

Rio Hondo Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, December 21, 2021
1:00pm - 3:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Julian Juarez, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Tom Love, Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Agency), Co-Vice Chair
Kelly Gardner, Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster (Agency)
Kristen Ruffell, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency), Chair
Brent Maue, City of Pasadena Public Works (Agency)
Thomas Wong, San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Community), Co-Vice Chair
Jill Fosselman, Resident (Community)
Mark Hall, Greater LA County Vector Control District (Community)
Edward Belden, Resident (Community)
Daniel Rossman, The Wilderness Society (Community)
David Dolphin, Alhambra (Municipal)
*Eddie Chan, Arcadia (Municipal)
Fernando Villaluna, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Gloria Crudgington, Monrovia (Municipal)
Frank Lopez, Monterey Park (Municipal)
James Carlson, Sierra Madre (Municipal)
Richard Watson, RWA Planning (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Kris Markarian, Pasadena (Municipal)

See attached attendance sheet for full list of attendees.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The District facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. All Committee Members made self-introductions and a quorum was established.

The Committee welcomed two new Members: Jill Fosselman and Edward Belden, community members from Pasadena and Monrovia, respectively.

Kristen Ruffell, Chair of the Rio Hondo WASC, welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order. District staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 16, 2021

The District provided the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member David Dolphin, seconded by Member James Carlson. The WASC voted to approve the November 16, 2021 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no Committee Member updates.

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District Staff provided an update:

- For the Regional Program, the District has initiated the process of sending Fund Transfer Agreements for projects approved under Round 2 of the Stormwater Investment Plan.
- For the Round 3 Call for Projects, the Rio Hondo WASC received two Infrastructure Program projects, four Scientific Study projects, and zero Technical Resource projects. The Scoring Committee reviewed both Infrastructure Program projects on November 22, 2021. One of the projects (East Los Angeles College Northeast Drainage Area and City of Monterey Park Biofiltration Project) scored below than the threshold necessary to be brought to the WASC for consideration.
- The Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) Spatial Data Library created by Stantec was updated to improve user interface and loading speeds, and to add a user guide.
- On November 30, 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.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Richard Watson (RWA) provided an update on Watershed Coordinator activities (refer to Watershed Coordinator Update Presentation) which included an overview of monthly activities and planned outreach events for the February to June 2022 period.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Watershed Coordinator Watson reached out to City of San Gabriel regarding the presentation in today's meeting.

6. Public Comment Period

Sandy Snider (Baldwin Lake Task Force) presented her public comment card, asking for a status update regarding the Arboretum Baldwin Lake/Tule Pond Project. Watershed Coordinator Watson directed the question to Member Julian Juarez. District Staff will follow up with Member Juarez regarding the public comment.

7. Presentation and Discussion Items:

a. Presentations for Infrastructure Project Program

i. Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project

Presentation by Greg de Vinck (City of San Gabriel). The project will divert water from Alhambra Wash to Vincent Lugo Park for pretreatment and infiltration via new and existing bioswale BMPs.

Chair Ruffell expressed concern regarding bringing water near recreational areas and asked about the project's treatment plans. De Vinck said there are no plans for treatment yet, though the water may receive some treatment before entering a storm tank. Treatment will be explored in the design phase. There will be signs posted to indicate the water is not for recreational use.

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Chair Ruffell asked how the project will coordinate with neighboring projects. De Vinck directed the question to the Watershed Coordinator, who provided a response later in the meeting.

Member Fosselman asked whether the project affects other cities' efforts to meet Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). De Vinck replied that the project is intended to divert 100% of the dry weather flow, so downstream flows would be dry and have no impact on other cities' efforts. Member Fosselman asked whether there was a feasibility study that analyzed the water quality at the project area. De Vinck responded that the water has not been sampled in the previous stages of the project.

Member Fosselman asked whether the funds requested by the project are inclusive of the minimum funds required to build and maintain the project, or if there are allowances that can be made for the project, given that the city has a negative budget. De Vinck responded that the City of San Gabriel's municipal program return is \$440,000 and could support some of the expected operations and management (O&M) costs. Watershed Coordinator Watson reminded that the Regional Program is intended to support the ongoing operations and maintenance of projects built by SCWP Funds, or which are helping achieve the goals of the SCWP.

Member Mark Hall asked whether the diversion structure would be an obstruction for service vehicles. De Vinck responded that it would not and clarified that the diversion structure will be a small berm about the size of a common speed bump. The proponent has considered an inflatable dam, but decided it was too costly and potentially an O&M challenge. Watershed Coordinator Watson concurred that the system proposed would not impact in-channel service vehicles.

Member Hall asked if this project had undergone a feasibility study yet. The proponent and the Watershed Coordinator replied, confirming a feasibility study had been performed. Member Hall asked why the project includes two pumps and why there is no trash capture before the pump. De Vinck explained that the first pump pumps water from the channel to the holding tank and the second pump pumps water from the holding tank when water builds up to the infiltration channel. The intention is to provide filtration and treatment before the storage chamber.

Member Hall echoed Member Fosselman's previous question about the project's impacts on surrounding cities and projects, given the project is diverting 100% dry weather flow.

Member Kelly Gardner asked about the water quality benefit claimed by the project, noting that the water treated by the project is drawn from inside the existing channel. De Vinck said the water quality has not been thoroughly analyzed in the feasibility study. As the design is further developed, water quality in the stream will be analyzed. It is anticipated that the water quality will be improved via the bioswale, some pre-treatment, and infiltration.

Member Gloria Crudginton asked about whether the SCW Municipal Funds specific to the city will be available for funding O&M costs of the proposed project. De Vinck clarified that the Municipal Program Return (Municipal Fund) amounts to roughly \$442,000 for the City, which are available as the project's fall back plan. The proponent's initial plan is to request Regional Program funds for O&M. Member Crudginton responded that the funding will need to be discussed further with the WASC.

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Member Belden asked if the project addresses impacts on existing uses of the park. De Vinck responded that the existing park is large and has low-density uses, concluding that the project will not significantly impact the public's use of the park. Member Belden listed uses of the channel, downstream of the project site, and echoed the question regarding the project's impacts on downstream areas.

Member Belden asked whether the proponents considered taking a gravity feed approach from the actual wash to remove the use of the pump. De Vinck responded that the channel is very deep, and the project site is very flat, which makes gravity flow financially unfeasible.

Vice Chair Thomas Wong asked for information about public education activities. De Vinck responded that the project's highlight is its educational component, which involves engineering components that are visible to the public. A variety of information will be shared, including project components, project benefits, local flora, and fauna, etc. Educational spaces and materials like picnic benches, brochures, and classroom spaces are incorporated into the project. Vice Chair Wong asked the project to consider ways to engage the community in the design process. De Vinck noted that the project intends to provide translated materials and signage for the City's diverse communities. The City will use their contract with local trash haulers to distribute education materials.

Watershed Coordinator Watson addressed previous questions regarding the project's impacts on downstream projects and reminded the WASC that it had approved the Alhambra Wash Dry Weather Diversion Project downstream of the Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project. The Alhambra Wash Dry Weather Diversion Project was designed to capture a 11,000-acre tributary area and the Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project captures approximately half that. It was suggested that the Vincent Lugo Park could be designed to capture more wet weather first flush and be aligned with the capacity of the downstream project.

b. Release of WASC meeting recordings ([WASC Comment Letter](#))

Chair Ruffell asked District staff to confirm whether they had received the draft WASC Comment Letter written by Member Bryan Matsumoto. Member Matsumoto wrote the letter to request the District make it standard procedure to post video recordings of the WASC meetings to the SCWP website to provide equitable access to the WASC meetings. Member Matsumoto does not believe the meeting notes capture the detailed discussions and back-and-forth questions and answers.

Vice Chair Tom Love asked whether this request has been made by other WASCs. District staff replied that they have not received similar requests from other WASCs.

Member Crudgington asked if there are additional costs associated with making the recordings available. District staff does not predict that there would be added costs associated with posting the recordings online, however, they noted that there may be extra costs once the meetings return to in-person or hybrid formats. Member Crudgington noted that carbon emission reductions associated with meeting virtually rather than in-person may be as high as 90%.

Mike Antos (Stantec) noted that posting video recordings may add challenges with accessibility of online resources for the District.

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Member Matsumoto noted that the District and Watershed Coordinators have been considering other costly items for outreach efforts and asked the WASC to consider pathways for community engagement. Member Matsumoto noted that having the meetings available is the most effective way of getting communities engaged and involved.

Chair Ruffell responded that the opportunity to engage in the discussion may not be available if community members are not watching the meeting live.

Member Hall asked if there were written District policies against posting online recordings. District Staff responded there aren't, though active participation and engagement are encouraged.

Vice Chair Wong would like to have further discussions with the District on how to better engage the community. However, for the time being, making meetings available online may be an easier engagement method to implement for the WASC.

Member Daniel Rossman asked if there are arguments against posting recordings on a probationary basis, given the low risk and low costs.

Member Belden echoed Member Rossman and Vice Chair Wong's comments and noted that other municipalities record public meetings and make them available, with similar community engagement intentions.

Member Fosselman echoed Member Rossman and Vice Chair Wong's comments and recommended that the Letter include a statement about posting recordings on a probationary basis.

Regional Coordinator Mike Antos noted that the letter should be addressed to the District and that WASC members should be engaging the community between meetings as well. Antos also commented that the details of projects are only partially shared during the WASC meeting presentations and that the full details for the projects are submitted in the application which are publicly available.

Watershed Coordinator Watson noted that, regardless of the vote on the WASC recordings later, watershed coordinators are working on engaging with the community using electronic media.

8. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

Member Matsumoto noted that the WASC recording request was made so that project proponents and WASC members could use the recordings as a resource for community members to refer back to for discussions on specific projects.

District staff agreed with Antos that the letter should be addressed to the District and conveyed that the North Santa Monica Bay WASC addressed their letter on a different topic to both the Regional Oversight Committee and the District. District staff acknowledged Member Fosselman's recommendation to include a statement about posting recordings on a probationary basis.

9. Voting Items

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- a. Submit Letter to the District regarding the release of WASC meeting recordings

Two changes were made to the WASC Recording Letter prior to making a motion: (1) the letter was addressed to the Flood Control District and (2) a provision was added to request meeting recordings be made available only while the meetings are held virtually.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Wong to approve the letter as drafted with changes made live. The motion was seconded by Member Rossman. The WASC voted to approve the motion (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting will be held Tuesday January 18, 2022, from 1:00 – 3:00 PM.

- a. The WASC is expecting a presentation from the Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP), and a presentation regarding the quarterly reports.

11. Adjournment

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

Attendance

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James Carlson	Tim Brick
C Hernandez	Aric Torreyson
Tom Love	Melanie Morita
Bryan Matsumoto	Jud Warren
Alex Tachiki	Justin Jones
Brent Maue	Jill Fosselman
Gloria Crudgington	David Dolphin
Kristen Ruffell	Julian Juarez
Edward Belden	Greg de Vinck
Eddi Chan	Laureen Abustan
Stephanie Tong - LACFCD	Darin Son (Note Taker)
Daniel Rossman	Richard Watson
Frank Lopez	Ruby Wang
Mike Antos	Thomas Wong
Brock Vance	Larry Tran - LACFCD
Kelly Gardner	Fernando Villaluna
Taylor McCauley	Mark Hall
James Tong	Julie Millett
Jason Casanova	