

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



Tuesday, February 28, 2023
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
WebEx Meeting

Committee Members Present:

*Madeline Chen, Central Basin (Agency)
*Asha Kreiling, Water Replenishment District (Agency)
Stephen Scott, City of Long Beach Parks and Recreation (Agency)
*Alysha Chan, LA County Sanitation Districts (Agency)
Ernesto Rivera, LA County Flood Control District (Agency)
Irene Lopez-Muro, Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Community)
*Melissa Bahmanpour, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (Community)
*Manny Gonez, TreePeople (Community)
*Dylan Porter, Port of Long Beach (Community)
Erica Maceda, River in Action (Community)
Gina Nila, Commerce (Municipal), Chair
Dan Mueller, Downey (Municipal)
Melissa You, Long Beach (Municipal), Vice-Chair
Julian Lee, Lynwood (Municipal)
Adriana Figueroa, Paramount (Municipal)
Gladis Deras, South Gate (Municipal)
Thuan Nguyen, Los Angeles County (Municipal)
Tara Dales, SGA (Watershed Coordinator, non-voting member)

*Committee Member Alternate

Committee Members Not Present:

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

District staff and Gina Nila, Chair of the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC), welcomed all Committee Members.

District staff conducted a brief tutorial on WebEx, provided an overview of meeting guidelines and participation instructions, and facilitated the roll call of Committee Members. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 24, 2023

District staff presented the minutes from the previous meeting. Member Adriana Figueroa motioned to approve, seconded by Member Manny Gonez. The Committee voted to approve the January 24, 2023 meeting minutes, with 17 votes in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 in abstention (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

3. Committee Member and District Updates

District staff provided an update, noting:

- On February 7, 2023, the Board of Supervisors (Board) voted to continue meeting virtually, acting under the authority of Assembly Bill (AB) 361 which authorizes public committees to meet without complying with all the teleconferencing requirements of the Brown Act when the situation warrants it.

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- On October 17, 2022, Governor Newsom announced that the State of Emergency would be lifted February 28, 2023. Today, February 28, 2023, the Board of Supervisors will vote on whether to extend AB 361. However, if the State of Emergency ends, there are no grounds to extend AB 361.
- The District released the Regional Program Process Funding Handbook (Handbook) which 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.
- The District has started to execute Round 3 transfer agreements and addendums and distribute funds to new and continuing projects included in the fiscal year. Details have been sent to the project developers.
- Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (FY22-23) Quarter 2 (Q2) reports were due on February 15. Quarterly reports are still required by project developers even if there is no project activity and if the transfer agreement has not been executed. Reports received to date can be viewed on the SCWP Portal Dashboard on the website.
- Annual reports for FY21-22 for projects and studies funded in Round 1 and Round 2 Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs) were due on December 31, 2022. There are a few projects that are still outstanding.
- Under the Municipal Program, Municipal Annual Reports were due on December 31, 2022 and Municipal Annual Plans are due on April 1, 2023.
- It is important for the WASC and the work of the Regional Program to remain transparent and fair. These principles are built into the SCWP and are represented by the ex parte disclosure item on each agenda. WASC members whose job connects them to specific projects should ask colleagues or consultants to attend WASC meetings to share about, or advocate for those projects during SIP deliberations and should avoid using their position as WASC members to advocate for projects from their home entities.
- District staff shared an update on how WASC meetings will be conducted after the State of Emergency for California ends. The presentation is available on the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) website and includes information regarding future teleconferencing requirements. This WASC's in-person meeting location will be Progress Park in the City of Paramount. WebEx teleconferencing will be used for any future hybrid meetings.

4. Watershed Coordinator Updates

Watershed Coordinator Tara Dales gave an update, noting that project catchment areas are now displayed on the Spatial Data Library available on the SCWP website. Additionally, Watershed Coordinator Dales gave an overview of the 2022 Interim Guidance and shared that the guidelines can be used when reviewing Round 3 projects, particularly to help strengthen community engagement and support, as well as implement disadvantaged community policies in the Regional Program.

Watershed Coordinator Dales also provided an overview of the Infrastructure Program (IP) projects under consideration: Spang Park and Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment (LB MUST). The project overview for each included a summary on claimed benefits to disadvantaged communities and a community engagement summary.

See slides available on the SCWP website and attached.

5. Public Comment Period

District staff compiled all public comment cards received by 5:00pm the day before the meeting. No comment cards were received before the meeting.

There were no public comments.

6. Discussion Items

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a. Ex Parte Communication Disclosure

Member Figueroa shared about a recent call with Member Gonez to get updates on recent projects, including Spane Park and Ground Truth: Guiding a Soils-Based Strategy.

Member Gonez shared the same disclosure and apologized for missing the last meeting.

b. Gateway Area Pathfinding (GAP) Analysis Phase 1 Final Tech Memo Presentation.

Brad Wardynski (Craftwater Engineering, Inc.) gave a presentation on the Gateway Area Pathfinding (GAP) Analysis Phase 1 Final Tech Memo (hereafter referred to as Final Tech Memo). Wardynski reminded the WASC that the goal of the study is to compile a library of known project opportunities throughout the Lower Los Angeles River and Lower San Gabriel River Watershed Areas, find potential project opportunities, and analyze these projects in relation to one another. For the purposes of the study, the team used only publicly available information and data.

Wardynski noted that Phase 1 of the study was meant to pilot-test the approach and Phase 2 will start once the transfer agreement is finalized. For Phase 1, the team first developed the project inventory, distinguishing the projects by their status (what has been funded, what has been submitted for evaluation, and what are potential opportunities). In addition to the regional opportunities, the study also started to identify projects with the potential for nature-based solutions. With the inventory in place, the team ran various watershed models to understand the treated runoff for these projects, looking specifically at zinc reduction and bioretention opportunities, and noting areas where more pollutant load is being managed. The model has been able to depict how projects operate as an overall system, instead of individual performance. With that, the team has started to contextualize Round 4 projects and to think about all the projects as a collective. It should be noted that although the projects under evaluation in this WASC are included in the analysis, the model results for such projects should be viewed as supplementary information. The study focuses on water quality and volume capture and does not include other community benefits and components that have been identified for each project.

The dashboard is publicly available on the Gateway Water Management Website. Wardynski explained how the map shows existing projects, differentiating between those that have been funded by SCWP and those that have been submitted for evaluation, and potential project opportunities. Wardynski will continue to give updates on this work in future meetings.

c. Summary of Scientific Studies from the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP).

[i. Ground Truth: Guiding a Soils-Based Strategy for Impactful Nature-Based Solutions](#)

District Staff reminded the WASC that this is an opportunity to ask questions to the applicant and get clarification to help make an informed decision as to whether to fund this scientific study and include it in the SIP.

Dustin Hermann (Tree People) expressed appreciation for the reviews received on Ground Truth: Guiding a Soils-Based Strategy for Impactful Nature-Based Solutions and highlighted a few questions that were raised about the modeling approaches. Additionally, there was a comment about how the soil systems might lose performance over time. Hermann noted that because of the way they are designed, these systems should only increase performance over time. It is possible that this scientific study leads to the development of a large demonstration study, which would provide the opportunity to monitor the systems' performance over a specific time period.

d. Project Updates from Previously Funded Projects

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i. Regional Program Quarterly Report Summary for FY 21-22, Q3 and Q4.

District Staff highlighted activity concerns for the John Anson Ford Park Infiltration Cistern and the Lynwood City Park Stormwater Capture Project, as well as exhibit A modifications for Spane Park. Representatives for each project were invited to this meeting to elaborate on the flagged items.

In the absence of a representative for the John Anson Ford Park Infiltration Cistern, District Staff noted that the construction of the cistern was delayed due to deficiencies and damage to the precast modules. Work on the installation stopped in December 2021 and a repair plan was approved. The repair work began on March 8, 2022 and the project was tentatively estimated to be completed by November 30, 2022. Because this project has received all its funding per the transfer agreement, the project team is required to continue to submit quarterly reports. It was noted that this report is from Q4 of FY 21-22.

Member Figueroa said the activity reported is about a year old and asked if there was more recent information. District Staff noted that there have been no verbal updates about the projects, but there are more recently submitted quarterly reports. Although it would be ideal to show the most recent quarterly reports at every WASC meeting, District Staff lack the capacity to do so. However, District Staff said they would review John Anson Park Infiltration Cistern's most recent quarterly report before the next WASC meeting.

Member Melissa Bahmanpour raised a question about Lynwood City Park Stormwater Capture Project and why the report showed the expenditure to date as \$0. Oliver Galang (Craftwater Engineering, Inc.) responded that the project funding was just recently awarded, so expenditures will be shown in the next quarterly report.

District Staff noted that there were modifications made to the budget plan, work schedule, and completion date for Spane Park. John Hunter (John L. Hunter and Associates) explained that during a previous meeting, Hunter had mentioned the possibility of requesting less funds, as the budget had decreased. Hunter explained that because of the difficulty associated with requesting this modification, the team is requesting the original amount. If there are any discrepancies in construction costs in the future, those will be properly addressed with SCWP Staff. District Staff clarified that the modifications highlighted in the quarterly report are referencing the design phase of the project, not the construction phase. Hunter explained that the design is taking longer than anticipated, but the project is still on track regarding the timeline. If there are any further issues, Hunter assured to have those resolved by the next meeting.

ii. Project Updates and Budget Confirmation for Projects with Continued Funding Requests.

District Staff showed that the SIP Tool depicts an overallocation of funds of more than 100% for Fiscal Year (FY) 24-25 and FY 25-26 if all considered projects are included. District Staff reached out to project developers to evaluate the possibility of reallocating funds to other fiscal years, without changing the total amount. Project developers for the Salt Lake Infiltration Cistern Infrastructure Project requested to modify their funding allocation prior to this meeting and District Staff created a funding scenario to reflect that. Additionally, project developers for Spane Park will submit any budget adjustments after completing the bid process. Hunter confirmed that the process is ongoing but has nothing to add at this time.

District Staff reminded the WASC that funding allocations can be readjusted for any of the projects to be under the 100% threshold. Member Dan Mueller shared that Apollo Park Stormwater Capture Project is currently close to the 60% level of design. Member Mueller also commented on the construction timeline for the Furman Park Stormwater Capture and Infiltration Project. Member Mueller noted that spreading the funds further out can have negative repercussions, as it would mean that the construction phase would be extended, and the community would have a closed park for a long time.

For clarification purposes, District Staff reminded the WASC that after funds are received, project developers have 5 years to spend them. Additionally, the disbursement of the funds for FY 23-24 will most likely happen in January or February of 2024. This timeframe of fund disbursement is applicable to all fiscal

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years. District Staff is working on expediting the process, but that is the current timeline that project developers should consider as they think through possible funding reallocations.

Member Figueroa suggested moving some of the funds from FY 24-25 to FY 23-24, since this year's percent-allocated is at 84%. Since project developers have five years to spend the funds from the time they are received, reallocating the funds for an earlier FY should not have negative repercussions on the timeline of the projects. Chair Nila noted that this WASC has attempted to keep the percent-allocated in the 80%-range but understands the concern about keeping parks disrupted for several years if construction is spread out because of funding reallocation.

Hunter and Galang mentioned that the pending budget adjustments for Spane Park may be a reduction of about \$4,000,000.

Watershed Coordinator Dales asked applicants if there are any other funding sources that they started to investigate since submitting the application. There were no further comments.

- e. **Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) Project Prioritization and Selection Discussion for populating the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Stormwater Investment Plan.** [SCW Portal](#) & [LLAR Scoring Rubric](#)
 - i. **Infrastructure Program (IP)**
 - (1) [Spane Park](#)
 - (2) [Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment \(LB MUST\) – Phase 2](#)
 - ii. **Scientific Studies Program (SS)**
 - (1) [Ground Truth: Guiding a Soils-Based Strategy for Impactful Nature-Based Solutions](#)

District Staff showed the results of the ranking tool for the three projects under this WASC: Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment (LB MUST) Infrastructure Project, Spane Park Infrastructure Project, and Ground Truth: Guiding a Soils-Based Strategy for Impactful Nature-Based Solutions Scientific Study.

District Staff restated the issue of overall funding allocation for FY 24-25 and FY 25-26 and clarified that this includes all projects considered but does not include anticipated construction costs. There are several projects that were funded for the design phase that are expected to come back to the WASC to ask for additional funding for the construction phase.

Member Thuan Nguyen inquired about the status of Spane Park in relation to the timeline for construction. Hunter reiterated the concerns about extending the construction phase through several years if funds were to be reallocated from FY 24-25 to a future year.

Collin Averill (City of Long Beach) noted that LB MUST is scheduled to complete construction of Phase 2 during FY 26-27, but there is some flexibility in the allocation of funds for FY 24-25 and possibly FY 25-26. Averill agreed to move \$500,000 from FY 24-25 and \$500,000 from FY 25-26 to FY 26-27.

As Hunter and Galang had mentioned, the pending budget adjustments for Spane Park will likely result in a reduction of \$4,000,000. To be conservative, District Staff reallocated \$1,000,000 from FY 24-25 and \$1,000,000 from FY 25-26 to FY 26-27. Upon inquiry, District Staff explained that if costs exceed funds during a FY, the project developers can reimburse themselves with the funds received in the next FY, if it is not over the total funding allocated to the project.

Member Mueller shared that the Furman Park Stormwater Capture and Infiltration Project is scheduled to start construction in the spring of FY 24-25. Additionally, the project's construction could be phased, in which case construction could start early with the fully designed parts. Based on this timeline, Member Mueller agreed to move \$1,000,000 from FY 24-25 to FY 23-24.

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Hermann shared with the WASC that although the funding allocated to the Ground Truth: Guiding a Soils-Based Strategy for Impactful Nature-Based Solutions Scientific Study is small compared to the other projects, the program does have flexibility in moving funding from FY 24-25 to future years.

Hunter mentioned that the team has applied for federal funding through the California Department of Transportation. Although the process is ongoing, it is anticipated that \$1,500,000 – \$2,000,000 will become available for Spane Park. Therefore, the budget reduction can be larger than the conservative change implemented in the budget scenario. An additional \$500,000 was removed from both FY 24-25 and FY 25-26, and \$1,000,000 was added to FY 26-27.

To summarize, District Staff made the following reallocations:

- LB MUST: remove \$500,000 from FY 24-25 and \$500,000 from FY 25-26 and add \$1,000,000 to FY 26-27.
- Spane Park: remove \$1,500,000 from FY 24-25 and \$1,500,000 from FY 25-26 and add \$3,000,000 to FY 26-27, with the understanding that it is possible that the budget may be further reduced in the future years.
- Furman Park Stormwater Capture and Infiltration Project: remove \$1,000,000 from FY 24-25 and add \$1,000,000 to FY 23-24

These reallocations result in the following percent allocations: 91% for FY 23-24, 93% for FY 24-25, 83% for FY 25-26, and 60% for FY 26-27. District Staff reiterated that these percentages include funding reallocations for all considered projects, but not any anticipated construction costs.

7. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

8. Voting Items

- a. **Approve the final Fiscal Year 2023-24 Stormwater Investment Plan funding recommendations for the LLAR Watershed Area and approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee for review.**

Member Nguyen motioned to approve the final FY 23-24 SIP for LLAR Watershed Area including SGA Marketing as Watershed Coordinator and to approve submission to the Regional Oversight Committee (ROC) for review. Chair Nila seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the motion with 16 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 in abstention, and 1 member absent at the time of vote (approved, see vote tracking sheet).

9. Items for Next Agenda

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 28, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. and would be held in person at the Progress Park in the City of Paramount. District Staff will inform the WASC if there is no reason to meet, depending on when the ROC meets and the resulting review of the SIP.

10. Adjournment

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

LLAR WASC - February 28th, 2023

		Quorum Present				Voting Items	
Member Type	Position	Member	Voting/ Present?	Alternate	Voting/ Present?	Approve 01-24-2023 Meeting Minutes	Approve the "Final Scenario" for Fiscal Year 2023-24 Stormwater Investment Plan for LLAR Watershed Area including SGA Marketing as Watershed Coordinator, and approve submission to the ROC for review
Agency	District	Ernesto Rivera	x	Ramy Gindi		y	y
Agency	Central Basin	Alex Rojas		Madeline Chen	x	y	y
Agency	Water Replenishment District	Rob Beste		Asha Kreiling	x	y	
Agency	LA County Sanitation Districts	Kristen Ruffell		Alysha Chan	x	y	y
Agency	City of Long Beach Parks & Recreation	Stephen Scott	x	Nancy Villasenor		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Conservation Corps of Long Beach	Irene Lopez-Muro	x	Isabelle Campiformio		y	y
Community Stakeholder	Rivers & Mountains Conservancy	Mark Stanley		Melissa Bahmanpour	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	TreePeople	Cindy Montanez		Manny Gonez	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	Port of Long Beach	James Vernon		Dylan Porter	x	y	y
Community Stakeholder	River in Action	Erica Maceda	x			y	y
Municipal Members	City of Commerce	Gina Nila*	x	Thomas Bekele		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Downey	Dan Mueller	x	Delfino Consunji		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Long Beach	Melissa You**	x	Cecilia Salazar		y	y
Municipal Members	City of Lynwood	Julian Lee	x			y	y
Municipal Members	City of Paramount	Adriana Figueroa	x	Sarah Ho		y	y
Municipal Members	County of Los Angeles	Thuan Nguyen	x	Fred Gonzalez		y	y
Municipal Members	City of South Gate	Gladis Deras	x			y	y
Watershed Coordinator							
Non-Voting Member	SGA Marketing	Tara Dales	x				
Total Non-Vacant Seats		17			Yes (Y)	17	16
Total Voting Members Present		17			No (N)	0	0
Agency		5			Abstain (A)	0	0
Community Stakeholder		5			Total	17	16
Municipal Members		7				Approved	Approved

Attendees
Lower Los Angeles River WASC Meeting
February 28, 2023

Adriana Figueroa	Ernesto Rivera	Manny Gonez
Alysha Chan	Fred Gonzalez	Melania Gaboyan
Amanda Begley	Gina Nila	Melissa Bahmanpour
Andrea Prado Iriarte	Gladis Deras	Melissa You
Andrew Gray	Haley Johnson	Michelle Kim
Aric Martinez	Haris Harouny - LACFCD	Nancy Gardiner
Arturo Gonzalez	Hoori Ajami	Nathan Schreiner
Asha Kreiling	Hugo Garcia	Oliver Galang
Brad Wardynski	Irene Lopez-Muro	Oliver Galang (Craftwater)
Cecilia Salazar	Jacqueline Mak	Patrick Kelley
Cesar Roldan	Jenny Chau	Ryanna Fossum (Regional Coordinator)
Colin Averill	john hunter	Safe Clean Water LA
Dan Mueller	Julian Lee	Shea Thornbury
Daniel Hirmas	Julio Soria	Stephen Scott
Dustin Herrmann (TreePeople)	Justin Jones - LACFCD	Tara Dales Watershed Coordinator
Dylan Porter	Kirk Allen	Thuan Nguyen
emily tyrer	Larry Tran	Video user
Erica Maceda	MADELINE CHEN	