCW Portal “Bids and Schedule” was mentioned at the last meeting. The District continues to remind Project developers and Municipalities through emails and during quarterly report reviews.
- The Metrics and Monitoring Study (MMS) is hosting a project briefing to share final updates, results of the study, and next steps. There are two workshop sessions on October 11 at 10:30 am and 5:00 pm. The meetings will be identical in agenda content and are intended to provide various opportunities and flexibility for those interested in attending.

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- Total Program Tax Collection 2022-23 is available on the SCW Program website, in the [Estimated Revenues webpage](#)
- The District conducted a completeness review of feasibility studies for the Infrastructure Program (IP). The WASC will hear more about these Projects in the meeting today. Project applications can be viewed on the SCW Portal. The Scoring Committee will begin meeting on October 5 and is tentatively scheduled to score ULAR on November 2.
- Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) presented additional information regarding the Alternate Water Supply Scoring Pilot. The presentation can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

Upon inquiry, District staff clarified that the Scoring Committee and WASC have access to the SCW Projects Module score and the Alternate Water Supply Pilot scores. In addition, the scoring rubric will include the final Scoring Committee score and the Alternate Water Supply Pilot score and will be shared with the ULAR WASC when available. All Project applicants were given the option to use the Alternate Water Supply Pilot score during the application in the Projects Module.

Member DeChellis asked who is ultimately evaluating scoring. District staff clarified that the Pilot is part of the SCW Program's adaptive management efforts that are the responsibility of the District.

Member DeChellis asked if the WASC will have input on what conclusions are drawn from the Pilot. Chair Villegas asked who was involved in completing the MMS and expressed a desire to have the MMS products be public so that all can see the calculations that may change the scoring system. District staff confirmed a consultant team under their direction is responsible for the work of MMS, and that there is a Stakeholder Advisory Committee. District reminded the Committee of the upcoming MMS workshops on October 11 for their participation and input.

Upon inquiry, District staff shared that the Alternate Water Supply Pilot scoring effort was shared with project proponents, and a tool was provided that allowed a proponent to calculate the pilot score prior to application submittal to judge its impact on their submission. A proponent would be incentivized to use the tool if their proposed Project would achieve additional water supply points from the pilot rubric. District staff confirmed that no project would lose points by participating.

Member Luna asked about additional information regarding the motive behind the pilot scoring. District staff shared that many individuals, led by the North Santa Monica Bay WASC, sought changes in how small Projects were able to gain water supply points. The pilot is part of the adaptive management goals of the SCW Program.

Member Yazdan Emrani expressed concern about the WASC being asked to evaluate projects that have been scored by different rubrics. District staff reminded the Committee that the scoring system judges eligibility, based on if the projects pass the threshold score. Projects deemed eligible are then considered by the WASC for programming into the SIP.

Chair Villegas asked if this pilot scoring will skew projects towards water supply projects and away from water quality. Antos reminded the Committee that the balance between water quality and water supply in the scoring rubric is unchanged by the pilot, it only makes the available water supply points more likely to be achieved by more projects.

Chair Villegas expressed concern that Alternate Water Supply Pilot was created without formal input from the WASC. District staff reminded the Committee that the Program has adaptive management goals, and the District is responsible for adjusting the Program. District staff will analyze results from the pilot and

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take WASCs' input into consideration as they determine whether to move forward and implement the pilot scoring for future rounds.

## 5) Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Carlos Moran introduced Watershed Coordinator alternates Alonso Garcia and Arlene Guzman. The Watershed Coordinators presented on recent activities.

Watershed Coordinator Moran discussed recent efforts to complete annual reports and an invitation to present on community engagement at the previous ROC meeting on August 31.

Watershed Coordinator Moran additionally highlighted the school greening working group's efforts. The working group is looking to host a series of tours. WASC Members will be invited to attend these events via email. The working group is actively coordinating two model projects in development with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and Municipalities. The first project is with City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and the Rosa Parks Learning Center in Panorama City. The second project is with Diego Rivera Learning Center, Los Angeles County Public Works, and Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. The school greening working group is hosting two upcoming school tours. Tours are planned for Victory Elementary School on October 24 and Victory Elementary and Northridge Middle Schools on November 17.

Watershed Coordinator Guzman shared an upcoming tour at the water pollution control plant on November 9. The tour is intended to provide individuals with more information about water infrastructure at the plant. All WASC members are welcomed to attend.

A tour of Albion Park has been tentatively scheduled for December 7. The tour is intended to target local and state elections with the goal to provide leaders with more information on various types of stormwater capture and treatment programs funded through the SCW Program.

Member Veronica Padilla-Campos asked for more information about operations and maintenance (O&M) funding for school greening projects. Watershed Coordinator Moran clarified that each school greening project has two jurisdictions, LAUSD and a municipality, each with separate ownership components of the project. LAUSD is responsible for school greening elements, such as urban green infrastructure on school campuses, while the municipalities are responsible for infrastructure related to the regional stormwater projects.

## 6) Public Comment Period

District staff compiled all public comment cards received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting, uploaded them to the SCWP website, and displayed them on-screen. Participants on the Spanish translation line and call-in users were also invited to provide public comment.

Three public comment cards were received by the day before the meeting from Elva Ynez, Jennifer Toy, and Jack Smith. All comment cards can be found on the [SCWP website](#).

Jessica Medina (Mountain Rivers Conservancy Authority (MRCA)) expressed support for the FY24-25 Technical Resources Program application Elephant Hill Open Space and Stormwater Infrastructure Feasibility Study.

Alan Fukes (Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement, Cal Poly Pomona) expressed support of the use of dry well design and construction methods and workforce development efforts. Cal Poly Pomona is interested in determining which methods provide the best balance between costs and

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long-term performance, pretreatment, maintenance practices, and frequency for different levels of land use.

Kelsey Jessup (The Nature Conservancy) expressed support for the FY24-25 Infrastructure Program application Bowtie Demonstration Project, noting it is a multi-benefit project requesting only O&M funding. Jessup hopes to leverage funds already put forward. Jessup explained that the project is requesting O&M funding for FY24-25 before construction completion to ensure a seamless process from construction to O&M.

Elva Yanez (President, Save Elephant Hill) noted the Elephant Hill Open Space and Stormwater Infrastructure Feasibility Study TRP application has received a Letter of Non-objection from MRCA and is expecting a letter from City of Los Angeles soon.

## 7) Presentations and Discussion Items

### a) Evaluation of Infiltration Testing Methods for Design of Stormwater Drywell Systems Update (Presentation by Cal Poly Pomona)

Ali Sharbat led the presentation with Mehrad Kamalzare with support from Scott Kindred. The update presentation and more information can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

During the presentation, Kamalzare highlighted results from Mary Bethune Park and emphasized how hydraulic conductivity (Ks) is a better indicator for predicting drywell capacity than infiltration rates.

Chair Villegas asked for clarification regarding the differences of the soil characteristics at each testing location. Kamalzare stated that the soil in Glendale is coarse, gravel sand and at the Mary Bethune Park, the soil was dark, black clay. Kamalzare clarified that the study demonstrated that the steady-state borehole permeability (SSBP) calculation method for the Ks was a comparable method for estimating actual drywell capacity. The SSBP method accounts for unsaturated soil while the GS200.1 utilizes Darcy's Law, which only works for saturated soil.

Member Luna asked for the role cost plays in comparing one method to another. Kamalzare stated that the only cost difference comes from the infiltration testing well installation equipment; the hollow stem auger (HSA) ranges from 5 to 7 thousand dollars and sonic drilling ranges from 7 to 8 thousand dollars. Kamalzare presented the following example to justify the cost and benefits: HSA borings severely underestimate infiltration and results may suggest 2 to 3 dry wells are necessary, where in the same situation, sonic drilling infiltration testing results may reveal only 1 dry well is necessary. Therefore, it is worth the higher initial upfront cost of sonic drilling since less wells may be needed (each dry well costs around \$100,000 to install). Kamalzare noted that in Washington, when Kindred conducts research, sonic drilling is common practice.

District staff clarified that GS200.1 does not explicitly recommend using HSA and noted that borings drilled with an HSA often give lower infiltration results than any other type of boring. District also noted that empirical formulas are not typically consistent with study results and asked if the study will develop new empirical formula. Sharbat confirmed that the study team developed a new empirical formula (which is in the final study report).

There will be a 2 to 3 hour workshop planned in which the study proponents will present the final results of the scientific study more thoroughly.

### b) Summary of submitted Infrastructure Program projects, Scientific Studies, and Technical Resources project concepts (Presentation by Watershed Coordinators)

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Watershed Coordinator Moran noted that the total ULAR funding request for FY24-25 is larger than what is available, and therefore the WASC will not be able to fund them all. Additionally, most of the funding request is distributed across Stormwater Investment Plan programming years 2 (FY25-26) through 5 (FY28-29).

Watershed Coordinators Guzman, Garcia, and Moran then presented project summaries of the seven IP projects, one TRP project, and three SS projects that were submitted to the ULAR WASC for FY24-25 Call for Projects. The presentation and more information on the FY24-25 ULAR applications can be found on the [SCW Program website](#).

The IP projects include:

- LA River Green Infrastructure Project (City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works, LA Sanitation and Environment (LASAN))
- Sun Valley Green Neighborhood Infrastructure Project (Consideration City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works LA Sanitation and Environment (LASAN))
- Osborne Street Stormwater Capture Green Street Project (City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA))
- Bowtie Demonstration Project (The Nature Conservancy)
- Arroyo Park Infiltration Gallery (City of South Pasadena)
- Green Street Demonstration Project on Main Street (City of Alhambra)
- La Crescenta Avenue Green Improvement Project (County of Los Angeles)

The TRP project concept includes:

- Elephant Hill Open Space and Stormwater Infrastructure Feasibility Study (Save Elephant Hill)

The SS include:

- Identifying Best Practices for Maintaining Stormwater Dry Well Capacity (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)
- Street Sweeping Study (City of Los Angeles)
- Pollutant Source Characterization Study (City of Los Angeles)

Member Ida Meisami-Fard clarified that the LA River Green Infrastructure Project (LASAN) is not a resubmittal of the same Project from Round 3, and the Project has been reduced in scale for the Round 5 application.

Member DeChellis asked for clarification regarding the “Estimated Module Score” shown on the presentation slides. District staff clarified that this score is from the SCW Projects Module generated score upon application submittal and is a preliminary score. The Scoring Committee will confirm the final score.

Member Padilla-Campos asked a question regarding letters of support and conflicts of interest, specifically that Pacoima Beautiful, the member’s employer, submitted a letter of support for the Osborne Street Stormwater Capture Green Street Project (StreetsLA). In response to a question from District Staff, Member Padilla-Campos clarified Pacoima Beautiful’s involvement was a letter of support and not a monetary contribution. District clarified that Member Padilla-Campos can explain and disclose Pacoima Beautiful’s support for the project during SIP deliberations. More information can be found in Section 7 of the Regional Program WASC Operating Guidelines.

## **c) Selection of Chair, Vice-Chair or Co-Chairs**

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Chair Villegas deferred this discussion item due to time.

## **8) Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments for this section of the agenda.

## **9) Voting Items**

- b) Send none, some, or all completed Infrastructure Program projects to the Scoring Committee**

Chair Villegas moved this item above Agenda Item 9a.

Member Luna motioned to send all completed Infrastructure Program projects to the Scoring Committee. Member Emrani seconded the motion. The motion was approved with 14 votes in favor, 0 in abstention, and 2 opposed (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

- a) Selection of Chair, Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs**

District staff reminded the WASC that Max Podemski is no longer a WASC member and there is currently no Vice-Chair.

Several separate motions were made for Member Teresa Villegas as Chair, and Member Karo Torossian as Vice-Chair. Member DeChellis consolidated these and made a motion to nominate Member Villegas as Chair and Karo Torossian as Vice-Chair for the ULAR WASC. Member Rafael Prieto seconded the motion. The motion was approved with 16 votes in favor, 0 in abstention, and 0 opposed (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

## **10) Items for Next Agenda**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 1, 2:00pm – 4:00pm. See the [SCW Program website](#) for details. Items on the agenda include:

- a) Regional Program Quarterly Report Summary for FY2022-23 Q3 and Q4**
- b) Technical Resources Program (TRP) Presentation**

## **11) Adjournment**

Chair Villegas thanked Committee Members and the public for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.