

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



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Wednesday, February 1, 2023  
2:00pm - 4:00pm  
WebEx Meeting

## Committee Members Present:

Genevieve Osmena, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)  
\*Art Castro, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)  
\*John Huynh, LA Department of Water and Power (Agency)  
Ida Meisami-Fard, LA Sanitation & Environment (Agency)  
Cathie Santo Domingo, LA Recreation & Parks (Agency)  
Ernesto Pantoja, Laborers Local 300 (Community)  
Max Liles, Michael Baker International (Community)  
Veronica Padilla-Campos, Pacoima Beautiful (Community)  
Yazdan Emrani, Glendale (Municipal)  
Patrick DeChellis, La Cañada Flintridge (Municipal)  
Teresa Villegas, Los Angeles (Municipal), Chair  
Max Podemski, Los Angeles (Municipal), Vice-Chair  
Rafael Prieto, Los Angeles (Municipal)  
Mark Lombos, Los Angeles County (Municipal)  
Kenneth Jones, San Fernando (Municipal)  
Adi Liberman, Environmental Outreach Strategies (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)  
Jason Casanova, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)  
Carlos Moran, Council for Watershed Health (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

\*Committee Member Alternate

## Committee Members Not Present:

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

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

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## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

LA County Flood Control District (District) staff provided a brief WebEx tutorial in both English and Spanish and announced that the meeting was being broadcast live in Spanish. District staff welcomed Committee Members and called the meeting to order.

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

## **2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 11, 2023 and January 19, 2023**

Member Yazdan Emrani motioned to approve meeting minutes from both January 11, 2023 and January 19, 2023. Member Genevieve Osmena seconded the motion. The WASC approved the January 11, 2023 meeting minutes with 14 in favor and 0 opposed, and the January 19, 2023 meeting minutes with 13 in favor, 1 abstention, and 0 opposed (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

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### 3. Ex Parte Communication Disclosures

There were no ex parte communications.

### 4. Committee Member and District Updates

There were no updates from Committee Members.

District staff provided an update:

- On January 10, the Board of Supervisors (Board) voted to continue meeting virtually, acting under the authority of Assembly Bill 361 which authorizes public committees to meet without complying with all the teleconferencing requirements of the Brown Act when the situation warrants it. The Board is reviewing its position every 30 days. If the Board decides to no longer approve findings to continue teleconferencing meetings under AB 361 and there is still a State of Emergency in place, the WASC has the authority to make their own AB 361 findings. District staff will provide additional guidance if that occurs.
- The District released the Regional Program Process Funding Handbook (Handbook). The Handbook provides consolidated information on existing regional program requirements and guidance. The Handbook is available under the Regional Program Call for Projects tab on the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) website ([safecleanwaterla.org](https://safecleanwaterla.org)).
- Emails have been sent to the project developers for Funds Transfer Agreements and Funds Transfer Agreement addendums for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (FY 22-23) Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs) fund disbursements.
- Quarterly Reports for FY22-23 covering October to December of 2022 activities are due February 15, 2023 for Round 1 and Round 2 Infrastructure Program (IP) Projects and Scientific Studies (SS). Regional Quarterly Reports must be completed even if there was no activity done on the project and if the transfer agreements have not yet been executed. To view Quarterly Reports, visit the [SCW Portal](#) Dashboard, select a project, then select Project Reports.
- Annual Plans for Municipal Programs are due April 1, 2023.
- WASC Stakeholder seats are up for reappointment August 2023, under Article 4, Section 5 of the WASC operating guidelines. Individuals interested in serving as a Community Stakeholder should submit the Interest to Serve Form, [available here](#).
- Attending meetings regularly is a requirement for WASC members under Article 5 of the WASC Operating Guidelines. An absence of two consecutive meetings or more than five meetings in one year will be considered failure to attend meetings and may result in the absentee member's removal from the WASC. If attendance by the primary member is not possible for a particular meeting, it is requested that the Alternate member be present at the meeting.

The Committee asked for clarification on the return of in-person WASC meetings. District staff shared that as of February 28, 2023, the State of Emergency for COVID-19 will end, and they have secured meeting venues through June of 2023. District staff added that the meetings will mostly be in the Los Angeles County Public Works headquarters building at 900 S Fremont Ave, Alhambra, CA 91803. District staff noted that hybrid options may be available for project developers and other constituents, but that Committee Members are highly recommended to attend in person. More details will be shared with the WASC and posted on the [ULAR WASC webpage](#) as they become available.

Member Veronica Padilla-Campos asked District staff if there is still opportunity to provide recommendations for the SCWP website, and District staff confirmed. Recommendations can be provided to [SafeCleanWaterLA@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:SafeCleanWaterLA@pw.lacounty.gov).

### 5. Watershed Coordinator Updates

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Watershed Coordinator Adi Liberman updated the Committee on past and upcoming events. See slides available on the SCWP website for details.

On March 1, 2023, the Watershed Coordinators will participate at the Los Angeles Business Council meeting, followed by a water resiliency workshop for the Los Angeles Federation of Businesses on March 24, 2023.

The Watershed Coordinators received a lot of engagement with the newsletter they recently distributed. The WASC is encouraged to pass along the newsletter to others who may benefit from its content.

Recently, ULAR Watershed Coordinators:

- Coordinated with other Watershed Coordinators to discuss interdisciplinary water topics at their monthly Watershed Coordinator gatherings, which recently included a robust conversation on homelessness and stormwater in Los Angeles.
- Presented for the Local Resident Water Committee by East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice and shared information to the Water Committee on local projects that are funded by SCWP.
- Met with Altadena Action Now to engage residents interested in green infrastructure, green streets, and water supply (February 1, 2023)
- Met with Black Thumb Farm in Panorama City (February 2, 2023)

On the topic of past and upcoming site visits, ULAR Watershed Coordinators shared:

- The City of San Fernando Valley conducted a tour at Rudy Ortega Park, where educational opportunities through SCWP were shared with participants.
- February 6, 2023: ULAR Watershed Coordinators will host a site tour in East Los Angeles Park with the non-profit Legacy LA.
- The ULAR Watershed Coordinators will co-host a Magic Johnson Park site tour with Los Angeles County Public Works, the Park Equity Alliance, and other community-based organizations.
- In the Spring, tours will be held for regional projects like the Tujunga Spreading Grounds, Rory M. Shaw, and South Los Angeles projects.

Watershed Coordinator Moran encouraged the WASC to let the Watershed Coordinators know if any ideas arise for other site tours.

## 6. Public Comment Period

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

Kelsey Jessup (The Nature Conservancy) provided a public comment card regarding the Bowtie Demonstration Project. Jessup mentioned that the project application document and public comment card were submitted prior to deciding that additional surveys were not necessary for the project. Jessup shared that members of the community have communicated to their team that they feel burdened by the quantity of surveys and requests for providing information. Jessup mentioned that this input is relevant to Agenda Item 7.a.ii.

## 7. Presentations and Discussion Items

### a. Infrastructure Program (IP) Project Presentations ([SCW Portal](#))

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i. Arroyo Seco Projects  
*Presentation by City of South Pasadena*

Ted Gerber (Public Works Director, City of South Pasadena) and Jon Abelson (Consultant, Stantec) shared a presentation about the project. The three regional stormwater capture and treatment facilities aim to treat both wet and dry weather runoff within an open space near the Arroyo Seco Channel in South Pasadena. The project has received TRP funds in the past.

The Committee asked if technical and/or feasibility studies have been conducted yet. Abelson confirmed that analyses were conducted to ensure site feasibility and added that the pre-existing water system will not be altered, but flows may be higher due to increased runoff.

Member Max Liles asked for the reasoning behind submitting a single application for all the Arroyo Seco Projects as opposed to submitting three separate project applications. The applicants explained that the sites are interconnected through the water infrastructure system, so it made sense to apply for funding as one project.

Member Padilla-Campos requested more information about the golf course on the project's site, and Gerber shared that the golf course is city-owned and available to the public, meaning that it is open for use to neighbors and local community groups.

Chair Teresa Villegas asked for clarification on the project funding request after the first two years of funding. The project applicants shared that additional funding will be sought out in the third and fourth years of project implementation.

ii. Bowtie Demonstration Project (Updated)  
*Presentation by The Nature Conservancy*

Kelsey Jessup (Urban Conservation Project Director, The Nature Conservancy) presented on the project. Jon Abelson (Consultant, Stantec) was available to answer questions for this presentation. The project aims to implement a multi-benefit stormwater management and habitat enhancement project along the Los Angeles River.

The Committee asked the project applicants about the permits required for developing habitat on the parcel, and if permitting processes are already under way. Jessup noted that the site is operated by California State Parks, meaning that ongoing maintenance will be a collaborative effort. Abelson added that since water will be used for irrigation, they will be coordinating with LA County Department of Public Health. The project applicants shared that since the wetland will be constructed rather than naturally occurring, it is not covered by certain protections and the CEQA process will confirm this. Jessup also noted that LA Department of Water and Power has an easement near the site and conversations are underway with related parties to fulfill NEPA requirements with the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Committee also discussed site design and its access to neighborhood residents. The project applicants highlighted that California State Parks will be designing and developing clear entryways to the site.

iii. Emerald Necklace John Muir High School Campus Natural Infrastructure Improvement Project  
*Presentation by Claire Robinson, Amigos de los Rios*

Claire Robinson (Project Applicant, Amigos de los Rios) and Mike Rudd (Consultant, Geosyntec) presented the project. The project will provide campus and neighborhood stormwater management, drainage, and public health benefits by integrating nature-based infrastructure on a school campus.

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Member Osmena asked if the school currently has any flood-prone areas and whether the school itself will be taking on the operations and maintenance long-term. Robinson confirmed that the school does experience nuisance flooding because it is a large campus. Robinson added that long-term care of the facilities will be split between Amigos de los Rios and the school, and Amigos de los Rios will oversee the dry well. Robinson added that they would apply for more SCWP funds after the first 5 years of project implementation.

Member Mark Lombos asked if the volume of water captured on-site versus off-site has been quantified, and Rudd shared that the specified numbers should be noted in the feasibility study documents.

Member Ernesto Pantoja asked if the project will be built under a Project Labor Agreement and whether local community members will have the opportunity to work on the project and potentially build a green career from those opportunities. The project applicants shared that they hope to work closely with State and local Conservation Corps teams to include youth and career mentors in green career development. Robinson also added that maintenance and care of the nature-based solutions will be conducted through collaborative events between Amigos de los Rios and Pasadena Unified School District, providing opportunities for students and community members from different campuses to come together.

The slides can be found on the SCWP website.

## **8. Public Comment Period**

There were no additional public comments.

## **9. Voting Items**

There were no voting items.

## **10. Items for Next Agenda**

District staff shared that the [SIP Tool](#) is ready to use and reminded the Committee that the February 16, 2023 meeting will cover an introduction to the tool if time permits. The following meeting will cover SIP deliberations. Agenda items include:

- a) Findings to Continue Teleconference Meetings under Assembly Bill 361 (if needed)
- b) Selection of the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Coordinators for the next term
- c) Regional Program Quarterly Reporting Summary FY2021-22 Q3 and Q4
- d) preSIP: A Platform for Watershed Science and Project Collaboration Update (Presentation by San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments) for the Round 1 preSIP Scientific Study

## **11. Adjournment**

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

**Upper Los Angeles River - February 1, 2023**

		Quorum Present				Voting Items	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 1-11-2023 Meeting Minutes	Approve 1-19-2023 Meeting Minutes
Agency	FCD	Genevieve Osmena	X	Ramy Gindi		Y	Y
Agency	Water Agency	Delon Kwan		Art Castro	X	Y	Y
Agency	Groundwater / Water Agency 2	Jesus Gonzalez		John Huynh	X	Y	Y
Agency	Sanitation	Ida Meisami-Fard	X	Alfredo Magallanes		Y	Y
Agency	Open Space	Cathie Santo Domingo	X	Javier Solis		Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Ernesto Pantoja	X	Sergio Rascon		Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	At Large	Miguel Luna		Yvette Lopez-Ledesma			
Community Stakeholder	Environment	John Luker		Wendi Gladstone			
Community Stakeholder	Business	Max Liles	X			Y	Y
Community Stakeholder	EJ	Veronica Padilla-Campos	X	Felipe Escobar		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Glendale / Pasadena	Yazdan Emrani	X	Kris Markarian		Y	Y
Municipal Members	La Cañada Flintridge / South Pasadena	Patrick DeChellis	X	Ted Gerber		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Teresa Villegas	X	Barbara Romero		Y	Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Max Podemski	X			Y	Y
Municipal Members	Los Angeles	Rafael Prieto	X				
Municipal Members	Los Angeles County	Mark Lombos	X	Thuan Nguyen		Y	A
Municipal Members	San Fernando / Calabasas	Kenneth Jones	X	Alex Farassati		Y	Y
Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)	Environmental Outreach Strategies	Adi Liberman	X				
Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)	Council for Watershed Health	Jason Casanova	X	Clarasophia Gust			
Watershed Coordinator (Non-Voting Member)	Council for Watershed Health	Carlos Moran	X				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	14	13
Total Voting Members Present		15			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	0	1
Community Stakeholder		3			Total	14	14
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

## Attendees

### Upper Los Angeles River WASC Meeting - February 1, 2023

Haris Harouny - LACFCD  
john huynh  
Jessica Medina  
Alyson Mello  
Jennifer Amarant  
Alba Lemus  
Noor Al Riyami  
Pablo Forni  
Yvana H  
Genevieve Osmena  
Jon Abelson  
MARISOL IBARRA  
brett perry  
Carlos Moran  
Darin Son  
Julie Allen  
Yaz Emrani  
Craig Doberstein  
Hayat Rasul

Brianne Logasa  
Cas, CWH  
Jason Casanova  
Kara Plourde  
Lidia Rivera  
Merrill Taylor  
Tim Brick  
Caleb Grimes  
Max Liles  
Paige Bistromowitz  
Peter Tonthat  
Luis Garcia  
H. Ted Gerber  
Lorena Matos  
Alonso Garcia  
Ida Meisami (LASAN)  
Mike Rudd  
Art Castro  
claire robinson

Ryanna Fossum  
Kelsey Jessup  
Mark Lombos  
kristina leyva  
max podemski  
gabriela gonzalez  
Kenneth Jones  
Justin Jones - LACFCD  
Mayra Martinez  
Susie Santilena  
Patrick DeChellis  
Rafael Piamonte  
Veronica Padilla  
Adi Liberman  
Thuan Nguyen  
Mayra Cabrera - LACFCD  
David Hwang  
Jenny Chau  
Maggie Gardner

Mike Scaduto  
Brian Baldauf  
Dawn Petschauer  
Conor Mossavi  
William OBraitis  
Mark Nguyen  
Cathie Santo Domingo  
Teresa Villegas  
Jeannette Hernandez  
Rafael Prieto  
Mike Antos (Regional Coordination)  
Gurjot Kohli  
Ernesto Pantoja  
Sarai Bhaga  
Nathan Schreiner  
Amanda Begley