

The Safe, Clean Water Program (SCW Program) provides local, dedicated funding to increase regional water supply, improve water quality, and enhance communities throughout Los Angeles County Flood Control District Boundaries. The SCW Program is organized into three sub-programs, each of which support SCW Program Goals in different ways. These sub-programs are the Regional Program, Municipal Program, and the District Program. As part of the ongoing adaptive management of the SCW Program, this 2022 Interim Guidance (Guidance) has been developed by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, with extensive input from stakeholders, for the following areas:

- Strengthening Community Engagement and Support
- Water Supply
- Programming Nature Based Solutions
- Implementing Disadvantaged Community Policies in the Regional Program

For each of these areas, specific guidance documents have been developed to summarize existing SCW Program information, establish a shared vocabulary as part of the SCW Program, include information related to best practices, and provide additional clarity on select issues that have been raised through SCW Program implementation to date. This guidance has been developed primarily to support the Regional Program call for projects, scoring, and Stormwater Investment Plan processes; however, information may be of value for the Municipal and District Programs as well.

Additional issues warranting further guidance may be considered in the future. The next round of guidance may incorporate, as appropriate, findings of the District-led Metrics and Monitoring Study and the associated Disadvantaged Community and Community Enhancement White Paper (currently anticipated to be completed in late 2023), as well as ongoing work with Watershed Coordinators, the Watershed Area Steering Committees, and WHAM coordination efforts, among others. As such, the next round of updated guidance is currently anticipated in 2024.



Safe, Clean Water Program 2022 Interim Guidance

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Strengthening Community Engagement and Support

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Purpose

Community outreach, meaningful engagement, and the pursuit and attainment of community support are important tools for ensuring that Safe, Clean Water Program (SCW Program) projects and expenditures deliver tangible *and* welcomed benefits on the ground. While such engagement is already “required,” experience to date has shown that there is additional guidance needed related to the details of community engagement and the desired evidence of community support required of every Project proponent and every recipient of Regional Program funds.

Community engagement is a key element of the SCW Program that is woven through many different aspects of the Regional Program, Municipal Program, and District Programs; however, it is not an explicitly listed goal of the SCW Program. The focus of this 2022 Interim Guidance is about community engagement for, and in support of, Infrastructure Projects submitted for the Regional Program. Nonetheless, key principles here can help provide some common terminology and backdrop for other existing programs and complimentary language.

Projects submitted for inclusion in Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs) must document any community engagement prior to submittal and describe plans for engagement during Project implementation. Resources, like Watershed Coordinators and/or the Technical Resources Program may support proponents with community engagement prior to the award of funding. Even so, completing community engagement and/or providing sufficient evidence of community support prior to receiving funding can be challenging for many applicants. Further, community engagement does not guarantee community support, and a strong demonstration of community support may not necessarily be the result of engagement.

This 2022 Interim Guidance is intended to consolidate the existing requirements and encouragements for community engagement in the SCW Program, and, at a high level, support SIP programming by providing information to help:

- Project Developers with early project development/engagement and application preparation
- The Scoring Committee and Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) consistently employ decision-making tools and strategies (both quantitative and qualitative) to inform scoring and/or the development of SIP recommendations.

Specifically, this 2022 Interim includes the following:

1. **Engagement Prior to Application:** Policies for establishing and documenting that community engagement has occurred (and to what level) and/or support for a Project exists (and to what level).
2. **Engagement Plan for Project Implementation:** Clarification of how Project proponents and WASCs can interpret and substantiate commitment to Community Engagement once a project is funded and being implemented.

Note that additional guidance may be provided following development of a white paper by third-party experts (University of California, Los Angeles [UCLA]) focused on Disadvantaged Community Benefits and Community Engagement (anticipated to be completed in 2022) and/or the overarching Metrics and Monitoring Study that houses this white paper effort, which is currently in progress by the District (anticipated to be completed in 2023).

Existing Community Outreach and Engagement Policies and Requirements in the SCW Program

It is important to note that there are multiple policies related to Community Outreach and Engagement in the SCW Program documents. A number of these policies are presented below.

For the Regional Program, the Feasibility Study Guidelines require that:

- A Feasibility Study must include “A plan for outreach/engagement to solicit, address, and incorporate stakeholder input on the Project, which should also address issues related to displacement and gentrification.” (Section 2.0).
- Regional Program applicants can receive up to 4 points from the Scoring Committee if the project “demonstrates strong local, community-based support and/or has been developed as part of a partnership with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).” This aspect of project development is not required, and how points are awarded between 0 and 4 is currently at the discretion of the Scoring Committee depending on the information provided by the proponent.
 - Note that the SCW Projects Module currently requests that if strong local, community-based support is to be considered for scoring, then the supporting organization(s), description of the support, and an optional supporting PDF should be uploaded to substantiate the level of engagement/support.

- A Feasibility Study must include the following if the applicant intends to receive points for community support, “A discussion of whether the Project has community-based support and/or has been developed as part of a partnership with local non-governmental organizations or community-based organizations.” (Section 3.5).

In addition to specific requirements for the Feasibility Study Guidelines, community engagement is woven through many other components of the SCW Program related to Regional Program activities:

- Watershed Coordinators as part of the Regional Program Technical Resources Program.
- The District Education Program, including “Public education and community engagement Programs throughout the District, including a sustained education and engagement Program for disadvantaged communities.”
- Municipal Program Implementation, including to “Identify or establish, and then execute, a plan to engage with Stakeholders in the planning process for use of the Municipal Program funds during the planning and implementation of Projects and Programs.”

SCW Program Fund Transfer Agreements in the Regional and Municipal Programs

Recipients of SCW Program funding in the Regional and Municipal Programs do not receive funds until they execute a fund Transfer Agreement, within which are several expectations relative to community engagement in Project design, implementation, and reporting.

Regional Program recipients “shall submit a Stakeholder and Community Outreach/Engagement Plan for Infrastructure Program Projects and include a discussion of how local NGOs or CBOs will be involved, if applicable, and if not, why. Additional outreach/engagement activities, even if funded by other sources, should be referenced to provide an overview of anticipated overall project approach.” Section A-8 (Stakeholder and Community Outreach/Engagement Plan) of the Regional Program Transfer Agreement has additional requirements for the Stakeholder and Community Outreach/Engagement Plan.

Below is the language addressing community outreach activities and community engagement activities in the Regional Program Transfer Agreement:



Community Outreach Activities in the Regional Program

“Community outreach activities to provide information to residents and information about upcoming meetings or other engagement activity event is to be scheduled. Outreach methods used should be appropriate in scale and type to the community being served. Outreach methods include but are not limited to:

- Online Media Outreach (email blasts, social media, publication on a website)
- Local Media Outreach (newsletters, local and regional newspapers, and local radio and television)
- Grassroots Outreach (door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, surveys and focus groups, and distribution of flyers or other printed materials).

The District will support outreach efforts through web-based platforms if requested at least four weeks prior to the requested publish date. The District should be included in all social media outreach and notified of all meetings and other engagement events.”

Community Engagement Activities

“Community engagement activities solicit, address, and incorporate input from community members for Funded Activities. These events may occur as part of any public meeting with multiple agenda items such as council, commission, or committee meetings where public input is invited; or at festivals, fairs, or open houses where a table or booth may be set up.”

Section A-8.3 of the Transfer Agreement specifies minimum required outreach/engagement activities for Infrastructure Program Project Funding, including that “Stakeholder and Community Outreach/Engagement Plan activities should occur at the onset of the project, during the design phase, and during construction.”

Table 1. Excerpt table from the Section A-8.3 of the Transfer Agreement

Infrastructure Program Funds	Required Activity 1	Required Activity 2
Up to \$2 M	Outreach or Engagement	
Up to \$10 M	Outreach	≥ 1 Engagement
Over \$10 M	Outreach	≥ 2 Engagements

Section A-8.4 states that “If the funded activity is for O&M of an Infrastructure Program Project, Outreach/Engagement activities shall occur biennially to remind communities of the SCW Program Contribution.”

In addition, Section A-8.5 states that the plan must include “Activities and measures to mitigate against displacement and gentrification. This includes, as applicable, an acknowledgement that the Funded Activity will be fully subject to and comply with any County-wide displacement policies as well as with any specific anti-displacement requirements associated with other funding sources.”

Interim Regional Program Guidance for Community Engagement and Support

In addition to the policies and requirements listed above, some Interim Guidance to be considered primarily by Project proponents and WASCs is presented below.

Expectations for Community Engagement by Project Phase

Sustained engagement to solicit, address, and incorporate stakeholder input on the Project, including issues related to displacement and gentrification, should occur throughout all phases of a Project. All outreach and engagement activities, even if funded by other sources, should be referenced to provide an overview of anticipated overall Project approach. The goals and expectations for level of community engagement may vary based on timing and the current phase of the Project. Project applicants are strongly encouraged to seek input from Watershed Coordinators to achieve desired goals based on Project phase. Please refer to the Watershed Coordinator webpage for more information¹.

Project Planning Phase

During the planning phase, the desired outcome of community engagement is to identify stakeholders and involve them in identifying community needs, concerns, and objectives, as well as the potential solutions. At a minimum, Project Applicants should identify stakeholders and Inform/Consult stakeholders prior to submittal of the application (see *Table 2* below, which should be used to standardize terminology and qualitatively identify levels of engagement at each project phase). Resources for community engagement prior to submittal of the application should be prioritized and secured utilizing other available funds, as applicable, including Municipal Program funds if the applicant is a municipality. If such resources did not exist prior to submittal of the application, a clear description of the limitations should be included by the Project Applicant along with a description of any planned efforts to procure future resources for these important planning activities. The funding needed for additional engagement efforts, whether for additional planning or future phases, can be included in the SCW Program funding request and submitted as part of the application.

Design Phase

During the design phase, the desired outcome of community engagement includes further solicitation, evaluation, and incorporation of stakeholder input, as applicable and able, such that Project decision making is done iteratively and equitably. This includes active education about Project benefits. Refer to section A-8.3 of the Transfer Agreement for minimum required outreach/engagement activities based in Infrastructure Program Project Funding (see *Table 2* above).

The following graphic provides the information and tips presented as part of the call for projects for Year 3 (FY22-23) with an example of a well-scoring Project for community engagement and support. For the Urban Orchard example, the Project was included in the FY21-22 SIP allocating \$5,438,000 over 5 years for Construction and O&M. The completed scoring rubric for the Project is available on the SCW website².

¹ Watershed Coordinators <https://safecleanwaterla.org/watershed-coordinators/>

² Urban Orchard Scoring Rubric (pg 17) <https://safecleanwaterla.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Scoring-Rubric-FY21-22-20210127-FULL.pdf>



Scoring Criteria – Community Support

Definition

- Support from and/or partnerships with the local community as a result of engagement throughout project development.

Tips

- Remember: outreach TO communities is different from support **FROM** or partnerships **WITH** communities.
- When showing community support, provide evidence of **partnerships with NGOs, or compelling evidence** that project enjoys **widespread community support** (e.g., multiple letters of support from diverse constituencies within the community; public polling; documentation that the community helped inform the project).

Examples

Urban Orchard Project

Support includes:

- 39 community meetings, focus groups, and tabling events.
- 986 community members engaged.
- Bilingual community outreach throughout entire project process.
- 7 letters of support from community members, Speaker of the CA State Assembly, and NGOs.

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Figure 1. Excerpt from the Year 3 Call for Projects Information Session on June 3, 2021

Construction Phase through Monitoring and Operations and Maintenance Phases

During and following the construction phase, the desired outcomes of community engagement are to realize effective partnerships, maintain relationships and sustained education, and communicate/recognize Project progress and Project benefits in order to best prepare for the success of long-term maintenance, monitoring, and/or plans for future Project phases. Project developers are already required to report on activities through the funded duration of the project. Project developers can refer to *Table 2* for best practices.

Best Practices for Community Education and Engagement

Below is a table outlining best practices for conducting outreach and engagement for the SCW Program and helping ensure equity, inclusion, and accessibility. These best practices, and the corresponding terminology, are derived from professional standards, guidance/input received to date, benchmarking, and existing analyses from Cities, non-profit experts, and other project developers and stakeholder groups. Some of these resources include the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, originally developed by Rosa González of Facilitating Power in partnership with Movement Strategy Center³ and the Principios y Comunidad: Principals that Redefine Strategies & Approaches for Impactful Community Engagement by Mujeres de la Tierra⁴. These guidelines/terms may be applied to all aspects of the SCW Program, including Regional Program Project applicants, Watershed Coordinator efforts, and planning/reporting in the Municipal Program. SCW Program projects should ultimately target the “Best” category at all project phases. Those claiming “Better” or “Best” engagement practices should also

³ <https://movementstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Spectrum-of-Community-Engagement-to-Ownership.pdf>

⁴ <https://safecleanwaterla.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FINAL-Principios-y-Comunidad-Report-2020-2.pdf>



demonstrate the incorporation of listed examples from the lower categories when documenting their justification of completed or planned outreach and engagement.

Table 2. Best practices for conducting outreach and engagement

	Good	Better	Best
Engagement Levels	<p>Inform - Provide the community with relevant information</p> <p>Consult - Gather input from the Community</p>	<p>Involve - Ensure community input, needs, and assets are integrated into processes, receive demonstrable consideration and appropriate responses, and inform planning</p> <p>Educate – Grow community understanding of the existing infrastructure systems, purposes, perceived outstanding needs, pertinent history and regulations, SCW Program opportunities (including Watershed Coordinators) to establish</p> <p>Learn – Grow own understanding of existing community, perceived needs, pertinent history, key concerns, and other potentially interested parties.</p>	<p>Collaborate - Leverage and grow community capacity to play a leadership role in both planning and implementation</p> <p>Incorporate - Foster democratic participation and equity by including the community in decision-making, bridge divide between community and governance</p> <p>Partner – Establish certain project concepts based on community-driven and identified needs, solidify formal partnerships, and build in sustained paths forward to joint implementation and management with well-defined roles per agreement</p>
Example Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets with translation as needed • Open Houses • Presentations • Videos • Online Media • Social Media • Local Media • Listening Sessions • Public Comment • Focus Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Meetings • Interactive Workshops & Tours • Community Forums • Canvassing • Transparent responses to community comments • Document expanded understanding and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs or support letters with Community Based Organizations • MOUs or support letters with Tribes affected by the Project • MOUs or support letters from Elected Officials • Community Organizing • Citizen Advocacy Committees



	Good	Better	Best
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Polling 	commitment to ongoing relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling • Community-Driven Planning • Consensus Building • Participatory Action Research • Participatory Budgeting • Cooperatives • Volunteerism activities • Workforce Development activities

Project Developers, the Scoring Committee and WASCs may also refer to additional references that can help suggest certain types of documentation and supplement discussions/evaluations based on Table 2 above. One such reference is the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) Envision Manual, section LD1.3 that includes a scale of Improved to Restorative to characterize levels of engagement. There is also guidance and examples related to evaluation criteria and documentation for engagement (e.g., stakeholder lists, engagement plans, letters of support, meeting minutes, memoranda, etc.) See [Attachment A - Envision Manual, section LD1.3 Provide for Stakeholder Involvement](#) for more information.

Additional best practices for effective and inclusive community outreach and engagement include:

- Project Proponents should provide a reasonable budget for outreach/engagement activities that aligns with the outreach/engagement plan. These costs can be included in the SCW Program funding request or funded by other sources and should acknowledge/account for any specific needs or focuses during certain project phases. Budgets for Projects included in the SIP are included in the Project Applications which are accessible via the SCW Portal⁵.
- Communicate early and often with your respective Watershed Coordinator (information available on webpage)
- Engage with elected representatives of communities to benefit from existing conversations, relationships, and planning efforts.
- Leverage existing relationships in the community and the outreach/engagement expertise of local Community Based Organizations/Non-Governmental Organizations.
- Establish meaningful dialogue early in the project timeline with both federally recognized and non-federally recognized Tribes that are or may be affected by the proposed project in an early and ongoing process with a basis of mutual respect and recognition of consultation capacity and needs

⁵ SCW Portal <https://portal.safecleanwaterla.org/scw-reporting/map>

- Use outreach and engagement methods that are appropriate in scale and type to the community being served (e.g., neighborhood-specific, family-focused, culturally appropriate, etc.).
- Review recent engagement efforts undertaken by others with the same community to become familiar with community goals and wishes. Ensure new engagement honors other recent contributions made by the community.
- Coordinate with partner educational, non-profit, and governmental entities to prevent community meeting fatigue and frustration about redundant meetings.
- Support awareness of outreach/engagement events through multiple platforms (Online Media, Local Media, Grassroots Outreach, etc.).
- Inform the community at least one week prior and send reminders a day or two before the event.
- Draft language that is plain, clear, and relatable.
- Provide necessary information and materials in the primary languages spoken in the community.
- Provide Project team training and consider utilizing residents from the local community.
- Consider transportation options for community members who do not own vehicles or holding community outreach and engagement activities where the community already meets.
- Consider virtual or online meetings to increase access to information and participation. If an online approach is taken, consider the digital divide for community members who do not have reliable access to the internet.
- Refer to <https://www.redesign.la/resources> for community events/engagements that are being coordinated with the Watershed Coordinator efforts.

Whenever possible, community support documentation should address specific SCW Program benefits and goals including, but not limited to, water quality, water supply, and community investment benefits, as well as anti-displacement efforts, benefits to disadvantaged communities, nature-based solutions, and the needs of the community. To achieve points for Community Support at the discretion of the Scoring Committee, documentation may include, but is not limited to:

- Letters from involved community leaders, NGOs/CBOs, individuals, tribal representatives, and elected representatives stating their support for the Project
- Minutes from meetings, including attendees and their affiliations (if applicable), photos, flyers, or other documentation
- Community engagement plans that incorporate best practices described herein
- Letters of support from CBO/NGOs explaining how they contributed to shaping the proposed project
- Verification that the benefits provided directly address identified community needs such as a summary of community concerns and how the concerns were addressed. If particular community concerns were not addressed by the project, please provide a discussion of why those concerns could not be addressed.

WASC and SC Tools and Strategies

The following strategies are available to the members of WASCs and Scoring Committee to assist in evaluating Community Engagement and Support:

Tools and strategies to evaluate Community Engagement and Support that WASC and Scoring Committee members can use:

- **Read the justification provided in the application, submitted Feasibility Study, and scoring rubric about Community Engagement and Support for the Project.**
- **During presentations by Project proponents or SC evaluations, ask questions about the Community Engagement and Support for the Project.**
- **Ask Watershed Coordinator(s) to evaluate and report to the WASC how the people, city and county agencies, and other stakeholders would describe community needs, concerns, and objectives in the Watershed Area.**

Long-Term Vision for Strengthening Community Engagement and Support

In the near term, the District has enlisted third-party experts from the University of California Los Angeles to assist in creating additional guidance for the SCW Program community engagement. This information is anticipated to be available in 2022 and may be used to assist with the planning and execution of engagement activities by Project proponents as well as evaluation of Projects.

Future guidance is currently expected to consider the following:

1. **Refinement or Additions to 2022 Interim Guidance:** This may include, but is not limited to, further refinement of best practices related to community and tribal engagement as well as documentation and demonstration of community outreach, engagement, and support. This could include additional processes to engage Indigenous and tribal communities in collaboration with the California Native American Heritage Commission and building on the precedent set by the County's sustainability consultation process.
2. **Regional Program Scoring:** Assessment of potential adjustments to scoring as part of comprehensive scoring review following MMS and robust stakeholder processes.
3. **Establish and Refine Metrics:** Metrics and indicators for evaluating community engagement efforts over time to inform adaptive management as well as to evaluate projects and overall SCW Program equity.
4. **Incorporate Community Needs:** Assess techniques/tools for WASCs supported by watershed coordinators, or project proponents, for establishing community wishes, that include both strengths to be reinforced and needs to be addressed.
5. **Integration Across SCW Program:** Ensure that Regional Program processes and preferences are appropriately integrated with the implementation of the Municipal Program, Watershed Coordinators, and District Programs, including the District Education Program. Integration with the guidance for Implementing Disadvantaged Community Policies in the Regional Program.

6. **Integration Across WHAM:** Establish processes to collaborate early with other funding programs to evaluate opportunities and maximize benefits in addition to SCW Program objectives.

The SCW Program is an evolving program and as such will be adaptively managed. This guidance will be revisited on a periodic basis, with the next round of updates currently anticipated in 2024, which will include findings of the District-led Metrics and Monitoring Study and the associated Disadvantaged Community and Community Enhancement White Paper (anticipated to be completed in late 2023), and will be informed by questions raised and lessons learned through program implementation.



LD1.3 Provide for Stakeholder Involvement

<h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">18</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">POINTS</p>	<p>INTENT</p> <p>Early and sustained stakeholder engagement and involvement in project decision making.</p>	<p>METRIC</p> <p>Establishment of sound and meaningful programs for stakeholder identification, early and sustained engagement, and involvement in project decision making.</p>
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LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT

IMPROVED	ENHANCED	SUPERIOR	CONSERVING	RESTORATIVE
A + B	A + B + C	A + B + C + D	A + B + C + D + E	A + B + C + D + E + F
(3) Active Engagement	(6) Direct Engagement	(9) Community Involvement	(14) Community Satisfaction	(18) Stakeholder Partnerships
<p>(A) Primary and secondary stakeholders are identified through a stakeholder mapping process. Stakeholder concerns and specific objectives for stakeholder engagement are defined.</p> <p>(B) A proactive stakeholder engagement process is established with clear objectives. This occurs at the earliest stages of planning and is sustained through project construction. Engagement moves beyond education into active dialogue. Stakeholder views are monitored, and a two-way line of communication is established to reply to inquiries. Sufficient opportunities are provided for stakeholders to be involved in decision making. The participation process is transparent with opportunities to provide meaningful input.</p>				
<p>(C) A lead person from the project team, in addition to any public involvement lead or manager, works with stakeholder groups to understand communication needs and the desire for and scope of involvement.</p>				
<p>(D) There are specific cases in which public input influenced or validated project outcomes. Potentially conflicting stakeholder views were evaluated and addressed equitably during decision making.</p>				
<p>(E) Feedback is sought from stakeholders as to their satisfaction with the engagement process, and the resulting decisions were made based on their input.</p>				
<p>(F) One or more stakeholders, having mutual interests or interdependencies, are identified and engaged as partners.</p>				

DESCRIPTION

This credit addresses the public input process established by the owner and the project team. Relationship building among the public and key stakeholders is an important component of the engagement process. Stakeholder engagement is a critical component of any infrastructure project. While many projects incorporate some level of stakeholder engagement, this credit assesses the degree to which stakeholder engagement was proactive, early, and sustained.

Project teams that do not proactively engage stakeholders risk failing to notice demographic, socioeconomic, or cultural shifts within the community that may impact the overall success of the project. Proactive, early, and sustained stakeholder engagement helps owners and project teams earn a social license to operate. Social license to operate is the acceptance of the community developed through mutual respect and can build goodwill, speed projects, and smooth the way for future projects.

Project teams should consider how a significant number of Envision credits rely on documentation from a robust stakeholder

engagement process and how incorporating these criteria into the stakeholder engagement plan can meet multiple requirements.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Improved: A public participation process is set up to identify and engage key stakeholders in project decision making. Project stakeholders may include local communities, customers, employees, governments and regulators, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. For this credit, stakeholders are categorized as primary or secondary. Primary stakeholders are individuals or groups directly impacted by the project, and secondary stakeholders are individuals or groups indirectly affected by the project.

The stakeholder engagement process includes informing stakeholders of the scope of the project, identification of stakeholder issues and concerns, collecting feedback, and incorporating that feedback into the design, construction, and operation of the project.

Enhanced: A member of the project team is directly engaged with stakeholders.

Superior: The project can demonstrate that the two-way communication established with stakeholders was successful and resulted in benefits to the project. Project teams demonstrate that consideration was given even to conflicting stakeholder feedback (i.e., the project team was not biased toward feedback that supported or reinforced their initial assumptions).

Conserving: Engagement becomes an opportunity to learn and improve for future projects. Stakeholder feedback is sought regarding their satisfaction with the process.

Restorative: Stakeholders are engaged as partners in the project.

Applicability: It is likely that all projects can benefit from stakeholder engagement. Although the types and scope of stakeholders may vary depending on the project, it would be difficult to demonstrate that the credit is not relevant or applicable to a project seeking an Envision award.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND DOCUMENTATION GUIDANCE

A. To what extent has the project team undertaken a stakeholder mapping exercise to determine stakeholders?

1. *Comprehensive list of potential stakeholders identified, with stakeholder classification (primary or secondary) and a statement or rationale for selection.*
 - a. *Primary stakeholders are individuals or groups directly impacted by the project, such as the communities crossed and served by a new road. This should include stakeholders who could be impacted or affected by the project during its life-cycle.*
 - b. *Secondary stakeholders are individuals or groups indirectly affected by the project.*
2. *Evidence that stakeholders were identified and prioritized in a fair and equitable fashion.*

B. To what extent has the project team analyzed, planned, and executed the engagement for key project stakeholders?

1. *Engagement plans for each stakeholder that consider the issues the project team needs to address and the method(s) of engagement (e.g., some stakeholders may require only one-way communication, while others may require dialogue and partnership-building engagement such as consultations, hosting stakeholder advisory panels, soliciting online feedback, hosting multi-stakeholder forums and partnerships, and/or convening networks of stakeholders).*
 - a. *Stakeholder engagement plans should be proactive. This would be characterized by outreach and a determination to involve those who will be affected by, or are very likely to have an active interest in, the project, as opposed to passive invitations to participation such as public notices with little or no follow-up to ensure a robust response.*
 - b. *Engagement moves beyond education into active dialogue. Stakeholder views are monitored, and a two-way line of communication is established to reply to inquiries.*
 - c. *Sufficient opportunities are provided for stakeholders to be involved in decision making. The participation process is transparent with opportunities to provide meaningful input.*

2. *Documentation of engagement, which may include letters, meeting minutes, or memoranda with stakeholders. Documentation shows the issues that were addressed with stakeholders and their concerns/feedback specific to the project.*

C. Was a lead member of the project team directly involved with stakeholder groups to understand their needs?

1. *Documentation that a lead person from the project team, in addition to any public involvement lead or manager, worked with stakeholder groups to understand communication needs and the desire for and scope of involvement.*

D. To what extent has stakeholder engagement feedback been incorporated into project plans, design, and/or decision making?

1. *Documentation showing that feedback raised by stakeholders was evaluated and prioritized and how feedback changed/impacted/ altered the project plans, design, and/or decision making.*

OR

Documentation showing how feedback raised by stakeholders was already incorporated into the project plans, design, and/or decision making.

2. *Supporting evidence that stakeholder feedback was treated fairly and equitably, according to principles of social and environmental justice, regardless of race, color, wealth, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status.*

E. Has the project team sought feedback from stakeholders as to their satisfaction with the engagement process and the resulting decisions that were made based on their input?

1. *Letters or other documentation showing support from stakeholders for the engagement process undertaken for this project.*
2. *Letters or other documentation showing support from stakeholders for the decisions that were made based on their input.*
3. *In certain cases, documentation may also demonstrate an absence of significant new stakeholder issues arising as the project advances to final design and construction.*

F. Has the project engaged one or more stakeholders as partners?

1. *Documentation that one or more stakeholders, having mutual interests or interdependencies, are identified and engaged as partners.*

RELATED ENVISION CREDITS

- QL1.1 Improve Community Quality of Life
- QL1.4 Minimize Noise and Vibration
- QL2.1 Improve Community Mobility and Access
- QL3.1 Advance Equity and Social Justice
- QL3.2 Preserve Historic and Cultural Resources
- QL3.3 Enhance Views and Local Character
- QL3.4 Enhance Public Space and Amenities
- LD2.4 Plan for End-of-Life



Water Supply Guidance

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Purpose

Los Angeles Flood Control District Code states that one of the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCW Program) Goals is to “increase drought preparedness by capturing more Stormwater and/or Urban Runoff to store, clean, reuse, and/or recharge groundwater basins” (Section 18.04.B). Benefits associated with this goal are referred to as **Water Supply Benefits**. Experience in the SCW Program to date has highlighted the need for additional guidance around Water Supply Benefits. This need was apparent based on two factors:

- A broad range of proponent, committee member, and stakeholder interpretations and/or desires regarding what could and should count as a Water Supply Benefit.
- The need to address issues that stem from the variability in potential for projects that provide Water Supply Benefits throughout the District due to factors like hydrogeology, condition of groundwater aquifers, connection to/capacity of existing infrastructure, dependency on future infrastructure, among others.
 - *Note: It’s important to acknowledge that projects within a Watershed Area that is believed to have less Water Supply Benefit opportunity are all facing the same situation, and are competing only amongst one another (not against projects from other watershed areas).*

The refinement of how Water Supply Benefits are applied within the context of the SCW Program was also explored at the Regional Oversight Committee in early 2021. This 2022 Interim Guidance accounts for all discussions to date, as able, and seeks to help project proponents and decision-making bodies develop and consistently evaluate projects that claim to provide Water Supply Benefits.

Specifically, this 2022 Interim Guidance:

1. Establishes a shared vocabulary for considering Water Supply Benefits;
2. Clarifies how a Project developer or applicant should characterize Water Supply Benefits in relation to the Feasibility Study Guidelines and Scoring Criteria;
3. Provides guidance to the Scoring Committee on how projects claiming water supply benefits should be evaluated;
4. Provides guidance to the nine Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) about how to assess Water Supply Benefits when evaluating Projects and programming recommended SIPs.

This 2022 Interim Guidance focuses on elements within the Regional Program but may also be an important reference for the Municipal Program. This 2022 Interim Guidance is currently anticipated to be refined and updated as part of the adaptive management process, with anticipated input from the District-led Metrics and Monitoring Study.

Water Supply Benefits in the Safe, Clean Water Program

Los Angeles Flood Control District Code Section 16.03.00: ***“Water Supply Benefit” means an increase in the amount of locally available water supply, provided there is a nexus to Stormwater or Urban Runoff capture. Activities resulting in this benefit include, but are not limited to, the following:***

- *reuse and conservation practices,*
- *diversion of Stormwater or Urban Runoff to a sanitary sewer system for direct or indirect water recycling,*
- *increased groundwater replenishment or available yield, or*
- *offset of potable water use.*

Regional Program Guidance

Scoring and Feasibility Studies via the SCW Program Projects Module

All applicants seeking funding through the Regional Program’s Infrastructure Program must submit a Feasibility Study, or equivalent. Feasibility Studies are given a preliminary “Module Score” by the SCW Program Projects Module, which is then verified by the Scoring Committee. Feasibility Studies which meet or exceed the Threshold Score are considered for programming into SIPs by one of nine WASCs.

Known or Perceived Need Addressed by Project

The SCW Program Projects Module asks each Project applicant to identify the known or perceived needs (or desired outcomes) of the community or Watershed Area within which a Project is located, justification of why the Project developer understands those to be needs, and the ways that the Project is anticipated to address those needs and achieve desired outcomes. This question is posed for each of the three SCW Program benefits – Water Supply Benefit, Water Quality Benefit, and Community Investment Benefit.

While not scored, the identification of needs related to each type of benefit is an important part of the Project narrative that WASC members should evaluate for any individual Project or suite of Projects considered for inclusion in a Stormwater Investment Plan. This is essential for Water Supply Benefits for a variety of reasons, but particularly due to the potential for one project’s claimed benefit to be impacted by another that is upstream or downstream of the other, especially in the absence of any coordination prior to project development and planning.

Points Available for Water Supply Benefits

Scoring criteria in the Feasibility Study Guidelines currently award points for both water supply benefit magnitude (total project capacity for long-term volume captured) and water supply cost effectiveness (total life-cycle cost per acre-foot capture capacity) (25 maximum for Water Supply Benefits out of 110 total points). It should be noted that a project’s capacity to capture is not equivalent to a direct water supply end use (see additional Feasibility Study Guideline Provisions below).

See description and point distribution for Water Supply Benefits in the table below.

B. Significant Water Supply Benefits	25 points max	The Project provides water re-use and/or water supply enhancement benefits
	13 points max	<p>B1. Water Supply Cost Effectiveness. The Total Life-Cycle Cost² per unit of acre foot of Stormwater and/or Urban Runoff volume captured for water supply is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >\$2500/ac-ft = 0 points • \$2,000–2,500/ac-ft = 3 points • \$1500-2,000/ac-ft = 6 points • \$1000–1500/ac-ft = 10 points • <\$1000/ac-ft = 13 points <p>². <i>Total Life-Cycle Cost: The annualized value of all Capital, planning, design, land acquisition, construction, and total life O&M costs for the Project for the entire life span of the Project (e.g. 50-year design life span should account for 50-years of O&M). The annualized cost is used over the present value to provide a preference to Projects with longer life spans.</i></p>
	12 points max	<p>B2. Water Supply Benefit Magnitude. The yearly additional water supply volume resulting from the Project is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <25 ac-ft/year = 0 points • 25 - 100 ac-ft/year = 2 points • 100 - 200 ac-ft/year = 5 points • 200 - 300 ac-ft/year = 9 points • >300 ac-ft/year = 12 points

Feasibility Study Guideline Provisions

Project applicants should include the following Water Supply Benefit information in their Feasibility Studies to be awarded points:

- An estimate of (1) the annual average amount of stormwater or urban runoff captured by the Project for reuse onsite and (2) the average annual amount of stormwater or urban runoff captured by the Project to augment water supplies, whether infiltrated or diverted (such as to a spreading facility or to a sanitary sewer for recycled water).
 - The estimate should be based on modeling or other similar approach, with justification.
 - The Feasibility Study should specify whether the Water Supply Benefit claimed will result from offsetting potable demand, increasing water supply, or both (and how). Since not all reuse offsets demand (e.g., if the Project creates new demand), the Feasibility Study should provide an analysis of supply and demand impacts when claiming an offset of potable demand.
 - Stormwater that is treated and released to a storm drain or receiving water should not be considered as reuse.
 - Stormwater that is treated and released to a storm drain or receiving water should not be considered as augmenting the local water supply unless the Project is tributary to a groundwater recharge facility, and/or unless the Project would facilitate the continued recharge of water that would otherwise be prohibited for use in the water supply (e.g., the infiltration of mixed or treated reclaimed or recycled water).
 - Where a Project's Water Supply Benefits include an increase in water supply through soil infiltration, the Feasibility Study should include an engineering analysis demonstrating that the infiltrated water is reaching a managed, usable groundwater aquifer and confirmation that the agency managing the groundwater basin concurs.
 - For Projects that treat and use stormwater to directly offset potable water use through irrigation or similar means, projections of the irrigation demand and use should be included.
 - The estimate of annual average capture should account for the inflow to the Project from the Project capture area, the storage of the Project, and the overflow/bypass during storm events (when capacity is exceeded).
 - The annual average estimate should clearly document the basis for the annual average precipitation/hydrology (e.g., whether a specific year was used as a representative average year with justification, or whether the long-term average was calculated across many years). A minimum of 20-years should be used for the annual average calculations.

- The Feasibility Study must demonstrate that the diverted water would not otherwise be diverted/captured downstream of the Project site (Consistent with the footnote in the existing Feasibility Study Guidelines, Projects that capture water that is already captured downstream can still be submitted and scored to receive water supply points, as applicable and if justified. Public Works will continue to evaluate value added in capturing onsite and/or allowing downstream capacity to remain through the ongoing Metrics and Monitoring Study).
- The Feasibility Study must identify whether and how the 85th percentile storm is being captured/diverted. If the Project will not capture the 85th percentile storm, the Feasibility Study must explain why.
- The nexus between water supply and the Stormwater and/or Urban Runoff that is captured/infiltrated/diverted by the Project should be clearly documented and justified.
- Total life-cycle cost of the Project based on an annualized value.

New 2022 Interim Guidance to Support Feasibility Study Guideline Provisions

The District acknowledges that projects seeking to achieve Water Supply Benefits in the program face additional challenges when designing, applying, and being evaluated by the program committees and community members. In some Watershed Areas like North Santa Monica Bay (NSMB) for example, there is currently an inability to achieve certain types of meaningful Water Supply Benefits due to hydro-geography. The NSMB Watershed Area Steering Committee has expressed this and other valid concerns, which will be carefully considered by the District moving forward while continuing to promote the incorporation of other meaningful SCW Program benefits and even potential water reuse projects that could be developed to augment reuse supplies during storm events. The following sections are intended to provide some high-level clarity about some of the prominent, uncertain water supply scenarios. Additional guidance is anticipated to be provided in the future.

Scenario 1: Projects in watersheds with existing downstream stormwater capture facilities (or other proposed downstream projects):

Feasibility studies must demonstrate, to the extent possible, that captured or diverted water would not otherwise be captured downstream of a Project site by an existing stormwater facility, or another concurrently proposed project, to avoid double counting of Water Supply Benefits. Alternatively, justification of value added in capturing or diverting upstream in order to allow downstream capacity to remain, or to provide another substantial benefit, should be included (with concurrence from appropriate parties). Currently the technical tools needed to verify the relationship between two projects across the full range of storm events in an urban watershed are not widely available. For this reason, the Interim Guidance is that:

- Project proponents must complete a good faith effort to establish and describe the relationship to downstream projects, as required by the Feasibility Study, such as development of a stormwater model, references to relevant studies, a letter of concurrence from the downstream project developers, etc.

- The Scoring Committee should consider the fact-based analysis provided by the project proponent.
- The Scoring Committee should be the site of evaluating the relationship between the proposed project, and other downstream projects. Stakeholders or agencies with input about these questions should engage at the Scoring Committee to support decision-making there.

Scenario 2: Projects claiming to capture the “first flush” flows that would not be captured by existing facilities or concurrent projects (and therefore would otherwise be wasted to the ocean)

- In the interim, such projects should demonstrate the benefit of capturing these limited events, including the anticipated capture amount, other factors impacting the scale of the beneficial use, detailed discussion of downstream facilities/projects that are not suited to capture first flush flows, the intended beneficial use, and clear justification of how the proposed efforts to capture first flush flows will not have any adverse impacts (e.g., to water quality, etc.).
- Scoring Committee should use only the first flush flows, substantiated by modeling, to determine Water Supply Benefit.

Scenario 3: Projects claiming future Water Supply Benefit due to future projects or infrastructure:

- Projects cannot receive Water Supply Benefit points for water diverted to a downstream project that is not yet built and operational. The future project may receive Water Supply Benefits from the water diverted to it.

Scenario 4: Projects diverting onsite runoff to a sanitary sewer:

- It can be a challenge to calculate how much volume of the stormwater runoff would reach a water reclamation plant and be converted to locally available water supply. At this time, the full calculated diversion volume will be considered locally available water supply. This may change in the future when a more refined quantitative analysis becomes available.

Scenario 5: Projects claiming infiltration of water:

- For infiltration Projects, it remains difficult to quantify the volume of water (and the time it would take) to reach a managed, usable, groundwater aquifer as locally available water supply. The District is conducting research in partnership with the US Bureau of Reclamation that may provide additional insights for this topic. As Interim Guidance, if a project proponent provides written concurrence from the agency managing the groundwater basin that the project is believed to increase local groundwater supplies, then the project’s full calculated capacity to infiltrated water will be considered by the Scoring Committee and WASCs as a benefit to locally available water supply.

Evaluating Water Supply Benefits at the WASC

As Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) develop Stormwater Investments Plans (SIPs), they can benefit from the following strategies in determining the appropriateness of each Project's claim of providing, or not providing, Water Supply Benefits:

Tools and strategies to evaluate Water Supply Benefits that WASC members should use during Project evaluation:

- Read the justification provided in the application, submitted Feasibility Study, and scoring rubric about Water Supply Benefits claimed for the Project, including how the project creates locally available water supply.
- Where applicable, review applications for assurance that infiltrated water reaches an aquifer managed for beneficial use through demonstration of high infiltration potential or proximity to a water reclamation facility.
- During presentations by Project proponents, ask follow-up questions about the Water Supply Benefits claimed for the Project, as appropriate.

Tools and strategies to evaluate Water Supply Benefits that WASC members can use at any time:

- Ask Watershed Coordinator(s) to evaluate and report to the WASC how the people, public agencies, and other stakeholders would describe the preferred Water Supply Benefits in the Watershed Area (i.e., desired outcomes and watershed-specific goals).
- Invite informational presentations from agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders to better understand potential Water Supply Benefits sought and challenges faced in the Watershed Area.

Long-Term Vision for Water Supply Guidelines

In the long term, the District may further enlist third-party experts to assist in informing additional guidance to score and evaluate Water Supply Benefits, in conjunction with any pertinent results from the ongoing Metrics and Monitoring Study. Future updates to this guidance are currently expected to consider the following:

- 1. Refinement or Additions to 2022 Interim Guidance**
- 2. Assessment of Watershed-Specific Conditions:** Analysis of hydrogeological conditions and groundwater management on a watershed basis, including where it is believed that all dry weather and stormwater runoff is captured or recharged or is accounted for in existing management agreements – and where that lack of opportunity may have a significant impact on the ability of projects within those watersheds to meet the minimum Threshold Score.
- 3. Establish and/or Refine Definitions and Metrics:** Guidance for what is considered locally available water supply and the scale at which those benefits should be considered.
 - a. Further guidance for understanding how regional improvements in local water supplies can be judged as benefiting individual municipalities or disadvantaged communities (for now, see Disadvantaged Community Benefits guidance for current practice).
 - b. Further standardization regarding how to calculate first flush flows and how/whether to apply benefits for projects capturing such flows;
 - c. If and/or how cleaned dry weather or stormwater runoff to streams or waterbodies with habitat beneficial uses could be judged a water supply for nature or environmental water and therefore counted towards water supply benefits; and
- 4. Guidance for Addressing Water Rights Implications**

Additional issues warranting further guidance may also be considered in the future, with the next round of updated guidance currently anticipated in 2024 to include findings of the District-led Metrics and Monitoring Study, anticipated to be completed in 2023.



Programming of Nature-Based Solutions

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Purpose

Los Angeles Flood Control District Code states that one of the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCW Program) goals is to “**prioritize Nature-Based Solutions**” (Section 18.04.F) to achieve water quality, water supply, and community investment benefits. This goal applies across the entire SCW Program, with specific requirements in both the Municipal and Regional Program elements. This guidance seeks to help project proponents and decision-making bodies prioritize Nature-Based Solutions.

Specifically, this guidance clarifies how best to prioritize Nature-Based Solutions by:

1. Establishing a shared vocabulary, starting from the SCW Program definition, for considering Nature-Based Solutions during Project development and the programming of Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs);
2. Providing guidance to the nine Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) about how to prioritize Nature-Based Solutions when evaluating Projects and programming SIPs;
3. Clarifying how a Project developer or applicant can and should support the Program Goal of prioritizing Nature-Based Solutions; and
4. Highlighting how the Feasibility Study requirements and virtual application submittal tool support Project proponents and WASCs in the prioritization of Nature-Based Solutions.

This guidance is focused on elements within the Regional program but may also be an important reference for the Municipal program.

Nature-Based Solutions in the Safe, Clean Water Program

Section 16.03.V: **Nature-Based Solution** means a Project that utilizes natural processes that slow, detain, infiltrate or filter Stormwater or Urban Runoff. These methods may include:

*relying predominantly on soils and vegetation;
increasing the permeability of Impermeable Areas;
protecting undeveloped mountains and floodplains;
creating and restoring riparian habitat and wetlands;
creating rain gardens, bioswales, and parkway basins; and
enhancing soil through composting, mulching, and planting trees and vegetation,
with preference for native species.*

Nature-Based Solutions may also be designed to provide additional benefits such as sequestering carbon, supporting biodiversity, providing shade, creating and enhancing parks and open space, and improving quality of life for surrounding communities.

Nature-Based Solution includes Projects that mimic natural processes, such as green streets, spreading grounds and planted areas with water storage capacity.

In short, Projects that use natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies to meet identified needs and deliver SCW Program benefits are Nature-Based Solutions:



Natural process or nature mimicking strategies can be further defined as follows.

Natural processes: Practices where vegetation serves as a primary treatment mechanism or endpoint for captured runoff (including irrigation)

Nature-mimicking strategies: Unvegetated practices that capture runoff and infiltrate into native soils

- Can be augmented with vegetated surface improvements
- Previously categorized Nature-Based Solutions such as permeable pavement and infiltration basins would now be in this category

Such projects can employ natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies to achieve any of the key benefits that SCW Program seeks to provide:

- Water Quality
- Water Supply
- Community Investments, including, but not limited to:
 - Improved flood management, flood conveyance, or flood risk mitigation;
 - Creation, enhancement or restoration of parks, habitat, or wetlands;
 - Improved public access to waterways such as new or improved pedestrian and bicycle paths;

- Enhanced or new recreational opportunities;
- Greening of schools; and
- Reduced heat island effect and increased shade or planting of trees / other vegetation

Below are examples of Nature-Based Solutions that can be used to address needs or desired outcomes and to provide SCW Program Benefits.



It is important to note that Nature-Based Solutions are inherently holistic approaches, and as a result, provide multiple benefits. The examples above have been simplified for illustrative purposes. The actual benefits provided through these Projects are more extensive than those listed.

The prioritization of Nature-Based Solutions, as called for in the Program Goals, is intended to apply to both the Regional and Municipal Programs. The Los Angeles Flood Control District Code calls for the following high-level policies related to Nature-Based Solutions:

Regional Program

Section 16.05.D.1.g: Regional Infrastructure Program funds *“Shall be programmed, to the extent feasible, such that Nature-Based Solutions are prioritized.”*

Municipal Program

Section 16.05.C: *“Projects implemented through the Municipal Program shall include a Water Quality Benefit. Multi-Benefit Projects and Nature-Based Solutions are strongly encouraged.”*

Section 16.05.C.1: Municipalities receiving funds shall prepare *“...a progress/expenditure report that details a program-level summary of expenditures and a description of Water Quality Benefits, Water Supply Benefits, Nature- Based Solutions, and Community Investment Benefits realized through use of Municipal Program Funds.”*

Prioritizing Nature-Based Solutions

The prioritization of Nature-Based Solutions can be realized from initial Project design to recommended programming of funds in SIPs, to retrospective program evaluation. Across these varied contexts, the following question can help Program participants prioritize Nature-Based Solutions:

Are there natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies that this Project can use to address watershed needs and deliver SCW Program benefits?

For example, using this question, a Project proponent can design a Project that maximizes the use of natural processes and nature-mimicking strategies to provide needed or desired water quality, water supply, or community enhancement benefits, or to submit a request under the Technical Resources Program such that a Feasibility Study would be conducted, including an investigation as to if and how natural processes and nature-mimicking strategies can be used at the particular site.⁶ Likewise, the governance committees can use this question in evaluating the extent to which individual Projects and SIPs for each Watershed Area are fulfilling the directive to prioritize Nature-Based Solutions in order to meet needs of the watershed and/or communities within it. Additional tools and suggestions are included in the section, “Regional Program Guidance,” below.

For many watershed and community-level needs—from addressing unreliable local water supply to improving community-level investment in historically underinvested communities—and for each of the core SCW Program benefits, there are proven Nature-Based Solutions in the greater Los Angeles region and elsewhere around the world. Further, the use of Nature-Based Solutions can, in many circumstances, be the most effective tool for achieving multiple benefits. For example, prioritizing solutions that use natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies to address poor water quality or

⁶ Any requests to explore project concepts as part of the Technical Resources Program must be approved by Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) as part of Stormwater Investment Plans for the Watershed Area in which the request was submitted.



insufficient local water supply can often produce community enhancements as well. In cases where the need is not feasibly met by Nature-Based Solutions, other identified needs or desired outcomes, such as increasing access to green space or reducing vulnerability to the urban heat island effect, may perhaps be addressed with natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies. There are plentiful examples for using Nature-Based Solutions to meet a variety of needs and desired outcomes, including improved flood management; additional parks, habitat or wetlands; increasing access to waterways such as new or improved pedestrian and bicycle paths; enhancing recreational opportunities; increasing green space on school property; and mitigating against extreme heat. Applicants are encouraged to work with Watershed Coordinators and other resources such as the WHAM Task Force to maximize Nature-Based Solutions, develop multi-benefit projects, and evaluate other funding opportunities.

Natural Processes and Nature-Mimicking Strategies Used in Nature-Based Solutions

A clear linkage exists between watershed and community needs, Nature-Based Solutions, and delivery of the core benefits the Safe, Clean Water Program. Below is a table that attempts to capture and make explicit some of those linkages. It is important to note that many of the needs or desired outcomes, feasible Nature-Based Solutions, and the benefits that can be achieved by using them are integrated. Thus, there is significant overlap in the contents of the rows below.

The table below is not intended to be an exhaustive list of needs/desired outcomes, strategies, or benefits in any of its columns; rather it is illustrative and presented to support Project developers and WASC members in identifying ways in which natural processes and nature-mimicking strategies can be used to address known challenges and as means of yielding tangible benefits. Because this table is not comprehensive, there may be natural processes and/or nature-mimicking strategies that address needs/desired outcomes and provide benefits outside of these categories. ***Any natural processes or nature-mimicking strategy claimed as Nature-Based Solutions by a Project applicant but not included on this table will be evaluated at the discretion of WASC members in each individual Watershed Area on a case-by-case basis.***



Identified Need or Desired Outcome	Potential Natural Processes & Nature-Mimicking Strategies	SCW Program Benefits
Improved environmental water quality	Bioretention; biofiltration; removed impermeable area; increase of permeability; soil enhancement; green streets	Water Quality Benefit
Increased local water supply	Surface and subsurface infiltration to groundwater; treat and release clean stormwater flows for a justified beneficial use; stormwater capture to offset irrigation with potable water; soil enhancement to offset irrigation with potable water; new native and climate-appropriate planting to offset irrigation with potable water; remove impermeable area; increase permeability	Water Supply Benefit
Improved flood management	Bioretention; native and climate appropriate planting; removal of impermeable area; increase of permeability; microtopography changes; protection or restoration of riparian or wetland systems	Community Investment Benefit (CIB): Flood Management
Improved flood conveyance	Stream daylighting; bioretention; microtopography changes; removed impermeable surfaces; increase of permeability; localized infiltration to groundwater	CIB: Flood Conveyance
Reduced flood Risk	Bioretention; microtopography changes; native and climate appropriate planting; soil enhancement; construction or restoration of riparian or wetland systems; protection of undeveloped mountains or floodplains	CIB: Flood Risk Mitigation
Increased park space	New pocket parks, green alleys, green medians; new access to stormwater facilities or streams; park renovation; new native or climate appropriate planting	CIB: Create, Enhance, Restore Parks
Increased, improved, or restored habitat area	Construction or restoration of riparian or wetland systems; new native and climate appropriate planting; soil enhancement; treat and release clean stormwater flows for a justified beneficial use; protection or restoration of native or climate appropriate habitat; protection of undeveloped mountain or floodplains	CIB: Create, Enhance, Restore Habitat
Increased, improved, or restored wetlands	Construction or restoration of riparian or wetland systems; new native and climate appropriate planting, soil enhancement; treat and release clean stormwater flows to wetland habitats	CIB: Create, Enhance, Restore Wetlands
Increased public access to waterways	New parks or greenways at street ends or in streamside rights-of-way; new access points and services in waterway rights-of-way	CIB: Public Access to Waterways
Increased access to quality recreational	New or enhanced parks or greenways; stream daylighting; treat and release clean stormwater flows in recreational areas; new native and climate appropriate planting	CIB: Enhanced or New Recreational



Identified Need or Desired Outcome	Potential Natural Processes & Nature-Mimicking Strategies	SCW Program Benefits
opportunities		Opportunities
Increased green space on school property	Removal of impervious area; new native and climate appropriate planting	CIB: Greening Schools
Extreme heat mitigation	Removal of impervious area, new native and climate appropriate planting, soil enhancement	CIB: Reduced Heat Island Effect
Increase in shade/tree canopy and vegetation	Native and climate-appropriate shade tree planting ⁷	CIB: Increased Shade; Planting Trees
Improved air quality	Native and climate-appropriate tree planting	CIB: Planting Trees
Increase in green space	New pocket parks, green alleys, green medians; new access to natural stormwater facilities; park renovation; new native or climate appropriate planting	CIB: Planting Other Vegetation
Greenhouse gas emissions mitigation	Native and climate appropriate planting; soil enhancement; construction or restoration of riparian and wetland systems	CIB: Sequestering Carbon
Enhanced biodiversity	Native and climate appropriate planting; soil enhancement; construction or restoration of riparian and wetland systems	CIB: Supporting Biodiversity
Improved quality of life	New or enhanced parks, green alleys, green medians; new or enhanced access to rights-of-way along waterways; new native and climate appropriate planting	CIB: Improving Quality of Life
Improved public health	New native and climate appropriate planting, soil enhancement; vector minimization strategies; biofiltration; treat and release stormwater flows to recreational areas; new or enhanced park and recreational access	CIB: Improve Public Health

⁷ For all plantings on SCW Program Project sites, there is a preference for plants that are native or climate-appropriate for the Los Angeles Region. Several resources with examples of these plant types are linked in the “Regional Program Guidance” section. Note that these lists are not intended to be exhaustive, and a proponent may choose to justify that a plant not found on these lists is climate-appropriate and/or native as well.



Regional Program Guidance

1. Scoring and Feasibility Studies via the Project Module

All applicants seeking funding through the Regional Program must submit a Feasibility Study, or equivalent, for review by the Scoring Committee and one of nine Watershed Area Steering Committees. Feasibility Study applications are submitted using a virtual tool on the website, the Project Module. Using the Feasibility Study information provided by the applicant via the Project Module, the Scoring Committee will verify the points awarded for Projects, including points specifically for Nature-Based Solutions.

Known or Perceived Need Addressed by Project

The Project Module asks each Project applicant to identify the known or perceived needs or desired outcomes of the community or Watershed Area within which a Project is located, justification of why the Project developer understands those to be needs, and the ways that the Project is anticipated to address those needs and achieve desired outcomes. This question is posed for each of the three SCW Program benefits – Water Supply Benefit, Water Quality Benefit, and Community Investment Benefit.

While not scored, this is an important part of the Project narrative that WASC members should consider in their evaluation of the strength of any individual Project or suite of Projects for inclusion in a Stormwater Investment Plan.

Points Available for Nature-Based Solutions

Of the total 110 points maximum, Project applicants can attain a total of 15 points for implementation of Nature-Based Solutions. See description and point distribution in the table below.

D. Nature-Based Solutions	15 points max	The Project implements Nature-Based Solutions
	15 points	D1. Project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements natural processes or mimics natural processes to slow, detain, capture, and absorb/infiltrate water in a manner that protects, enhances and/or restores habitat, green space and/or usable open space = 5 points • Utilizes natural materials such as soils and vegetation with a preference for native vegetation = 5 points • Removes Impermeable Area from Project (1 point per 20% paved area removed) = 5 points

Project applicants must include the following Nature-Based Solutions information in their Feasibility Studies in order to be awarded points:

- 5 points for **implementing natural processes** (yes/no)

The Project Module provides the following example for implementing natural processes: *“For example, does this project implement natural processes or mimic natural processes to slow, detain, capture, and absorb/infiltrate water in a manner that protects, enhances or restores habitat, green space or usable open space.”*

To be eligible for points in this category, Projects should support achieving desired outcomes related to improved water quality, water supply, and/or community investments using **embedded solutions** where the processes used to slow, detain, capture, and absorb/infiltrate water is both a natural process or nature-mimicking strategy AND protects, enhances, and or restores habitat, green space and/or usable open space.

Importantly, habitat, green space, and usable open space can often be incorporated in stormwater improvement strategies. However, habitat, green space, and usable open space or other natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies that are independent of the stormwater improvement would not be eligible for points in this category. Excluded strategies may include, but are not limited to, ornamental landscaping, pocket parks, and shade trees.

- 5 points for **utilizing natural materials** (yes/no)

The Project Module references the following example for how a Project can use natural materials: *“For example, such as soils and vegetation with a preference for native vegetation. The explanation should include the relative increase in soils and vegetation at the project site and/or the relative increase in native vegetation. If a plant palette has been developed, it should be attached.”*

To be eligible for points in this category, the Project should advance benefits related to water quality, water supply, and/or community investments by incorporating natural materials such as soils and vegetation—with a preference for native and climate-appropriate vegetation—anywhere within the Project area. There are multiple databases (some examples are shown in Figure 1) produced by Los Angeles area organizations and institutions that can support the selection of appropriate and preferred plants, trees, and soil amendments. Note that these lists are not intended to be exhaustive, and a proponent may argue that a plant not found on these lists is climate-appropriate and/or native.

The natural materials may be associated with the stormwater improvement but are not required to be. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, adding landscaping, planting shade trees, planting native and climate appropriate vegetation, soil enhancement for infiltration (or subsurface infiltration) or improved soil health, and other strategies listed in the table above.

Figure 1. Resources for Native and Climate-Appropriate Vegetation.

Los Angeles County Waterworks Division:
<https://dpw.lacounty.gov/wwd/web/Conservation/NativePlant.aspx>

California Native Plant Society:
<https://vegetation.cnps.org>

Metropolitan Water District Water Wise Program:
https://www.bewaterwise.com/assets/mwd_plantguide-screen_la_4_23.pdf

Theodore Payne Foundation: Plant Guides: [Plant Guides | Theodore Payne Foundation](#)

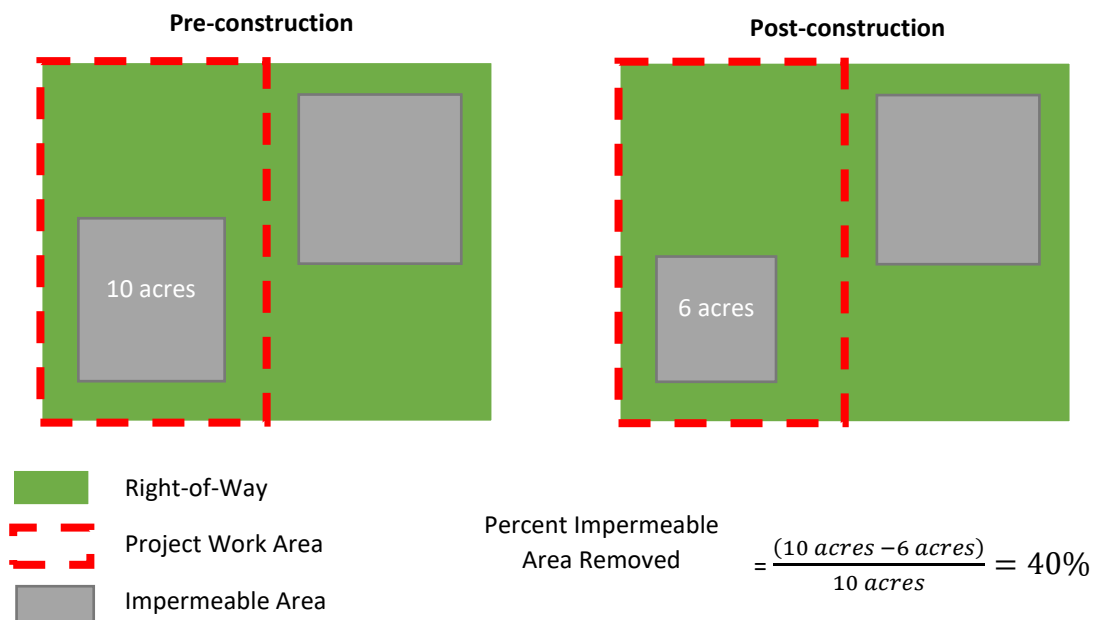
TreePeople Climate-Appropriate Non-Native Plants List:
<https://www.treepeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Non-Native-Plant-Starter-List.pdf>

- Up to 5 points for **removing impermeable surface** (1 point for every 20% impervious area removed)

The Project Module asks the proponent to quantify the amount of impermeable surface that will be removed during the course of the Project, with this guidance: *“An engineering estimate for how much impermeable area is removed after the construction of the project. Compares the impermeable area of the project work area before construction to after the project is completed.”* (Yes/No; Acreage estimation before and after)

Impermeable areas should be calculated for the entire project work area (i.e., areas within active work limits). Percent Impermeable Area Removed shall be calculated using the following formula. See sample calculation below for reference.

$$= \frac{\text{Impermeable area pre construction} - \text{Impermeable area post construction}}{\text{Impermeable area pre construction}}$$



The role of impermeable surfaces in the production of polluted runoff and as a barrier to infiltration is well established. Impermeable surfaces are also often the cause of heat islands and the associated negative public health outcomes.

Absence of Nature-Based Solutions

If Nature-Based Solutions are not used, the proponent is required to provide an explanation, with supporting analysis and information, of why it is not feasible to do so.

For each of the three scored benefits in the Project Module, Water Quality, Water Supply, and each of the identified Community Investments, a Project developer is asked the following: *“Can you describe how natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies have been used to achieve this benefit? If you have achieved this benefit without using Nature-Based Solutions, please include a description of what options were considered and why Nature-Based Solutions were not utilized.”*⁸

Project proponents are responsible for prioritizing Nature-Based Solutions at the earliest available stage of development by working through the feasibility of using natural processes and nature-mimicking strategies to meet identified needs in the watershed and/or community and provide Program benefits.

⁸ Note that previously, a version of this question was asked just on the Project Module page for Nature-Based Solutions. Starting in Round 3, it instead is asked for each benefit in order to help the WASCs better understand and evaluate the project- and program-level prioritization of NBS.

2. Evaluating Projects at the Watershed Area Steering Committee

Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) develop Stormwater Investments Plans (SIPs), which summarize WASC recommendations for how to allocate Regional Program funding for each Watershed Area. One criterion the WASCs must consider in the development of their SIP recommendations is the prioritization of Nature-Based Solutions to the extent feasible.

WASC Evaluation of Individual Projects

WASCs can use the materials submitted by each applicant in the Project Module to evaluate the Nature-Based Solutions submitted for funding consideration. WASCs can use this question set to assist their consideration of each qualified Project, alongside the answers provided by the proponent when they submitted the Project and asserted the use of, or the decision to not use, Nature-Based Solutions:

Questions to Ask Regarding Individual Projects

Are there natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies that this Project will use to address watershed needs and deliver SCW Program benefits?

If not, should this project be revisited for future SIP consideration

Where possible, WASC members should consider known needs of the Watershed Area and/or the community in which the Project is located when evaluating the benefits that it is providing.

Note that the feasibility of using Nature-Based Solutions is key to the treatment of the second question. In situations where a Project proponent has expressed that Nature-Based Solutions are infeasible, the WASC can evaluate how the proponent analyzed and ultimately decided to not include natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies in the proposed Project. If the infeasibility is considered to be demonstrated adequately, the WASC should not consider the absence of natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies as the sole grounds to revisit the Project in the future.

However, for those sites where Nature-Based Solutions are feasible and desirable, the WASC may consider shifting the Project to the Technical Resources Program for refined/new concept development (incorporating Nature-Based Solutions) or requesting the proponent bring a revised proposal back to the WASC for consideration in a future year.

WASC Evaluation of SIPs

Additionally, WASCs can prioritize Nature-Based Solutions by considering how the suite of Projects supported by past SIPs, and those under consideration each fiscal year as a SIP is programed, together reflect a prioritization of Projects that use natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies across the Watershed Area and to the benefit of all communities. A couple questions that could help this consideration are:

Questions to Ask Regarding SIPs

Has the WASC prioritized Nature-Based Solutions within this and prior Stormwater Investment Plans?

How are the Nature-Based Solutions funded to-date collectively providing the anticipated benefits to the Watershed Area, and where are the biggest needs or opportunities?

Considering the known and perceived needs of the Watershed Area, WASC members should evaluate the extent to which full suites of Projects programmed in Stormwater Investment Plans meet or are anticipated to meet those needs.

In cases where collective groups of Projects, including Nature-Based Solutions, do not adequately address Watershed Area needs, WASC members may wish to reevaluate programming recommendations to have a suite of Projects more targeted toward providing specific benefits or achieving particular outcomes. If programming a Stormwater Investment Plan such that Watershed Area needs can be met is not possible (i.e. there are not eligible Projects that meet those needs that can be programmed), WASC members should provide that information to the Flood Control District staff and to their Watershed Coordinator(s) to assist with developing the pipeline of such Projects applying for funding in future years.

Other Tools Available to WASC Members A series of actions and activities are available to WASCs for prioritizing Nature-Based Solutions:

Strategies to prioritize Nature-Based Solutions that WASC members can use during Project evaluation and SIP recommendation development:

- Prior to sending submitted Projects to Scoring Committee, the WASC can choose to evaluate the extent to which natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies are included in each Project, and the extent to which Nature-Based Solutions appear across the suite of Projects. This evaluation can support the WASC decision-making about which Projects are “sent” to Scoring.
- Upon the completion of scoring and during review of individual Projects, the WASC should read materials provided by proponents about natural processes and nature-mimicking strategies included in Projects, and in the case where Nature-Based Solutions were judged infeasible, about the analysis and reasons given.
- During presentations by Project proponents, the WASC members can ask questions about the natural processes or nature-mimicking strategies included in the Project, or about the analysis completed which showed Nature-Based Solutions to be infeasible.
- When programming the SIP, the WASC can review SIP of previous years, and the suite of Projects proposed, to consider how Nature-Based Solutions are being prioritized in the Watershed Area.

Strategies to prioritize Nature-Based Solutions that WASC members can use at any time:

- WASCs can ask their Watershed Coordinator(s) to evaluate and report to the WASC how the people, city and county agencies, and other stakeholders would prioritize Nature-Based Solutions in the Watershed Area.
- WASCs can invite informational presentations from agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders to better understand how Nature-Based Solutions would bring benefits and meet the challenges faced in the Watershed Area.

SCW Program Fund Transfer Agreements in the Regional and Municipal Programs

In addition to the requirements listed above, recipients of SCW Program funding in the Regional and Municipal Programs do not receive funds until they execute a Fund Transfer Agreement that outlines several expectations relative to Nature-Based Solutions in Project design, implementation, and reporting.

Both Regional Program Fund Recipients and Municipalities are required:

- To consider using and incorporating Nature-Based Solutions for their Projects.
- To include in their Progress reports (quarterly and annual) and in the Expenditure report a summary whether and how their Projects achieve a good, better, best for each of the 6 Nature-Based Solutions methods in accordance with guidance (See Appendix for the good/better/best guidance for Nature-Based Solutions).
- To include in their Progress reports (quarterly and annual)/ Expenditure Reports a discussion of any considerations taken to maximize the class within each Nature-Based Solutions method. If at least 3 Nature-Based Solutions methods score within a single class, the overall Project can be characterized as that class.
- To attach a copy of the matrix for each Project with the good, better, or best column indicated for each method, to facilitate District tracking of methods being utilized.

Long-Term Vision for Nature-Based Solutions

The Flood Control District recognizes that, long-term, additional measures will need to be taken across SCW Program implementation—from project design to retrospective considerations, along with ongoing adaptive management—to facilitate the prioritization of Nature-Based Solutions. While not appropriate to include within the scope of this guidance, the Flood Control District anticipates pursuing additional activities and exploring further potential guidance in 2024.

- **Regional Program Project Design Phase:** Assessment of ways to build a pipeline of Nature-Based Solutions applications received for funding consideration. This could be accomplished through a variety of tactics, including but not limited to the following:
 - Identification of regional and watershed-level needs that can be met using Nature-Based Solutions
 - Education/training for Project developers on what is considered a Nature-Based Solution in the SCW Program, how to design, construct, and maintain Nature-Based Solutions, and examples of projects that are considered good, better, or best for meeting Nature-Based Solutions preferences of the SCW Program
 - Incentives for Project developers, such as by specifying round-specific program preferences for funding, development of Nature-Based Solutions targets for WASCs, or other measures
 - Exploration of an iterative project design process that enables Project developers to engage with the District and with WASCs earlier in the design process so that any preferences in design can be shared by governance committees and taken into account by Project developers
 - Facilitating WASC discussions to further establish Watershed Area specific needs and opportunities that inform new project concepts and ensure maximum consideration of potential Nature-Based Solutions

- **Regional Program Scoring:** Assessment of potential adjustments to scoring as part of comprehensive scoring review following MMS and robust stakeholder processes that may include modifications related to any or all of the following:
 - Desirable Nature-Based Solutions are competitive in scoring (i.e., pass threshold)
 - Nature-Based Solutions on the lower end of the good/better/best spectrum are not awarded de facto full points
 - Nature-Based solutions be a means to desired outcomes related to the primary benefits and Goals of the SCW Program.
- **SCW Program Evaluation:** Establish processes for the biennial review in developing recommendations for adaptive program management. This will include careful consideration of lessons learned to date and resulting options to potentially improve outcomes.
- **Integration Across SCW Program:** Ensure that Regional Program processes and preferences are appropriately integrated with the implementation of the Municipal Program, Watershed Coordinators, and District Programs, including the District Education Program, such that all parties working to implement the SCW Program are fulfilling the directive to prioritize Nature-Based Solutions.
- **Integration Across WHAM:** Establish processes to collaborate early with other funding programs to evaluate opportunities and maximize Nature-Based Solutions that may achieve multi-sector benefits in addition to SCW Program objectives.

APPENDIX: Annotated "Nature-Based Solutions Best Management Practices"

The content below has been taken from the Fund Transfer Agreements, and annotated for clarity. This annotation is meant to assist the Project developers and Municipalities in filling out progress reports for Projects and expenditures. It clarifies terms and other ambiguities for each of the Nature-Based Solutions methods highlighted in the evaluation form.

Nature-based solutions (NBS) refers to the sustainable management and use of nature for undertaking socio-environmental challenges, including climate change, water security, water pollution, food security, human health, and disaster risk management. As this environmental management practice is increasingly incorporated into projects for the SCW Program, this guidance document may be expanded upon to further quantify NBS practices based on benefits derived from their incorporation on projects.

The SCW Program defines Nature-Based Solutions as a Project that utilizes natural processes that slow, detain, infiltrate or filter Stormwater or Urban Runoff. These methods may include relying predominantly on soils and vegetation; increasing the permeability of Impermeable Areas; protecting undeveloped mountains and floodplains; creating and restoring riparian habitat and wetlands; creating rain gardens, bioswales, and parkway basins; enhancing soil through composting, mulching; and, planting trees and vegetation, with preference for native species. Nature-Based Solutions may also be designed to provide additional benefits such as sequestering carbon, supporting biodiversity, providing shade, creating and enhancing parks and open space, and improving quality of life for surrounding communities. Nature-Based Solutions include Projects that mimic natural processes, such as green streets, spreading grounds and planted areas with water storage capacity. Nature-Based Solutions improve water quality, collect water for reuse or aquifer recharge, or to support vegetation growth utilizing natural processes.

Recipients are to consider using Nature-Based Solutions for infrastructure projects and tinclude in each quarterly and annual report whether and how their project achieves a good, better, or best for each of the 6 NBS methods in accordance with the guidance below. Additionally, reports should include discussion on any considerations taken to maximize the class within each method. If at least 3 methods score within a single class, the overall project can be characterized as that class.

Note that because Nature-Based Solutions are inherently holistic approaches, many attributes of projects that meet the description under one method will receive credit under other methods.

Method 1: Vegetation/Green Space

Purpose: This method refers to the utilization of climate-appropriate and native vegetation, as well as strategically placed shade trees that provide cooling benefits. The class is determined by the type of vegetation included in the project as well as estimated percentage of vegetative cover.

Evaluation: To be considered as meeting any class in this method, both criteria must be met in that class. This method is also intended to be cumulative, where a “best” classification is attained only when all requirements of lower tier(s) are satisfied as well. If you believe you have met a “good,” “better,” or “best” class but haven’t met all the criteria within or below a tier, please justify.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION
GOOD	<p>Use of climate-appropriate vegetation (groundcover, shrubs, and trees) / green space</p> <p>5%-15% covered by new climate-appropriate vegetation</p>
BETTER	<p>Use of native, climate-appropriate vegetation (groundcover, shrubs, and trees) / green space</p> <p>16%-35% covered by new native vegetation</p>
BEST	<p>Establishment of plant communities with a diversity of native vegetation (groundcover, shrubs, and trees) / green space that is both native and climate-appropriate</p> <p>More than 35% covered by new native vegetation</p>

NOTES

“**Climate appropriate vegetation**” means a variety of plants that may not be “native” to the Los Angeles region, but which require below-average amounts of water. This includes certain shade trees. Examples can be found here: [TreePeople Climate-Appropriate Non-Native Plants List](#)

The **percentages** indicated here mean the portion of the total Project area cover by vegetation at plant maturity.⁹

“**Native vegetation**” means a variety of plants that are adapted to and historically grown within the Los Angeles region, and are non-invasive. Examples may be found using the following resources:

- [Los Angeles County Waterworks Division Native Plant List](#)
- [Metropolitan Water District Water Wise Program Native Planting Guide for LA County](#)
- [TreePeople Native Plants List](#)
- [California Native Plant Society](#)
- [Theodore Payne Foundation: Plant Guides](#)

⁹ While only the portion of vegetation relative to the whole Project area is noted as a criteria for this method, Project developers and WASCs should consider the total absolute square footage of vegetation when self-assessing for reporting purposes and evaluating Project impact.

Method 2: Increase of Permeability

Purpose: This method is about increasing the amount of permeable surface in LA County. Accordingly, for projects implemented on land that is already fully permeable, this method does not apply.

Evaluation: To be considered as meeting any class in this method, two criteria must be met: (1) percentage of impermeable/paved surfaced removed and (2) the type of landscape installed (see “Notes” section for details). The other criterion in each class is desirable, but not required. This method is intended to be cumulative, where a “best” classification is attained only when all requirements of lower tier(s) are satisfied as well. If you believe you have met a “good,” “better,” or “best” class but haven’t met all the criteria within or below a tier, please justify.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION
GOOD	Installation of vegetated landscape – 25%-49% paved area removed Redesign of existing impermeable surfaces and/or installation of permeable surfaces (e.g. permeable pavement and infiltration trenches)
BETTER	Installation of vegetated landscape – 50%-74% paved area removed Improvements of soil health (e.g., compaction reduction)
BEST	Installation of vegetated landscape – 75%-100% paved area removed Creation of well-connected and self-sustained natural landscapes with healthy soils, permeable surfaces, and appropriate vegetation

NOTES

Paved area means anything impermeable through which water cannot percolate or infiltrate.

The **percentages** refer to the proportion of paved/impermeable surface being removed in the Project area.¹⁰

To meet a **“good” class** in this method, a Project must have removed at least the listed percentage of impermeable/paved area, AND installed a permeable surface in its place, including but not limited to permeable pavement, soil, or vegetated landscape. Redesign of remaining impermeable/paved surfaces is encouraged but not required.

To meet a **“better” class** in this method, a Project must have removed at least the listed percentage of impermeable/paved area, AND installed soil or landscape in its place (permeable pavement does not count). Redesign of remaining impermeable/paved surfaces and improvements to soil health are encouraged but not required.

To meet a **“best” class** in this method, a Project must have removed at least the listed percentage of impermeable/paved area, AND installed vegetated landscape with groundcover, shrubs, and/or trees in its place. Redesign of remaining impermeable/paved surfaces, improvements to soil health, and creation of landscapes are encouraged but not required.

¹⁰ While only the portion of impermeable/paved surface removed relative to the whole Project area is noted as a criteria for this method, Project developers and WASCs should consider the total absolute square footage of removed surface when self-assessing for reporting purposes and evaluating Project impact. For example, removing a total of 1 square foot of pavement that exists on a Project site shouldn’t qualify for the “best” class even if the Project removes 100% of the impermeable surface.

Method 3: Protection of Undeveloped Mountains & Floodplains

Purpose: This method refers to the preservation of existing habitat, wetland, and natural hydrologic features of the watersheds of Los Angeles County. For Projects located on land that does not have existing vegetation or land to preserve, this method does not apply.

Evaluation: To be considered as meeting any class in this method, both criteria must be met in that class. This method is intended to be cumulative, where a “best” classification is attained only when all requirements of lower tier(s) are satisfied as well. If you believe you have met a “good,” “better,” or “best” class but haven’t met all the criteria within or below a tier, please justify.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION
GOOD	Preservation of native vegetation Minimal negative impact to existing drainage system
BETTER	Preservation of native vegetation Installation of new feature(s) to improve existing drainage system
BEST	Preservation of native vegetation Creation of open green space Installation of features to improve natural hydrology

NOTES

Preserving native vegetation: Projects built in locations that already have a lot of native vegetation that is protected or will be preserved via Project implementation are considered to be in the “good” and “better” classes.

The **existing drainage system** may be the natural hydrology or an existing built drainage system, depending on the project site.

Minimal negative impact is any action or impact considered “less than significant” as defined by CEQA.

Improvements will enhance the drainage system’s ability to slow, detain, capture, and/or infiltrate water without creating increased flood damage risk to property or persons.

Creating open space: Those projects that preserve native vegetation AND create open green space, using climate-appropriate and native vegetation, that is intended for safe public use are considered to be in the “best” class.

The **natural hydrology** is comprised of green infrastructure and land elements that direct and infiltrate water entering the built drainage system. To meet the “best” class in this method, improvements should be to the natural hydrology, rather than to a built system.

Method 4: Creation & Restoration of Riparian Habitat & Wetlands

Purpose: This method is about restoration of former or existing degraded riparian habitat and wetlands and/or creation of riparian and/or wetland habitat on the Project site.

Evaluation: To be considered as meeting any class in this method, all criteria must be met in that class. This method is intended to be cumulative, where a “best” classification is attained only when all requirements of lower tier(s) are satisfied as well. If you believe you have met a “good,” “better,” or “best” class but haven’t met all the criteria within or below a tier, please justify.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION
GOOD	Partial restoration of existing riparian habitat and wetlands
	Planting of climate appropriate vegetation - between 5 and 15 different climate-appropriate or native plant species newly planted
	No potable water used to sustain the wetland
BETTER	Full restoration of existing riparian habitat and wetlands
	Planting of native vegetation - between 16 and 30 different native plant species newly planted
	No potable water used to sustain the wetland
BEST	Full restoration and expansion of existing riparian habitat and wetlands
	Planting of plant communities with a diversity of native vegetation – greater than 31 native plant species newly planted
	No potable water used to sustain the wetland

NOTES

Riparian habitat is defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and can be found [here](#).

Wetland is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and can be found [here](#).

Restoration means the manipulation of physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of a site with the goal of returning natural or historic function of degraded habitat to equal or better than its former state.

Partial restoration means less than 80% of the existing riparian habitat or wetlands on the parcel will be restored as part of the project scope.

A list of **climate-appropriate** and **native vegetation** can be found in Method 1, “Vegetation/Green Space.” Plant palettes should be designed to consider habitat opportunities, functional use, and site conditions.

Full restoration means all or almost all (at least 80%) of the existing riparian habitat or wetlands on the parcel has been restored as part of the Project scope.

To meet the “**best**” class in this method, new riparian habitat or wetlands must be created in addition to the area restored.

Method 5: New Landscape Elements

Purpose: This method refers to the use and/or manipulation of the natural landscape to capture or direct stormwater flows and to improve water quality. These new landscape elements may supplement or even replace existing drainage systems.

Evaluation: To be considered as meeting any class in this method the capture criteria indicated below must be met. This method is intended to be cumulative, where a “best” classification is attained only when all requirements of lower tier(s) are satisfied as well. If you believe you have met a “good,” “better,” or “best” class but haven’t met all the criteria within or below a tier, please justify.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION
GOOD	Elements designed to capture runoff for other simple usage (e.g. rain gardens and cisterns), capturing the 85th percentile 24-hour storm event for at least 50% of the entire parcel
BETTER	Elements that design to capture/redirect runoff and filter pollution (e.g. bioswales and parkway basins), capturing the 85th percentile 24-hour storm event from the entire parcel
BEST	Large sized elements that capture and treat runoff to supplement or replace existing water systems (e.g. wetlands, daylighting streams, groundwater infiltration, floodplain reclamation), capturing the 90 th percentile 24-hour storm event from the entire parcel and/or capturing off-site runoff

NOTES

Landscape elements that qualify a project for credit under this method include any of the following:

- Cisterns (small-scale)
- Rain gardens (small-scale)
- Treewells (small- to medium-scale)
- Bioswales (medium-scale)
- Parkway basins (medium-scale)
- Retention ponds (medium- to large-scale)
- Wetlands (large-scale)
- Daylighting streams (large-scale)
- Regional groundwater infiltration basins (*must be vegetated*) (large-scale)
- Floodplain reclamation (large-scale)

The “good,” “better,” or “best” evaluation for this method will depend on the amount of **stormwater effectively captured or redirected** by the elements across the parcel and off-site, as noted in the matrix.

For the “**best**” class, Projects must capture either the 90th percentile OR at least the 85th percentile from the entire parcel plus off-site runoff in order to qualify. For off-site runoff, WASCs should verify volumes in order to consider a Project as “best” under this method.

Method 6: Enhancement of Soil

Purpose: This method refers to the health of soil at the project site to ensure adequate drainage and advance co-benefits associated with healthy soils, like greenhouse gas sequestration, erosion prevention, water retention, and others.

Evaluation: To be considered as meeting any class in this method, all criteria must be met in that class. This method is intended to be cumulative, where a “best” classification is attained only when all requirements of lower tier(s) are satisfied as well. If you believe you have met a “good,” “better,” or “best” class but haven’t met all the criteria within or below a tier, please justify.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION
GOOD	<p>Use of soil amendments such as mulch and compost to retain moisture in the soil and prevent erosion</p> <p>Planting of new climate-appropriate vegetation to enhance soil organic matter</p>
BETTER	<p>Use of soil amendments such as mulch and compost that are locally generated to retain moisture in the soil, prevent erosion, and support locally-based composting and other soil enhancement activities</p> <p>Planting of new native, climate-appropriate vegetation to enhance soil organic matter</p>
BEST	<p>Use of soil amendments such as mulch and compost that are locally generated, especially use of next-generation design with regenerative adsorbents (e.g. woodchips, biochar) to retain moisture in the soil, prevent erosion, and support on-site composting and other soil enhancement activities</p> <p>Planting of new native, climate appropriate vegetation to enhance soil organic matter</p>

NOTES

Soil amendments mean materials that are mixed into the soil to improve water retention and nutrient absorption, which could include compost, manure, wood chips, or rocks.

A list of **climate-appropriate** and **native vegetation** can be found in Method 1, “Vegetation/Green Space.”

Locally-generated soil amendments are those sourced and processed within the Watershed Area of the project under consideration. **Locally-based** soil enhancement activities will be those taking place within that same Watershed Area.

For the **“best” class**, Projects should include on-site soil enhancement.



Implementing Disadvantaged Community Policies in the Regional Program

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Purpose

Experience to-date in the Regional Program reveals that aspects of Safe, Clean Water Program (SCW Program) related to providing Disadvantaged Community Benefits require further guidance to better support achieving the outcomes sought. The SCW Program emphasizes investments that produce benefits in or directly to disadvantaged communities. Complying with the Disadvantaged Community Benefit policy in the Program is complex, and asserting what benefits accrue to which communities is not easily quantified.

As of May 2021, the District Program is developing a study which, among many things, will review how other funding programs that direct investment in disadvantaged communities have worked to overcome the many challenges that remain when seeking to implement the SCW Program policy. That study will inform future guidance in support of Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) development in the Regional Program.

The following Interim guidance is intended to support SIP programming by providing information to help Project proponents with application preparation and Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASCs) with consistent evaluation and decision-making during the development of SIP recommendations. As appropriate, this guidance may also be referenced during ongoing discussions at the WASCs for recommendations.

Specifically, this guidance includes the following:

1. Clarification of how Project proponents and WASCs can interpret and substantiate a Project's ability to deliver Disadvantaged Community Benefits;
2. Policies for consistently accounting for the 110% investment provisions within Stormwater Investment Plans;
3. Considerations to inform deliberation and discussion about relationships between communities, municipalities, and census block groups.

Disadvantaged Community Benefit Policies in the Safe, Clean Water Program

One goal of the SCW Program, found in Los Angeles County Flood Control District (District) Code Section 18.04 (J), is to "provide Disadvantaged Community Benefits, including Regional Program infrastructure investments, that are not less than one hundred and ten percent (110%) of the ratio of the [disadvantaged community] population to the total population in each Watershed Area."

Summarizing the ordinance sections and definitions below reveal that the **program goal of investing in disadvantaged communities is achieved by locating beneficial Projects within, or such that the benefits of a Project are directly provided to, census block groups where the median household income is less than 80% of the statewide median household income.**

When a Project has these qualities, and the WASC recommends it for funding, the value of regional SCW Program funding that is allocated to the Project in the 5-year Stormwater Investment Plan will be used to calculate fulfillment of the 110% requirement.

Key Definitions

- Section 16.03(H): "Disadvantaged community" means a census block group that has an annual median household income of less than eighty percent (80%) of the Statewide annual median household income (as defined in Water Code section 79505.5).
- Section 16.03(I): "Disadvantaged Community Benefit" means a Water Quality Benefit, Water Supply Benefit, and/or Community Investment Benefit located in a [disadvantaged community] or providing benefits directly to a [disadvantaged community] population.
- Section 16.03(Y): "Project" means the development (including design, preparation of environmental documents, obtaining applicable regulatory permits, construction, inspection, and similar activities), operation and maintenance, of a physical structure or facility that increases Stormwater or Urban Runoff capture or reduces Stormwater or Urban Runoff pollution in the District.
- Section 16.03(NN): "Water Quality Benefit" means a reduction in Stormwater or Urban Runoff pollution, such as improvements in the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of Stormwater or Urban Runoff in the District. Activities resulting in this benefit include but are not limited to: infiltration or treatment of Stormwater or Urban Runoff, non-point source pollution control, and diversion of Stormwater or Urban Runoff to a sanitary sewer system.



- Section 16.03 (OO): "Water Supply Benefit" means an increase in the amount of locally available water supply, provided there is a nexus to Stormwater or Urban Runoff capture. Activities resulting in this benefit include, but are not limited to, the following: reuse and conservation practices, diversion of Stormwater or Urban Runoff to a sanitary sewer system for direct or indirect water recycling, increased groundwater replenishment or available yield, or offset of potable water use.
- Section 16.03(F): "Community Investment Benefit" means a benefit created in conjunction with a Project or Program, such as, but not limited to: improved flood management, flood conveyance, or flood risk mitigation; creation, enhancement or restoration of parks, habitat or wetlands; improved public access to waterways; enhanced or new recreational opportunities; and greening of schools. A Community Investment Benefit also includes a benefit to the community derived from a Project or Program that improves public health by reducing heat island effect and increasing shade or planting of trees or other vegetation that increase carbon reduction/sequestration and improve air quality.

Other Provisions

- Section 18.07(B)2.c: Funding for Projects that provide DAC Benefits shall not be less than one hundred and ten percent (110%) of the ratio of the DAC population to the total population in each Watershed Area. To facilitate compliance with this requirement, the District will work with stakeholders and Watershed Coordinator(s) to utilize existing tools to identify high-priority geographies for water-quality improvement projects and other projects that create DAC Benefits within DACs, to help inform WASCs as they consider project recommendations.
- Section 18.07(B)2.d: Each Municipality shall receive benefits in proportion to the funds generated within their jurisdiction, after accounting for allocation of the one hundred ten percent (110%) return to DACs, to the extent feasible, to be evaluated annually over a rolling five (5) year period.

Regional Program Guidance for Interpreting "Disadvantaged Community Benefit"

The following Interim Guidance supports ongoing decisions at the WASCs and Project proponents

1. Projects that provide any of the benefits sought by the SCW Program (Water Quality Benefit, Water Supply Benefit, or Community Investment Benefit) directly to a disadvantaged community will be considered as providing the Disadvantaged Community Benefit.
2. Projects where any of the construction effort is within a census block group designated as a disadvantaged community will be considered "within" a disadvantaged community, and therefore providing a Disadvantaged Community Benefit.
3. Projects where none of the construction effort is within a census block group designated as a disadvantaged community, but where the completed Project will provide a **direct benefit** inside a census block group designated as a disadvantaged community, will be considered as providing a Disadvantaged Community Benefit. If two potential project locations provide substantially equivalent benefits to a Disadvantaged Community but one is physically located within that

Disadvantaged Community, the prospective Project developer(s) should pursue the location within the Disadvantaged Community to the extent otherwise feasible.

4. Whether a Project provides a “direct benefit” as used in SCW Program policy and within #3 above will be a decision made by WASCs on a project-by-project basis, considering the goals of the SCW Program, the benefits provided to the community by each Project, and the area within which those benefits will be felt. See section, “Consideration of Direct Benefit,” below, for additional guidance.
5. The WASC, in its determination of whether a Project provides “direct benefit” to members of a disadvantaged community, should strongly rely on documented public support by members of that community such as, CBOs, NGOs, elected representatives and other stakeholders. Similarly, decisions by the WASC can rely upon the lack of documented public support, or the presence of documented resistance from members of a community. See section, “Community Support,” below, for additional guidance.
6. The designation as to whether a Project is providing a Disadvantaged Community Benefit may be modified from the original application during an agenda discussion of a Project. Any voting WASC member may suggest adjusting the disadvantaged community benefit designation of a Project (in accordance with District Code Section 18.07.B.2.c) as part of a motion related to the formation of a SIP, either to say that a Project claiming a Disadvantaged Community Benefit does not provide one, or that a Project that did not claim to provide a Disadvantaged Community Benefit in the application does provide a benefit. In the latter case, the WASC would need to request additional information about the Disadvantaged Community Benefit from the Project developer, consistent with the questions in the Project Module. See sections titled “Relevant information in the Project Module” and “WASC Tools and Strategies,” below.
7. When a Project judged to be providing benefits to members of a disadvantaged community is included in a recommended 5-year SIP, the total amount of funding provided by the regional program towards the Project is used to make the 110% investment calculation.

Relevant information in the Project Module

All applicants seeking funding through the Regional Program must submit a Feasibility Study, or equivalent, for review by the Scoring Committee and one of nine WASCs. Feasibility Studies are submitted using the web-based Project Module.

The Project Module currently includes the following prompts related to Projects seeking to provide benefits to members of disadvantaged communities:

- Will the Project provide benefit to a disadvantaged community?
 - *Note that the questions below are posed within the Project Module only if the applicant answers “YES” to this first question.*
- Is the Project located in a [disadvantaged community] Census Block Group as defined by SCW?
- If no, please describe if there is a formal or informal community boundary more appropriate

than a Census Block Group boundary to consider for the benefit area of a particular project where the median householder income statistic or current Cal Environ Screen tool considers that community "disadvantaged".

- Describe how the Project will provide benefits to a [disadvantaged community].
- Describe how the Project will provide water quality benefits to a [disadvantaged community].
- Describe how the Project will provide water supply benefits to a [disadvantaged community].
- Describe how the Project will provide community investment benefits to a [disadvantaged community].
- Describe how the Project engaged the benefitting [disadvantaged community] to date.

By default, the Project's Disadvantaged Community Benefit designation will be displayed as a YES or a NO based on the entries made by Project proponents.

Consideration for "Direct Benefit" Determination

California has two policy systems for identifying disadvantaged communities, one is CalEnviroScreen which is managed by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the other is within the State Water Code and uses a median household income statistical test. In both policy systems, census boundaries are used because the relevant socio-economic and demographic data is differentiated using those boundaries. However, both state policies do not define what a "community" means. The use of the census boundaries as community boundaries is a convention in these programs, not a formal policy. Because a "community" is undefined within the Water Code related policy system, any appropriate geographic boundary that supports the median household income statistical test can be deemed as a "disadvantaged community."

Unlike the state policy, SCW Program directs that Census Block Groups are communities, some of which are disadvantaged, and some of which are not. Functionally, Census Block Groups are rarely perceived as a community by any community members, the agencies that serve them, or the elected representatives at various levels. In fact, Census Tracts and Blocks rarely have any familiarity or utility outside the Census itself, and the use of the demographic data that is differentiated with those boundaries. Census Places, however, are another geographic unit used by the Census and are typically drawn to contain political or social geographies that have meaningfulness for the people who live and work there.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) maintains a Disadvantaged Community Mapping Tool for the use across many programs that it administers. The tool is found at the link below and includes both 2016 and 2018 US Census data for analyzing disadvantaged communities. The SCW Program currently uses 2016 data to determine the targeted ratios of investment into Disadvantaged Communities but is expected to be updated roughly every five years. In the tool, Census Places, Tracts, and Block Groups can be viewed to understand their median household income and its relation to the statewide median household income.

- Link to DWR Disadvantaged Community Mapping Tool: <https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/dacs/>
- Link to CalEPA CalEnviroscreen: <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen>

Inglewood Example

If you calculate the median household income for the city of Inglewood as a Census Place (Figure 1), you find that the city has a median household income below 80% of the statewide median household income, and therefore can be considered a disadvantaged community. However, when you review the many Census Block Groups within the city of Inglewood (Figure 2), you find that some are considered disadvantaged, some severely disadvantaged (defined in the State Water Code as having a median household income below 60% of the statewide median household income), and some are neither.

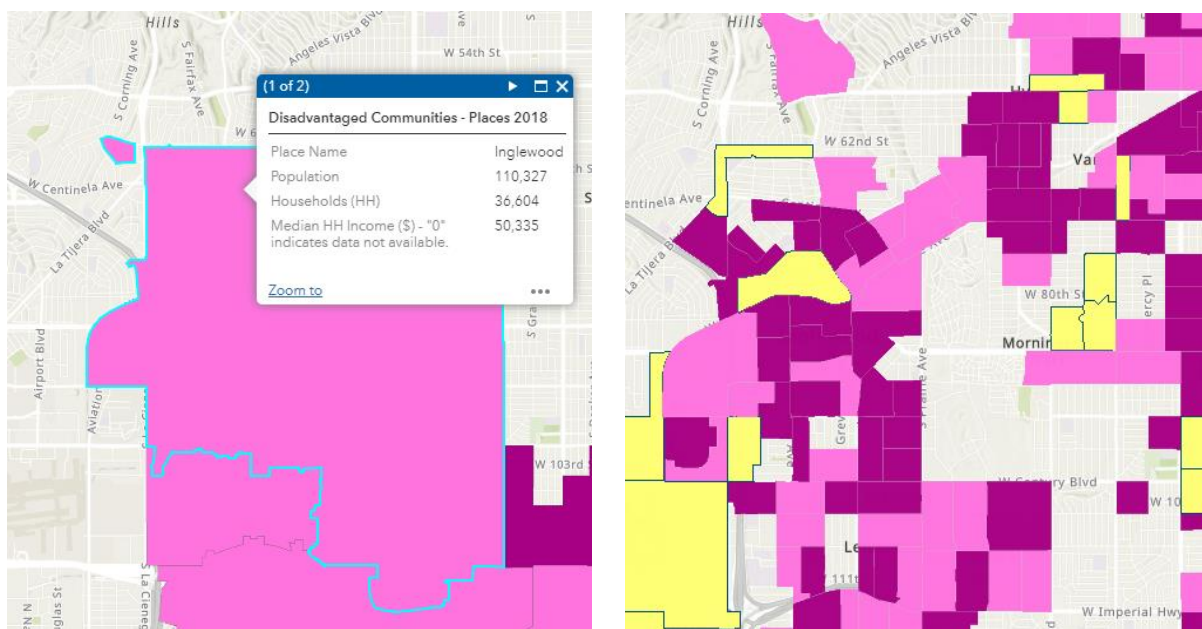


Figure 1 - Inglewood Census Place (DWR Disadvantaged Community Mapping Tool): Pink is disadvantaged, and purple is severely disadvantaged.

This example is shared to reveal that a pure focus on Census Blocks may inadvertently omit Projects that are of critical importance to communities that collectively have unmet needs and are therefore intended to benefit from the disadvantaged community policies of the SCW Program.

Benefits within a community boundary can be identified formally (like the city of Inglewood) or less formally (like the community of Pacoima, where the median household income calculation using that boundary supports the designation of “disadvantaged community”), or when CalEnviroscreen suggests unjust cumulative impacts are experienced inside that boundary. In any such cases, a WASC would be justified considering that Project as providing benefits across the entire area within that boundary. This is reiterated in three steps, below:

SCW Program 2022 Interim Guidance

Implementing Disadvantaged Community Policies in the Regional Program



1. Is there a formal or informal community boundary more appropriate than Census Block Group boundaries to consider for the benefit area of a particular Project? *If yes...*
2. Using that boundary as a community, does the median householder income statistic or the current CalEnvironScreen tool consider that community “disadvantaged?” *If yes...*
3. Does the WASC wish to recommend that the Project will provide benefits across the entire community boundary?

The following municipalities are within the SCW Program boundaries, and are US Census places that have an MHI below 80% of the statewide MHI (2018 data), and therefore could be considered disadvantaged at the scale of the municipality (alphabetical):

- Bell
- Bellflower
- Bell Gardens
- Commerce
- Compton
- Cudahy
- El Monte
- Gardena
- Hawaiian Gardens
- Hawthorne
- Huntington Park
- Inglewood
- Lynwood
- Maywood
- Montebello
- Paramount
- Pomona
- Rosemead
- San Fernando
- South El Monte
- South Gate
- Walnut Park

Community Support

The SCW Program places priority on developing community support for Projects that yield Water Quality Benefits, Water Supply Benefits, and Community Investment Benefits. Within the scoring process for regional Projects, points are available for Projects that document community support.

One of the most effective ways to document if a Project will provide benefit to a community is if the community itself says so and expresses support. Project proponents are encouraged to obtain letters of support documenting that communities who will benefit from the Project are, in fact, eager for those Project benefits and supportive of the effort. WASCs too, when considering which communities will benefit from regional Projects, can rely on assertions from communities and their representatives that the Project will provide them benefits. This underscores the importance of empowering community members to voice their perceived benefits through community education and engagement.

This approach can be very effective when Projects are anticipated to provide regional benefits, some of which will accrue to one or many disadvantaged communities. If a Project proponent engages with members of those communities and their representatives and has received their concurrence that the Project benefits will be felt by their community, this becomes strong evidence that the Project will provide a Disadvantaged Community Benefit.

WASCs can look towards the letters of support that are provided by a Project proponent, or to public engagement during the programming of the SIPs. Public testimony offered during public meetings that expresses how a Project will, or will not, provide benefits to a community can be part of the decision-making process of the WASC as the question of “direct benefit” is settled.

WASC Tools and Strategies

The following strategies are available to the members of WASCs to assist in determining the appropriateness of each Project’s claim of providing, or not providing, benefits to members of disadvantaged communities:

Tools and strategies to evaluate Disadvantaged Community Benefits that WASC members can use during Project evaluation:

- The WASC can read the justification provided in the application and submitted Feasibility Study about Disadvantaged Community Benefits claimed for the Project.
- During presentations by Project proponents, the WASC members can ask questions about the Disadvantaged Community Benefits claimed for the Project.
- During the agendized Project Discussion period, any voting WASC member may suggest modifying the Disadvantaged Community Benefit designation of a Project in accordance with 18.07.B.2.c and the recommended criteria described above as part of a motion related to the formation of a SIP.
 - When modifying a Disadvantaged Community Benefit designation from NO to YES, where justification was therefore not provided in the Project Module application and submitted Feasibility Study, the WASC may consider the recommended criteria described herein and seek equivalent information to that solicited in the Project Module and otherwise as necessary.

Tools and strategies to evaluate Disadvantaged Community Benefits that WASC members can use at any time:

- WASCs can ask their Watershed Coordinator(s) to evaluate and report to the WASC how the people, city and county agencies, and other stakeholders would describe the preferred Disadvantaged Community Benefits in the Watershed Area.
- WASCs can invite informational presentations from agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders to better understand potential Disadvantaged Community Benefits sought and challenges faced in the Watershed Area.

Long-Term Vision for Disadvantaged Community Benefits

The District recognizes that, long-term, additional tools and engagement are needed to enhance efforts across the SCW Program to achieve benefits sought by those who live in, work in, and represent disadvantaged communities. While not appropriate to include within this Interim Guidance, the District anticipates pursuing additional activities and exploring further potential guidance in 2024.

- **Develop metrics for tracking and evaluating Disadvantaged Community Benefits:** As noted in the “Purpose” section, the District is facilitating the development of a study that will support future guidance related to both the planning and evaluation/monitoring of benefits within Disadvantaged Communities.
- **Evaluating and sharing accomplishments of Watershed Coordinators:** Watershed Coordinators are a key element within the SCW Program for ensuring communities are engaged and able to influence the Regional Program in each Watershed Area. Providing engagement opportunities, education, and technical assistance to members of disadvantaged communities will be fundamental to the watershed coordinators’ work. Future guidance will evaluate and share accomplishments from the watershed coordinators efforts.
- **Evaluating community support or opposition:** One element that is addressed generally in this Interim guidance is how the WASCs, the Scoring Committee, and the Regional Oversight Committee can rely on representations of community support or opposition as part of their decision-making. It is expected that future guidance will further describe how community support can additionally influence the SCW Program.
- **Assessment of “who benefits” from Projects in the Regional Program:** Both the disadvantaged community investment and the municipal return elements of the Regional Program require information about how a Project’s benefits are received by specified groups of people. The question of who benefits from a Project or its components is difficult to solve systematically because the characteristics of Projects are so varied. Within SCW Program context, asserting whether members of a disadvantaged community ultimately benefit from a Project remains a decision for the Board of Supervisors when they consider adopting a SIP as recommended by the WASCs and ROC.

Work is underway within the District to develop more tools for making these judgments, to support engagement, Project development, WASC deliberation, and quantification of achievement of the SCW Program ordinance goals and priorities around targeted funding and the accrual of benefits. The development of these tools includes further engagement opportunities and the resulting tools will support future guidance.

- **Further clarifying what constitutes a “community”:** The current policy, as described above, directs the consideration of Census Block Groups while acknowledging that the Regional Program is conceptually focused on Projects that provide regional benefits. This means that Projects can benefit multiple communities that are distant from the physical Project. When considering “disadvantaged communities” as the beneficiary of investments in the Regional Program, who and what constitutes a “community” requires additional guidance to be

developed in collaboration across multiple interested parties in the SCW Program. The alignment between scales – the scale of the Regional Program’s focus on Watershed Areas, the scale of community boundaries, and the scale of the benefit area of Projects – is expected to be explored further. Future guidance is intended to include efforts to bring more certainty for community members, elected leaders, municipal and county staff, Project proponents, and decision-making bodies inside SCW Program about how to judge or quantify the beneficiaries of a Project.

- **Revisiting inclusive language:** Multiple policies at the state and regional levels, including the SCW Program, use the term “disadvantaged community” to explain how aspects of the program are intended to provide enhanced or targeted support to communities that are low-income, pollution burdened, underserved, or historically and currently marginalized or underrepresented. Future guidance within the program may include incorporation of additional inclusive language that better captures the richness and complexity of these communities.
- **Strengthening anti-displacement policies:** The Regional Program Fund Transfer Agreement, when describing the Stakeholder and Community Outreach/Engagement Plan required of every signatory, refers to “activities and measures to mitigate against displacement and gentrification.” It also requires the plan to include commitments to comply with “any County-wide displacement policies” and “specific anti-displacement requirements associated with other funding sources.” The role of Projects in the SCW Program Regional Program to support anti-displacement is one that could be strengthened in future guidance, as the County and cities adopt additional practices and policies, and as additional policies are added to other funding programs.
- **Advancing workforce development:** The SCW Program has explicit goals to support workforce development. Chiefly, this is being carried out within the District Program, as an element of the broader Education Program, and is still early in its development. Many WASCs have considered, and heard public comment regarding, the role of Projects within the Regional Program providing workforce development and jobs that benefit all communities, but also specifically members of disadvantaged communities. Future guidance is expected to discuss the relationship between elements of the Regional Program and the workforce development within the District Program, and how those SCW Program elements could leverage benefits to members of disadvantaged communities.