

Rio Hondo Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, March 15, 2022
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)
*Brian Matsumoto, 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)
David Dolphin, Alhambra (Municipal)
Vanessa Hevner, Arcadia (Municipal)
Fernando Villaluna, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Gloria Crudgington, Monrovia (Municipal)
James Tong, Pasadena (Municipal)
James Carlson, Sierra Madre (Municipal)
Richard Watson, RWA Planning (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Daniel Rossman, The Wilderness Society (Community)
Frank Lopez, Monterey Park (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.

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 February 15, 2022

District Staff provided the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Member David Dolphin, seconded by Member Gloria Crudgington. The WASC voted to approve the February 15, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District Staff provided an update:

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- On March 1, 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 of Supervisors 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. The recording has been posted on the Safe Clean Water website and the Q&A portion will be available within a few days.
- The SCWP Interim Guidance document is available for public review on the SCWP website. The District drafted Interim Guidance regarding Disadvantaged Community Benefits and Nature-Based Solutions in May 2021. The document has been updated to include guidance on Water Supply, Community Outreach, and Engagement. The public review period has been extended to April 27, 2022.
- WASC members should complete their Annual Statement of Economic Interest, Form 700, by April 1, 2022. Late statements are subject to a fee of \$10 per day, up to \$100. WASC members should have received a reminder email about this.
- Round 3 projects for the Rio Hondo WASC's consideration include: 1 Infrastructure Project, 4 Scientific Studies, and 0 Technical Resources Program projects.
- The District reminded the Rio Hondo Committee members that it is important for the WASC and the work of the Regional Program to remain transparent and fair. These principles are built into the Safe, Clean Water Program and are represented by the *ex parte* disclosures on each agenda. WASC members whose job connects them to specific projects should ask colleagues or consultants to attend WASC meetings to share about or advocate for those projects during Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) deliberations and should avoid using their position as WASC members to advocate for projects from their home entities. Not all projects are connected to a WASC member's full-time job and must advocate for their inclusion during the managed opportunities (the application itself, presentation(s), questions from the WASC, and the public comment period). Ensuring each project gets treated fairly during discussion and voting agenda items and that all proponents have equal access to engage in the WASC discussion needs to be part of how the WASC manages itself.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Richard Watson (RWA) provided an update on recent on Watershed Coordinator activities (refer to Watershed Coordinator Update Presentation).

Co-Vice Chair Tom Love asked the watershed coordinators to elaborate on the category of projects "with existing downstream stormwater capture facilities (or other proposed downstream projects)," since most projects in the Rio Hondo and USGR Watershed Areas fall under this category. Watershed Coordinator Watson emphasized local availability of water as a key aspect for projects. Watershed Coordinator Watson said Rio Hondo is positioned upstream of the spreading grounds, noting that water captured downstream is not for the locality, but for the region. Watershed Coordinator Watson noted that this poses a dilemma for water managers and the watermaster. Watershed Coordinator Watson stated that the District allows first flushes to go by to protect water quality, and in some cases, the District may allow several hours of first flushes. In these cases, if water is cleaned up or used locally and then released, it becomes water that would have been bypassed. Watershed Coordinator Watson stated that since this is the case, it is important

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to consider how projects work together and their relationship with the spreading grounds. Co-Vice Chair Love clarified the local benefits provided by projects under this first category by discussing the South El Monte Storm Water Capture and Recharge Project. Watershed Coordinator Watson agreed and emphasized that it is important to be cognizant of the watermaster's interpretation of water use. Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) specified that it is the duty of the project proponent to make a good faith effort to understand the project's downstream impacts. Antos noted that the Scoring Committee will assess whether water supply claims are appropriate. By the time a project gets to the WASC, there is a strong administrative record of how projects relate to one another. Watershed Coordinator Watson supported this clarification.

Co-Vice Chair Brian Matsumoto requested an update from the Watershed Coordinators on reaching out to the four targeted disadvantaged municipalities. Watershed Coordinator Watson is working with several Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and is conducting ongoing work with the City of Alhambra. Watershed Coordinator Watson also noted that their team is looking into how to work more closely with Montebello and South El Monte, but have not yet focused on Rosemead. Co-Vice Chair Matsumoto suggested tracking and reporting outreach to those specific communities in the future, to monitor progress. Watershed Coordinator Watson agreed to this request.

Member Crudginton expressed concern with recent public discourse which has questioned the value of conserving water after seeing substantial flows in the storm control channels. Member Crudginton asked if there was outreach being done to counteract this narrative and let the community know about ongoing efforts. Watershed Coordinator Watson replied that there was more to be done on this front and pointed to an upcoming in-person event on May 1, 2022 in Alhambra which will address these sorts of comments. Watershed Coordinator Watson also said that they may want to talk to Member Crudginton later to strategize on how to counteract that narrative.

Co-Vice Chair Matsumoto had a question regarding the "Good, Better, Best" table on outreach included in the Watershed Coordinator's update and asked if these efforts were also built into the Scoring Rubric. Watershed Coordinator Watson replied that the Scoring Rubric did include this to an extent, and for this reason, the watershed coordination team emphasized the value of encouraging project applicants to receive comments from CBOs. Watershed Coordinator Watson reflected that it is important for the project proponents to work with the Watershed Coordinators to facilitate such interactions. Watershed Coordinator Watson also emphasized that the Scoring Committee is seeking support directly from CBOs during the scoring process.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

Chair Ruffell stated that they discussed the proposed projects and how they interacted with previously funded projects with Watershed Coordinator Watson and Vick Bapna (CWE).

Co-Vice Chair Love disclosed that the SGVCOG Water Committee discussed the SCWP in the past week.

6. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

7. Discussion Items:

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

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District Staff gave an overview of the Summary of Scientific Studies from SCCWRP. The reviews were emailed to the WASC members in the past week. Chair Ruffell expressed their gratitude for the summary and considered the reviews in their preliminary ranking.

Member Jill Fosselman also expressed gratitude and wanted to clarify if the reviewers were the same for all Scientific Studies. District Staff answered that the SCCWRP used a group of independent reviewers that rotated based on their expertise, therefore, not all reviewers reviewed all studies. District Staff clarified that these reviewers were hired based on their expertise and ability to assist the WASC with decision-making

Member Fosselman asked if feedback was provided to the applicants, so that any concerns could be addressed. District Staff answered that the applicants received the same reviews as the WASC members. District Staff noted that the goal of the review is for applicants to address concerns, and they are looking into developing an adaptive management process to facilitate that.

Co-Vice Chair Matsumoto asked if the Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation Scientific Study proposal had addressed the WASC's concerns related to cleaning water in the same location food is grown. Juan Diaz-Carreras (Los Angeles Community Garden Council) stated that the goal of the study was to see how certain land use categories can be used to also accomplish the goals of the SCWP. Diaz-Carreras stated that based on this objective, the community land-use type would be the primary constraint of the study and that proposed recommendations need to be compatible with the land-use type. Diaz-Carreras said that some sites are already collecting rainwater, so the goal would be to see what actions could be taken to benefit the SCWP as well as the gardeners, many of which are in disadvantaged communities. Chair Ruffell expressed concerns that the proposal is more of a feasibility study than a scientific study. Chair Ruffell asked whether the project could be made more generally applicable, in line with how Scientific Studies are intended. Diaz-Carreras replied that the goal of the study would be to develop a set of criteria which can be used to determine if a site is compatible with the SCWP's goals. Diaz-Carreras stated the focus of the study is not on any specific site and the criteria could be applicable to many other sites. Mike Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) noted that the full name of the program is "Scientific and Technical Studies," however, the full name has fallen out of use.

Member Mark Hall requested clarification on whether the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study and the Additional Funding Request to Support the LRS Adaptation Study share redundant scopes of work.

Bruce Hamamoto (Senior Civil Engineer, LA County Public Works) responded that they had not looked at the details of the LRS Adaptation Study and could not speak to details of that project. Hamamoto noted that based on a quick glance, there are many similarities and possible overlaps in collecting microbial data and assessing risk to humans. Hamamoto stated that the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study's objective is to gather data across the County from multiple bacteria Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and determine the highest risk sources. Hamamoto added that the project's focus is on how to leverage limited funds to address the highest risk sources to reduce human health risks most effectively.

Dawn Petschauer (LA Sanitation, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Group) added that there may be some overlap and noted that the LRS study was approved for Round 1 funding. Petschauer stated that this additional request for funding was for additional data collection and website development. Petschauer shared that the project has made noteworthy progress since being awarded Round 1 Funding, including submittal of the LRS Adaptation Plan to the Regional Board. Petschauer added that the study was locally focused. Petschauer noted that the SCCWRP

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reviewers left positive comments on the study's clear objectives, innovative aspects, and sound data. Petschauer clarified that this Round's funding request is to conduct additional sampling and to develop a website to make the data publicly available. Petschauer shared hope that the findings may be utilized by others.

Member Hall asked if the activities proposed in the first phase of funding rely on the second phase of funding. Petschauer noted that all Phase 1 Funding activities are on-track to be completed and do not rely on the second phase of funding.

Chair Ruffell asked whether the project includes sampling locations in the Rio Hondo Watershed Area, and not just the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed. Petschauer responded that there are several sampling locations in both Watershed Areas. The number of sampling locations in each Watershed Area is reflected in the respective funding requests to those WASCs.

Member Dolphin asked project proponents from the Regional Pathogen Reduction Study whether they could make use of data from the LRS study once it is completed. Member Dolphin also wanted to know if it would be more advantageous for the studies to run concurrently or sequentially. Petschauer stated that their goal is to make regionally specific information available on a website to help aid regional studies. Hamamoto answered that their regional pathogen study covers both marine and freshwater TMDLs and will use numerous data sets available within the scope of their study. Hamamoto noted that the South Santa Monica Bay, Upper San Gabriel River, and Santa Clara WASCs had already signed onto the study. Hamamoto noted that although the project is easily scalable, the project proponents would like as many WASCs as possible to sign onto the Scientific Study to strengthen the regulatory action recommendation. Hamamoto added that the regional pathogen study would use all available data sets, including data sets from the LRS study, SCCWRP, monitoring coalition group (SMC), etc. Hamamoto noted that the data needs to be regionally specific for it to be of use to the study. They cannot use data from projects such as the Surfer Health Study in San Diego.

b) Rio Hondo (RH) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022- 23 Stormwater Investment Plan (SCW Portal)

- i. Infrastructure Program (IP)
 - (1) Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project – City of San Gabriel
- ii. Scientific Studies (SS)
 - (1) Regional Pathogen Reduction Study - Gateway Water Management Authority
 - (2) Additional Funding Request to Support the LRS Adaptation Addressing the La River Bacteria TMDL for the ULAR Watershed Management Group - San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
 - (3) Maximizing Impact of Minimum Control Measures - San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
 - (4) Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation - Los Angeles Community Garden Council

District Staff brought up the SIP tool and the preliminary rankings. District Staff received 14 responses out of 17 for preliminary ranking. For the first SIP Scenario, District Staff turned on the top 3 ranked projects which included 1 Infrastructure Program Project and 2 Scientific Studies, noting that this scenario could be adjusted based on WASC discussion.

Co-Vice Chair Matsumoto asked if project proponents for the Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project were able to address significant questions from the past WASC meeting about how the project was going to affect upstream and downstream projects.

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Lauren Abustan (Brown and Caldwell) shared that the project proponents for the Vincent Lugo Park project met with Watershed Coordinator Watson and the project consultant team from CWE regarding the downstream Alhambra Wash Dry Weather Diversion Project. Both parties coordinated to see how their projects could work together.

Greg de Vinck (City of San Gabriel) and Topher Jones (Brown and Caldwell) presented slides to describe potential changes that could be undertaken at Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture project to create more synergy between the opportunities there and the Alhambra Wash projects drawing water from the same Flood Control District Channel. De Vinck highlighted the Vincent Lugo Park project's multiple benefits, scalability, and considerations for enhancement. Jones noted that planned bioswales can be scaled for the right amount of dry weather flow based on the downstream project and that excess flows can be filtered and returned to the channel. Jones stated that there is enough flow that can be taken by each project, and they will continue work with Watershed Coordinator Watson and CWE on the technical aspects of the project.

De Vinck noted that there are several options to alter the project's scalability while keeping the project's budget in mind. De Vinck stated that the project proponents could alter the size of the bioswale, alter the size of pump station 2 (e.g., take a portion of first flush), and alter the performance of the pumps in the creek bed (e.g., instead of a constant dribble, store water and then pump at a high rate to lessen infiltration).

Chair Ruffel asked District Staff whether the Committee can vote to include a project in the SIP if it has been altered after scoring. District Staff stated that the process has not changed since earlier rounds, the project applicant cannot implement the project with the requested funding, the project should be resubmitted with changes to be considered in the following year. The WASC can only judge a project based on how it was submitted; the applicant cannot change the scope of the project while it is being considered by the WASC. Chair Ruffel asked how an applicant can document improvements to a project in a situation like this where the project will now also include wet-weather aspects and not be a duplicate dry weather project. Those changes may impact the project's score. Antos (Stantec, Regional Coordination) said that the WASC cannot place conditions on an award. Antos added that once approved, design changes would be reflected in quarterly reporting. Future rounds of funding could increase or decrease the funding as needed.

District Staff added that awarding partial funding is an option available to the WASC, though the intent of the SCWP is to ensure project completion so that benefits are realized. 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 a mandatory information meeting for Round 4 Call for Projects on September 31, 2022. District Staff said that if a WASC decides to utilize partial funding, the WASC must consider anticipated future funds, even if not formally requested.

District Staff clarified that the SIP should be developed in accordance with the following criteria: no less than 85% of the budget is allocated to Infrastructure Projects, no more than 10% of the budget is allocated to Technical Resources Projects, and no more than 5% of the budget is allocated to Scientific Studies. This is calculated based on the 5-year SIPs for each WASC and is not calculated regionally. District Staff noted that in extenuating circumstances where Infrastructure Projects are limited, such as in North Santa Monica Bay, there may be exceptions. If the WASC devotes more than 5% of the budget towards Scientific Studies, the budget for Scientific Studies should be limited in future years.

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Chair Ruffell wrapped up the discussion due to time considerations.

8. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

9. Voting Items

The following voting item was postponed:

- a) Include Vincent Lugo Park Stormwater Capture Project in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 19, 2022, from 1:00 – 3:00 PM. Items for the next agenda include:

- a) Rio Hondo (RH) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan (SCW Portal)
- b) Selection of the RH Watershed Coordinator for the next term

Member Fosselman requested the next meeting dedicate more time to the Vincent Lugo Park project presentation and discussion. Member Fosselman also asked that project proponents prepare answers for questions regarding the change in costs for the proposed adjustments. Member Fosselman asked about the possible disadvantages of pushing the project to next year. Chair Ruffell asked the Vincent Lugo Park project proponents to provide information on how the wet weather changes would alter the project. The project proponents confirmed they understood the WASC's requests. Co-Vice Chair Matsumoto asked if the WASC is allowed to include a changed project in this year's SIP. Chair Ruffell replied that this would need to be clarified at the next meeting.

11. Adjournment

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

Attendance
RH WASC - March 15, 2022

Mark Hall	Vanessa Hevener
Jill Fosselman	James Carlson
Jeff Herr	Mike Antos (Regional Coordination)
Julian Juarez	David Dolphin
Aric Torreyson	Vik Bapna
LACPW Hamamoto	Jud Warren
Bridget Childs	Enrique Baul
City Of Pasadena Public Works Tong	Greater Los Angeles County Vecto Daniel
Kristen Ruffell	Justin Jones
Edward Belden	Alexander Iglesias - LACFCD
Capucine Hernandez	Julie Millett
Brianne Logasa	Greg de Vinck
Stephanie Tong - LACFCD	Los Angeles County Public Works Verdiner
Topher Jones (Brown and Caldwell)	Richard Watson
Brad Wardynski	City of Monrovia Tachiki
brown and caldwell Cohen	Gloria Crudgington
Fernando Villaluna	Latoya Waters
Taylor McCauley	Upper District Love
Nature for All Matsumoto	WSP Diaz-Carreras
Eddie Chan	Kevin Kim (LACFCD)
Brianna Datti	Katie Harrel
Laureen Abustan Brown and Caldwell	Dawn Petschauer
Brent Maue	Ruby Wang