

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



Wednesday, March 2, 2022
2:00pm - 4:00pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Genevieve Osmena, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
*Art Castro, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
*John Huynh, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)
Alfredo Magallanes, LA Sanitation & Environment (Agency)
Cathie Santo Domingo, LA Recreation & Parks (Agency)
Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)
Max Liles, NBCUniversal, Inc. (Community)
Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)
Yazdan Emrani, Glendale (Municipal)
Patrick DeChellis, La Cañada Flintridge (Municipal)
Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair
Max Podemski, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice Chair
Christine Peters, Los Angeles (Municipal)
Mark Lombos, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Kris Markarian, Pasadena (Municipal)
Adi Liberman, Environmental Outreach Strategies (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
Clarasophia Gust, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)
Carlos Moran, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

Miguel Luna, Urban Semillas (Community)
John Luker, Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (Community)

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Teresa Villegas, Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR) 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. District staff also provided a Spanish translation of the tutorial.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 2, 2022

District staff presented the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Motion to approve the meeting minutes, by Member Yazdan Emrani. Member Genevieve Osmena seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the February 2, 2022 meeting minutes (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no committee member updates.

District staff provided an update:

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- On February 8, 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 every 30 days and will act to cover all the commissions and committees under their authority.
- The District is continuing to process Fund Transfer Agreements for projects approved in Round 2 of the Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP).
- Quarter 3 Quarterly Reports are due May 15, which should capture all expenditures through March. This applies for projects approved in Round 2 of the SIP (Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022).
- 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. The District intends to add functionality to the existing reporting module to streamline the Annual Plan process. A webinar is planned for March 7 from 1:30pm to 3:00pm. The webinar is available here: <https://safecleanwaterla.org/municipalities/>
- Public Review for the Safe Clean Water Program Guidance is now available on the website. The 30-day public review period is from February 16 to March 17. Details on how to provide comments were sent via email.
- It is important for the WASC and the work of the Regional Program to remain transparent and fair. These principles are built into the SCWP 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 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 outside job, and those that aren't must advocate for their inclusion during the managed opportunities (the application itself, presentation(s), questions from the WASC, and the public comment period). Ensuring that each project gets treated fairly during discussion and voting agenda items and that all proponents have equal access to engage the WASC discussion needs to be part of how the WASC manages itself.
- Reminder that the intent of the SCWP is to ensure project completion so that benefits claimed can be realized. Partial funding in phases without secure funds and a clear pathway to completion is highly discouraged. Whether it be structured accordingly with the initial request or a consideration by the WASC during the SIP development, the messaging will be that if the WASC decides to consider partial funding in phases such that future phases are dependent on subsequent SCWP funding requests, the WASC must consider and anticipate the future costs during SIP deliberation even if it is not formally earmarked or shown in the projections for planning purposes.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinators Clarasophia Gust, Adi Liberman, and Carlos Moran provided an update on watershed coordinator activities (refer to Watershed Coordinators Presentation). Each watershed coordinator provided a quarterly report, available on the SCWP website.

Member Veronica Padilla-Campos requested clarification about the number of attendees at the Creating Sustainable Communities Event on February 26. Watershed Coordinator Moran clarified that 300 people attended the event.

Member Padilla-Campos said Pacoima Beautiful and KDI had reached out to Watershed Coordinators Gust and Moran and received a fast response from them, acknowledging the value the watershed coordinators bring to the WASC.

5. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

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Chair Villegas received emails from Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh regarding the North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project.

6. Public Comment Period

District staff will compile all public comment cards received and include them in the meeting minutes that will be uploaded to the SCWP website as "Meeting Minutes Attachment". During the meeting, District staff will share on the screen those public comment cards that were received prior to the deadline of at least 5:00pm the day prior to the meeting.

Bob Blumenfield (Los Angeles City Council) presented a public comment card in support for the City of Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN)'s proposed LA River Green Infrastructure Project for funding consideration.

District staff presented public comment cards from Rolo Bernal and Lionel Mares, both of which expressed support for the LASAN's proposed LA River Green Infrastructure Project.

David Bower (Bower Law Group PC) presented a public comment card on behalf of SEITec regarding the North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project.

Dr. Shahriar Eftekhazadeh (SEITec) presented a public comment card seeking justification from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and LASAN for their opposition to the North Hollywood Stormwater Capture Project.

7. Presentations and Discussion Items:

a) Selection of the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Coordinators for the next term

Watershed Coordinators were excused from the meeting for Agenda Item 7.a.

District Staff reminded the WASC that the duration of the watershed coordinator contracts is one year, with the option to extend yearly for up to three years, and then month-to-month, for a total of 54 months. The current watershed coordinators renewal date is approaching. If the WASC does not want to continue the contract, then the WASC will go back to the list to select watershed coordinators for the next term. District Staff also recommended that a public comment period follow the WASC discussion, prior to voting for the watershed coordinator contracts.

Committee members expressed satisfaction with the current watershed coordinators and recommended renewing the watershed coordinator contracts.

Member Padilla-Campos noted seeing a lot of community events with Watershed Coordinator Gust and Watershed Coordinator Moran and believes this can continue amongst all three of the watershed coordinators upon contract renewal.

Member Mark Lombos believes that the watershed coordinators have gained momentum in creating relationships with municipalities for the SCWP.

District Staff opened a public comment period for the reselection of the watershed coordinators.

8. Public Comment Period (moved up on the Agenda)

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The Chair requested Agenda Item 8 be held prior to the Voting Item, which has also been advanced in the agenda.

There were no public comments.

9. Voting Items (moved up on the Agenda)

The District initiated Agenda Item 9 prior to continuing with the Discussion Items. Motion to approve the reselection of the ULAR watershed coordinators for next term, Adi Liberman, Clarasophia Gust, and Carlos Moran, by Chair Villegas. Member DeChellis seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the reselection of the current ULAR watershed coordinators (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

Watershed coordinators were invited to return to the meeting at this time. Chair Villegas notified the watershed coordinators of the approval of the vote.

7. Presentations and Discussion Items: (continued)

b) Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary

i. Quarter 3 (January – March 2021) and Quarter 4 (April – June 2021) (Reports Summary)

Chair Villegas asked if there were any notable projects in the quarterly report which the WASC should review. District Staff shared that project proponents need to present their quarterly report if there have been any modifications to scope, exhibits, schedule, etc., that would impact project funding. The WASC should review the flags to determine whether they would like to rearrange funds for the SIP tool.

Chair Villegas reminded WASC members to review the meeting agenda and attached meeting materials prior to the meetings.

c) Upper Los Angeles River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan (SCW Portal & Summary of Resources)

Chair Villegas noted that the District received preliminary project ratings from 14 of the 17 WASC members.

District staff reminded the WASC that this is not a voting item and is subject to change; the preliminary rankings are a resource to help the WASC streamline discussion for SIP decisions.

The WASC has received the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) reviews of all but one of the scientific studies. These are posted on the SCWP website and the missing one will be added later. The SCCWRP review should be considered as part of the WASC's funding deliberations. District staff noted that WASC members may submit a different preliminary ranking of projects after reviewing the SCCWRP analyses.

District staff presented the "FY20-21 and FY21-22 Future Funding Test actuals" funding scenario in the FY22-23 ULAR SIP Tool. This scenario shows the breakdown of future funding from three projects that were approved in previous SIPs: David M. Gonzales Recreation Center Stormwater Capture Project (approved in FY21-22 SIP), Valley Plaza Park Stormwater Capture Project (approved in FY21-22 SIP), and Active Transportation Rail to River Corridor Project - Segment A (approved in FY20-21 SIP). District staff

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have reached out to the proponents for David M. Gonzales Recreation Center and Valley Plaza Park Stormwater Capture Projects to ascertain the specific funding amounts they will request for FY26-27 out of the future funding amount approved. District staff also reached out to the proponent for the Active Transportation Rail to River Corridor Project - Segment A to ascertain the specific funding amounts they will request for FY25-26 and FY26-27 out of the future funding amount approved. These amounts should be reviewed by the WASC to determine whether the requested amount should be fully funded or partially funded in that program year. Project proponent for the Metro Orange Line Water Infiltration and Quality Project still need to provide their specific funding needs for FY26-27. The Victory ES – DROPS project is no longer applying for SCWP funding.

District staff presented the “FY20-21 and FY21-22 Future Funding Test” funding scenario in the FY22-23 ULAR SIP Tool. This scenario includes the “FY20-21 and FY21-22 Future Funding Test actuals” scenario plus the anticipated future funding requests for two projects (Altadena-Lake Avenue Green Improvement and Westmont-Vermont Avenue Green Improvement) that were approved in the previous FY21-22 SIP for design funding only. These projects are expected to apply to the SCWP for construction funding in future years. The District has received updates from the project proponents on what the estimated construction funding requests might be for FY24-25, FY25-26, FY26-27, etc. The construction funding should be considered in the current SIP; the anticipated amounts are shown on the SIP for the WASC’s consideration. District staff invited discussion from the WASC on running potential scenarios using the SIP tool.

Chair Villegas clarified that the WASC are considering two types of projects for the SIP. The first involves projects that may exceed the 5-year term and need to determine what to do after 5 years, which is considered as “Future Funding”. The second type involves projects that were approved for design funding only and may return to request more funding from the WASC in the future, which includes the Altadena-Lake Avenue and Westmont-Vermont Avenue Green Improvement projects.

District staff confirmed that the Altadena-Lake Avenue and Westmont-Vermont Avenue Green Improvement project proponents would have to submit a new application to apply for construction funding, whereas David M. Gonzales Recreation Center and Valley Plaza Park Stormwater Capture and Active Transportation Rail to River Corridor Project - Segment A (approved in FY20-21 SIP) project proponents would not have to submit a new application since they were already approved for construction and O&M funding.

Watershed Coordinator Gust noted that the previously awarded TRP projects are not shown in the SIP tool for potential IP funding. District Staff added that their exclusion is something the WASC should be mindful of when distributing funds and planning the SIP.

Watershed Coordinator Gust reminded the committee that a watershed coordinator role is to find funds to leverage and offered to work with project proponents to help offset their funding requests.

District staff presented the “FY20-21 and FY21-22 Future Funding Test actuals” funding scenario, but temporarily excluded all FY22-23 projects to show the amount of funds available for the current funding year. This scenario does not include the anticipated construction funding, as described above.

Chair Villegas asked District staff to provide more information about the allotted budget for this fiscal year, as provided in the “Stormwater Investment Plan Preview” section of the SIP tool. Row A shows the amount of funds that were collected from the Measure W tax for the ULAR WASC. Row B shows the amount of funds that the WASC holds in the current fiscal year (Row A plus remaining funds from previous fiscal year).

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Row C is dynamic and shows the amount of funds that would be allocated for the projects included in the current SIP scenario. The sub-row under Row C shows the sum of the amount of funds that were allocated for the current fiscal year by the previous SIP's Row C. Row D shows the remaining funds available to fund projects submitted for the current fiscal year (Row B minus Row C and minus sub-row under Row C). Row E is dynamic and shows the total percent of funds that the WASC is allocating per fiscal year for projects that have been approved in the previous SIPs and the projects that the WASC will decide to include in the current SIP.

Chair Villegas observed that with no FY22-23 projects funded for the current year, 87% of the ULAR WASC budget for the FY22-23 (Row E, Column FY22-23) has been allocated already.

Member Alfredo Magallanes asked to run a scenario that only includes the LA River Green Infrastructure project. The total percent allocated for FY22-23 resulted in 91% (Row E, Column FY22-23).

District staff noted that the percent allocated for other WASCs are all different and depends on the WASC. Most WASCs have many projects and do not have enough budget to fund all projects. In the first program year, WASCs were encouraged to limit their total percent allocations to 80%, but that recommendation is no longer made by the District.

Chair Villegas noted that due to the high percentage of funds already allocated, the WASC may need to consider asking project proponents to delay their projects.

Member Lombos asked to run a scenario that includes the smaller proposed projects: La Crescenta Green Improvement, Winery Canyon Channel and Descanso Gardens Stormwater Capture and Reuse, and Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement projects. The total percent allocated for FY22-23 changed to 95%.

Chair Villegas asked to run a scenario that includes the LA River Green Infrastructure, Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement, and Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture projects. The total percent allocated for FY22-23 resulted in 94%.

Member DeChellis asked to run a scenario that includes the top projects in the preliminary rankings provided by the WASC. The top three Infrastructure Program (IP) projects were included (Whitsett Fields Park North Stormwater Capture, Echo Park Lake Rehabilitation Operation and Maintenance, and Jackson Elementary School Campus Greening and Stormwater Quality Improvement projects). The two Technical Resource Program (TRP) projects were included (Camino Verde Pocket Park Regional Stormwater Capture Demonstration Project and San Fernando Calles Verdes). The top three Scientific Studies (SS) were included (Additional Funding Request to Support the LRS Adaptation Addressing the LA River Bacteria TMDL for the ULAR Watershed Management Group, Maximizing Impact of Minimum Control Measures, and Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation). The total percent allocated for FY22-23 resulted in 94%. The scenario was saved into the SIP tool as "Top3 IP, 3 SS, 2 TRP".

The committee expressed concern regarding committing so much of the future years' funding, since it would mean less funding would be available for upcoming project applications. They need to consider the funding allocations of future funding years as well as the current funding year.

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8. Public Comment Period (continued)

There were no public comments.

9. Voting Items

a) Reselect the current ULAR Watershed Coordinators for the next term

This agenda item was moved up in the meeting to occur prior to Agenda Item 7.b.

10. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 6, 2022, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm. See the SCWP website for meeting details. Topics will include:

- a) Upper Los Angeles River Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan (if needed)
- b) Approve the final Fiscal Year 2022-23 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the ULAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review

Chair Villegas asked the District if the WASC should hold a second meeting in March. District staff noted that the SIP should be voted on by May. District staff suggested that the WASC consider holding a second meeting this month or extend the April meeting to three hours. Chair Villegas said the next meeting will be in April.

11. Adjournment

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

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		Quorum Present				Voting Items	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 2-2-2022 Meeting Minutes	Reselect ULAR Watershed Coordinators for next term (EOS-Adi L., CWH-Clarasophia G., and CWH-Carlos M.)
Agency	FCD	Genevieve Osmena	x	Ramy Gindi		Y	Y
Agency	Water Agency	Delon Kwan		Art Castro	x	Y	Y
Agency	Groundwater / Water Agency 2	Paul Liu		John Huynh	x	A	Y
Agency	Sanitation	Alfredo Magallanes	x	Michael Scaduto		Y	Y
Agency	Open Space	Cathie Santo Domingo	x	Javier Solis			Y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Ernesto Pantoja	x	Sergio Rascon			Y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Miguel Luna		Yvette Lopez-Ledesma			
Community Stakeholder	Environment	John Luker		Wendi Gladstone			
Community Stakeholder	Business	Max Liles	x			A	Y
Community Stakeholder	EJ	Veronica Padilla-Campos	x	Felipe Escobar		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Glendale	Yazdan Emrani	x			Y	Y
Municipal Members	La Canada Flintridge	Patrick DeChellis	x	Maged El-Rabaa		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Teresa Villegas	x	Barbara Romero		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Max Podemski	x	Ackley Padilla			Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Christine Peters	x	Rafael Prieto		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles County	Mark Lombos	x	TJ Moon		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Pasadena	Kris Markarian	x	Brent Maue		Y	
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	Environmental Outreach Strategies	Adi Liberman	x				
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	Council for Watershed Health	Clarasophia Gust	x				
Watershed Coordinator Non-Voting Member	Council for Watershed Health	Carlos Moran	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	10	14
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	2	0
Community Stakeholder		3			Total	12	14
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

Attendees

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Maggie Gardner	shahram kharaghani	Thuan Nguyen	Juliann Rooke
Tim Brick	Max Liles	Patrick DeChellis	LA Garden Council Campos
David Bower	Conor Mossavi	Teresa Villegas	Jeannette Hernandez
Jesse De La Cruz	City of Los Angeles, Bureau of S Tabuena-Ruddy	Katie M	Jon Ball
Ramy Gindi	Claire Robinson	Jesanya Maldonado	Anthony Nercessian
Jose Rodriguez	Ernesto Pantoja	Mike Antos	Cathie Santo Domingo
Alynn Sun	NA Edgley	Mike Rudd	Christine McLeod
Miller Zou	Mark Hall GLACVCD	Bob Blumenfield	Los Angeles County Public Works Verdiner
Seta Marjanian	Garen Abrahamian	Horacio Urias	Daniel Rydberg
Uriel Cobian - LACFCD	john huynh	Rafael Piamonte	Ali Sharbat, PhD, PE
Brianna Datti	Nayiri Vartanian	City of Los Angeles Scaduto	Jennifer Amarant
Jessica Medina	Shahriar Eftekharzadeh	Brian Baldauf	Esther Woo
Ted Gerber	Keith Banks	Burns & McDonnell Pohl	max podemski
Brenda Ponton	Genevieve Osmena	LA Sanitation and Environment Matos	Christine Peters
Ian Cesario	Darin Son	Joyce Amaro	Jose Luis Escajeda
Susie Santilena	Alex Chin	Alfredo Magallanes	Brianne Logasa
Eileen Alduenda	Kris Markarian	Gordon Haines	Bowen Liang
Ruth Siegel	Veronica Padilla	Sonali Abraham	Johanna Chang
LA Sanitation perry	Drew Ready	WSP Diaz-Carreras	Brad Wardynski
Phuoc Le	Council for Watershed Health Moran	Council for Watershed Health Zeidner	Kelsey Reed
Marisol Ibarra	Cameron McCullough	Council for Watershed Health Gust	Dawn Petschauer
CJ Caluag - LACFCD	Maria Ramirez	Ryan Jackson	Shona Ganguly
Isabelle Russell	Mark Lombos	Gregor Patsch	Rafael Prieto
Somer Sherwood-White	Haris Harouny	Sarkis Oganessian	Kevin Ho
Ashley Lozada	Jason Casanova	Peter Tonthat	Gustavo Orozco
Shant Oganessian	Brody Wang	Yaz Emrani	Adi Liberman
benny ko a	Art Castro	Carmen Andrade	