

**LOS ANGELES RIVER FLOWS
Stakeholder Working Group (SWG)
Meeting #3**

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2020
Location: Webinar
Time: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

MEETING NOTES SUMMARY

Attendees:

- *See Attendee List*
- Project Team (Staff and Consultants)
 - Jonathan Bishop, State Water Board
 - Lori Webber, State Water Board
 - Tatyana Isupov, State Water Board
 - Jenny Newman, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
 - Lisa Beutler, Stantec
 - Gilberto Ruiz, Stantec
 - Kris Taniguchi-Quan, PhD, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
 - Eric Stein, PhD, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project

Action Items

#	ITEM	OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1.	Review options and provide additional written materials for SWG members	Lori Webber Lisa Beutler	30 Days
2.	Determine when fourth and final meeting should occur	Project Team	60 Days
3.	Provide input on the Project Summary Fact Sheet and FAQs	SWG Members	30 Days
4.	Identify and implement options for Spanish translation of key outreach materials	Project Team	90 Days
5.	Prepare a survey/poll on how to stay in touch for the next meeting before the modeling, etc. is completed.	Project Team	60 Days
6.	Complete a survey/poll on how to stay in touch for the next meeting before the modeling, etc. is completed.	SWG Members	90 Days

Major Themes/Topics:

- Stakeholder Working Group Charter review
- Outreach Activities to Date
- Technical Work to Date
 - Habitat Modeling
 - Scenario Analysis
 - Summary of Recreational Use Study and Report
- Outreach to SWG constituents
- Next steps

Presentations: See PowerPoint presentation

Recordings: See recording of meeting

ORDER OF BUSINESS

9:30 AM

Welcome & Greetings

- The Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) members were welcomed by Jenny Newman and Lori Webber. Lisa Beutler provided the safety moment and also discussed meeting logistics.

Introductions and Agenda Review

- Lisa Beutler provided an overview of agenda, the SWG members on-line and participating in the meeting, an introduction of staff facilitating the meeting, and information on how to work the webinar control panel.

Review of Charter

- Lisa Beutler provided an overview of the group's Charter related to expectations for the meeting.

Group Feedback on Outreach Activities to Date

- SWG members were asked to provide feedback on their outreach activities to date. It was noted that COVID-19 has affected all state and local agencies and has made outreach efforts difficult. It was suggested an alternative to obtaining insight might be the use of Survey Monkey. SWG members were reminded of the importance of outreach in the process and if they are doing outreach to please share the two-page project information sheet and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) with their constituents, as part of their outreach/feedback efforts. In addition, SWG members were also asked to share if there are specific topics that should be addressed and to share these with the Water Boards.
- **Action Item:** Lori Webber agreed to follow-up with the project team and review options for updating existing or developing new written materials for SWG members.

Overview of Technical Work to Date

- Lori Webber relayed this was the third of four SWG meetings planned over a two-year period (2018 through 2020), with the fourth meeting date to be jointly determined with the SWG members. She also quickly restated the composition of the group members (e.g., public, private, Non-governmental organizations, interested parties) in the SWG. Ms. Webber also explained that the project was initiated to address the following:
 - Dry weather flows are primarily from wastewater treatment plants who plan to recycle this water, which could affect recreation and aquatic and terrestrial species
 - Need to determine potential impacts to beneficial uses
 - What are potential impacts (both positive and negative)
 - Develop technical tools to understand potential effects of different flow scenarios
 - Apply these tools to the flow management
 - Engage stakeholders for feedback on technical tools

- An overview of the five project activities (see presentation slide) was provided. Lori noted that a Water Board action once the technical work has been completed will be undertaken, but that the action has not been defined at this point. She also stated that outreach would continue to the SWG, once the technical work has been completed and the project is turned over to Water Board staff for follow-up action.
- Jonathan Bishop shared that this is an important project to the Board and that they are seeking to balance needs and use science to make informed decisions about the flows. Jenny Newman noted the importance of receiving local stakeholder input in making determinations.
- **Action Item:** Determine when fourth and final meeting should occur.
- **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Overview (Members and Role)**
 - Eric Stein summarized materials and findings present to the TAC at their last meeting and reviewed the recommendations that resulted. He also noted the State Water Board maintains a website with all of the TAC and SWG information included (e.g., meeting minutes, FAQ).
 - Eric also provided an overview of the TAC's role and its relationship to the SWG. He explained there is some overlap between the two groups, although the TAC focuses on technical details, including species life history characterization, modeling, and other technical information, including data sources, interpretation, refinements, etc., while the SWG's role is to connect with community groups and decision makers, review and provide feedback for the technical team, indicate implications of the work and any assumptions, and relay the information in a way that can be contextualized and readily understood by these groups.
- **Overview of TAC Work**
 - Kris Taniguchi-Quan provided an overview of the TAC work to date (see presentation slide). She indicated one TAC webinar has been held, but more are to come. To date, the work has included the following:
 - Completed Non-Aquatic Life Use Study
 - Identified Focal Habitat Species
 - Habitat Map by Reach
 - Physical Watershed Models
 - Analysis of Key Reaches (10 in Los Angeles River Mainstream, 2 in Rio Hondo and 1 in Compton Creek)
 - Focus is within the mainstem of Los Angeles River, not in the adjacent area above the banks
 - Kris also provided a summary from last meeting indicating the habitat modeling's intended use is to understand conditions to support species and assess future scenarios of flows and how species are affected. In addition, hydrology, hydraulic, and water quality modeling (developed by the Colorado School of Mines) is addressing depth, flow

rate, pollutant loading, temperature, etc. with calibration underway for different reaches of the Los Angeles River.

- Question from SWG: Is the study using the California Environmental Flow Framework?
- Answer: Kris and Eric replied the framework will be applied and that the Los Angeles River is an important case study of how the framework can be applied in a Southern California urban watershed with large contributions from wastewater discharge.

- **Habitat Modeling**

- Kris provided the SWG members with an overview of the habitat modeling and indicated an extensive literature review and consultation with technical experts has occurred. In addition, she noted that the modeling will be refined over time in consultation with the TAC. As an example, she noted the model can be used to address such focal species as the Santa Ana sucker and black willow. The intent is to have a Conceptual Habitat Model which takes a wholistic approach to the system and understand what reaches of the Los Angeles River will support which species and what might be the limiting factors. Detailed modeling will then be used to assess suitability for specific life stages of each focal species. For example, the “Willow Model” which begins with pre-germination and adult stages will identify critical periods for life cycles and conditions for survival. This will be accomplished by developing response curves as a tool to assess suitability (e.g., temperature, flow speed). To this end, web-based calls will be set up for input from the TAC and general feedback from the SWG and technical information they may have.
 - Question from SWG: The Los Angeles River Master Plan Update is underway, but the timing for this study is not the best. Hydrology drives biology, so it’s important to integrate this information. Also, with the proposed divestment of United States Army Corps of Engineers from the Los Angeles River, how might this affect the study?
 - Answer: This study’s analysis reaches align with the Los Angeles River Master Plan and allow for the information to be fed back into the Master Plan. For restoration, we are trying to incorporate the existing efforts and consider these in the model. Eric and others have been attending meetings and creating dialogue between these groups and the modeling effort. A lot of what the Master Plan is proposing is along the banks of the Los Angeles River, but this study is focused on the mainstem, so in some cases, there is no overlap. Preliminary model analysis may be able to be used to inform the Master Plan.
 - Question from SWG: What are the minimum flows for instream recreational uses?
 - Answer: The presentation has a specific slide on this, but the plan is to circle back with recreational experts to revisit some of the questions related to this topic.

- Question from SWG: Will the focus be only on desirable (native) versus undesirable (invasive)? Important for understanding how to manage undesirables.
- Answer: We are looking at opportunities to switch from warm to cold water to reduce invasive species.

- Question from SWG: Why are invasive species important? Aren't they supposed to be removed?
- Answer: They are included in order to understand if and how the balance can be tipped in favor of the native species to assist with recovery. We are not trying to promote these, but instead model and understand them.

- Comment: A member of the National Audubon Society noted they are undertaking an important bird study

GROUP 13 MINUTE BREAK UNTIL 10:52 AM

- Question from SWG: Will meeting notes be included on the website?
- Answer: Yes, on the website. In addition, the meeting is being recorded and the recording will be made available on the website.

- Question from SWG: Are you coordinating with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts regarding the Habitat Management Committee? Are there certain invasive species that are prevalent enough that it would make sense to address these individually instead of with WARM?
- Answer: Yes, Eric is coordinating on that and is a member of the Committee. It is bit different though, but cross-pollination is occurring. Invasive species are more of a challenge, but it might be good to circle back and look at models and their relationships and if they need a specific or focused approach.

- Question from SWG: Are you considering regional climate models and how these will affect species?
- Answer: Not yet. We are looking at immediate impacts, since climate change is long-term and will be changing over decades. Climate change will not be the primary driver of change within the scope of this study and as such, we are not including it.

- Question from SWG: This is a narrow 1211 focused project, but as the agency moves toward an integrated multi-benefit projects, how does this fit in?
- Answer: We are looking at recycling and the 1211 permit, but the reason we are working with the SWG and others, is we understand a lot of work is occurring within the watershed and we want to ensure these technical tools being developed can assist and not only address this specific question, but also the broader approach.

- **Scenario Analysis**

- Eric provided the SWG members with an overview of the scenario analysis, including consideration of management scenarios. He also noted there is a lot occurring within the watershed, including stormwater capture related to controlling total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), restoration, etc., which requires coordination and understanding of these activities. A tool used to assist in this are sensitivity curves which allow you to evaluate sensitivity, changes, and potential impacts and evaluate varying scenarios. This approach can be applied to other rivers and streams. For the scenarios, the 24 functional flows metrics from the State framework were used to evaluate changes in suitable habitat conditions during both wet- and dry-flow river conditions. Through the scenarios, you can see how the metrics and percentages are changed by the flow scenarios. For example, if you have a species that needs a certain depth to survive, base flow changes can assist to determine this and to figure out what the “sweet spot” of minimum conditions for flow conditions is for the species to occur. Moreover, once the sensitivity curves are prepared, multiple scenarios can be readily evaluated using the curves. The curves can also allow for consideration of diurnal variability in the scenarios, thereby allowing wastewater discharge to be altered throughout a 24-hour period and the results understood. This would be useful for consideration of recreational uses.
- The recreational subcommittee couldn’t provide quantitative analysis of recreational flow needs to allow for modeling. Therefore, we will be circling back with recreational use experts on how best to do this and figure out what the optimum flow might be seasonally. The “next steps” are to develop curves to consider stormwater capture, temperature, and other parameters and apply these also to Compton Creek and Rio Hondo.
 - Question from SWG: Can the model accommodate recirculation of instream flows in discrete reaches to support recreational uses as opposed to using a single pass flow for recreational uses?
 - Answer: The models are not set up that way currently, but they could be modified to accommodate that, as long as we know where the points of egress and entrance are, it could potentially be included.
 - Question from SWG: What about identifying conditions in current recreation areas?
 - Answer: We might be able to do so.
 - Question from SWG: When will alternative scenario analysis be available?
 - Answer: Likely by summer. Would like to hold some focused group meeting with recreational experts to develop that after the summer.
 - Question from SWG: There may be a lack of understanding of what is going on here that some recreation groups may not understand. Conservancies need to be briefed in particular so they understand you are not taking all of the water out of the system.
 - Answer: Yes, we need to coordinate with them. This is an area where the SWG can be of assistance.

- **Next Steps for Habitat Analysis and Scenario Modeling**
 - Develop overall conceptual models
 - Build remaining models with TAC input
 - Refine flow management scenarios
 - Fill in data gaps
 - Next TAC meeting planned for July 2020, with intermediate TAC webinar scheduled for mid-May

Outreach Support

- **Frequently Asked Questions** – The SWG members were asked to provide input on the FAQ. Input is needed on how best to do outreach, and as part of that, the FAQ was identified as important. The FAQ map was revised to show roadway/highway system to better orient reviewers. In addition, language/text edits were made and other clarifications included. The FAQ can be made for other communities, if needed.
- **Action Item:** Spanish translation should be considered and will be looked into by State Water Boards
 - Comment from SWG: Greater input on climate change is needed. Current language is too weak and needs to be strengthened.
 - Comment from SWG: Should a fact sheet be developed too which is less technical?
 - Comment from SWG: Document should also address protecting water rights too.
 - Response: Water rights are complicated and likely do not need to be included in a FAQ, but instead should be included in a link or other source.
 - Comment from SWG: Include a picture/graphic of a scale to show balance of what a scenario is doing.
 - Response: Eric indicated such a graphic is already included in the presentation materials.

Lori welcomed additional input on the FAQ, but requested comments be provided within 30 days from today's meeting. In addition, Eric encouraged SWG members to reach out directly to him and Kris. Lisa posted his contact information.

- **Action Item:** The Project Summary and FAQ will be sent to the SWG with the notes and members will be asked to provide input on the documents within 30 days

Next Steps

- SWG members were asked if we should wait until the modeling scenarios are completed for the last and final meeting? SWG members responded "Yes." This would mean that the last meeting would be in late 2020. SWG members will be updated as the modeling progresses.
- **Action Item:** Prepare a survey/poll on how to stay in touch for the next meeting before the modeling, etc. is completed.

Closing Comments

- Meeting notes will be posted on the Project website.
- A total of 52 people attended the webinar.

Respectfully submitted:

Gilberto Ruiz, Stantec