

# North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

*Grant Applicant:*



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*to:*

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation  
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
Phase I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Letters of Support

## 1.0 Mandatory Federal Forms

The following forms were submitted electronically via grants.gov:

SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance

SF-424A Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs

SF-424B Assurances – Non-Construction Programs

Project Abstract Form

Grants.gov Lobbying Form

## 2.0 Technical Proposal and Evaluation Criteria

### 2.1 Executive Summary

**Date:** September 3, 2024 -

**Applicant:** County of Orange -

**City:** Orange -

**County:** Orange -

**State:** California -

**A one-paragraph project summary that briefly describes the location of the watershed area in which the group will work, the activities that will be carried out, any partners involved, watershed concerns in the watershed area, and how the activities completed through this grant are expected to help alleviate impacts of those concerns. This information will be used to create a summary of your project for our website if the project is selected for funding.**

The North Orange County and Central Orange County Watershed Management Areas (North OC WMA and Central OC WMA, respectively), span a heavily urbanized and populated region along the southern California coast (south of Los Angeles and north of San Diego).

Disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal community engagement remains a gap in stakeholder connection despite the North Orange County Integrated Regional Water Management Group's (North OC IRWM Group – the existing watershed group in the region) nearly 20-year history and prior attempts to connect with these populations. The County seeks to meaningfully engage with disadvantaged, underserved, Tribal, and other underrepresented groups through the proposed project by developing and implementing a comprehensive and targeted outreach and engagement strategy. The partners involved with this effort will include local cities, water and sanitation districts, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and state and federal agencies (the other members of the North OC IRWM Group). Watershed concerns include ensuring adequate and reliable water supply, protecting and enhancing surface water quality, restoring ecosystems and improving native habitat, integrating flood management, improving quality of life, and addressing climate change. The proposed project will help alleviate impacts of these concerns by fostering watershed project input and support from and communicating watershed project needs to all community stakeholders. This will help ensure future watershed projects benefit all community members to the greatest extent possible and help the North OC IRWM Group achieve their water-related goals faster.

**State the length of time and estimated completion date for the proposed project (mm/yr).**

Based on the notice of funding opportunity's (NOFO) stated anticipated award date of September 30, 2025, the estimated project start date is October 1, 2025, and the estimated project completion date is September 30, 2028, for a total of 36 months from anticipated project award to project closeout.

**State whether or not the proposed project is located on a Federal facility or will involve Federal lands, and what work will occur on the Federal facility or Federal lands.**

The proposed project is not located on a Federal facility, nor will it involve Federal lands.

## 2.2 Project Location

**Provide specific information on the geographic location of the area in which the watershed group will work including a map showing the geographic location. For example, {watershed area} is located in {state and county} approximately {distance} miles {direction, e.g., northeast} of {nearest town}. If applicable, please provide the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) in which the group will work. If you are selected for funding, Reclamation may request additional detail regarding your project location. If the project will focus on site-specific planning or watershed management project design, please identify both the watershed area the watershed group works in and the location the site-specific planning or project will focus on.**

The North OC IRWM Group comprises both the North and Central OC WMAs. The North OC WMA includes portions of the Lower San Gabriel River – Coyote Creek (HUCs 12-180701060603, 12-180701060604, 12-180701060605), Santa Ana River (HUCs 12-180702031002, 12-180702031003), and Anaheim Bay – Huntington Harbor watersheds (HUCs 12-180702010001, HUCs 12-180702010002) and is located in northern Orange County, California. The Central OC WMA encompasses the Newport Bay (HUCs 12-180702040101, 12-180702040102, 12-180702040103) and Newport Coastal Streams (HUCs 12-180702040201, 12-180702040202) watersheds and is located in the middle of Orange County. Collectively, the North OC and Central OC WMAs span 26 cities and portions of unincorporated Orange County (three cities overlap with the South OC WMA). **Figure 1** depicts the area of the North and Central OC WMAs both combined and individually.

**Figure 1 – North and Central OC WMAs Geographic Location**



### 2.3 Applicant Category

The County is applying as an Existing Watershed Group because the North and Central OC WMAs serve as an existing watershed group called the North OC IRWM Group, which is already well-established with significant watershed restoration planning completed to-date.

### 2.4 Eligibility of Applicant

The County meets the eligibility requirements because it is located in the State of California, and it is a fiscal sponsor of the existing watershed group for the North and Central OC WMAs called the North OC IRWM Group. The North OC IRWM Group meets the definition of a watershed group as described in Section A.3 of the NOFO as a “grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues within the relevant watershed, is capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources in the watershed, makes decisions on a consensus basis, and represents a diverse group of stakeholders.”

### 2.5 Project Description

The County will address Task Area A as part of this proposed project. The watershed group has not previously received a Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Phase I grant. Historically, disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal community involvement has been lacking from the North OC IRWM Group. The County recognizes this as a gap in stakeholder diversity and full stakeholder representation. Therefore, it now seeks to remedy this through implementation of the proposed project which seeks to engage disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal community interests, as well as any other underrepresented stakeholders identified through this process.

To do so, the County proposes to complete the following over the three-year timeframe of this grant:

1. - Conduct an internal review of existing stakeholders and complete an initial assessment of missing groups or individuals. (Oct – Dec 2025)
2. - Host a stakeholder engagement kickoff workshop to re-establish communications with previously committed stakeholders, confirm underrepresented groups/individuals, and add any additional missing stakeholders to the list to target. (January 2026)
3. - Based on the missing stakeholders identify and determine the best strategy for meaningful engagement of these groups. Community-based organizations (CBOs) and community healthcare workers (Las Promotoras) have already been identified as possible avenues for reaching these stakeholders. These and other strategies will be evaluated. (February – March 2026)
4. - Analyze the options and provide recommendations for the best engagement methods (CBOs, Las Promotoras, etc.). (April – June 2026)
5. - Select outreach methods and establish formal partnerships and scopes with third-parties, as-needed. (July – August 2026)
6. - Conduct outreach and engagement activities. Assess stakeholder understanding of the North and Central OC WMAs, watershed needs, and feelings about watershed projects (e.g., generally favorable, or unfavorable) at the beginning of the outreach and engagement process. (September 2026 – August 2027).



7. - Survey newly engaged stakeholders on understanding of the North and Central OC WMAs, watershed needs, and feelings towards watershed projects. (September 2027)
8. - Adjust outreach and engagement strategy based on survey feedback and continue the process. (October 2027 – April 2028)
9. - Incorporate feedback from the stakeholder outreach and engagement process into the regional stormwater CIP approach and watershed project planning efforts. (May 2028 – August 2028)
10. Project closeout (September 2028)

By conducting the proposed outreach and developing meaningful relationships with under-represented stakeholders, Central and North OC WMA watershed projects can be designed to integrate benefits to those communities and ensure that watershed projects are designed with community support. This will ensure that the implemented watershed projects benefit all community members to the greatest extent possible and help the Central and North OC WMAs achieve their water-related goals faster. As the Central and North OC WMAs are developed and populated, these watershed projects will occur within already existing communities. To successfully implement regional stormwater and other watershed projects, input and support from all community stakeholders will be key. Without the outreach and engagement proposed by this project, the County and its partners will not know the needs and desires of under-represented groups and will not be able to incorporate that input into future watershed projects being designed, nor will the watershed project proponents be able to communicate the critical need for these watershed projects. This could lead to future community misunderstandings and even potential opposition of watershed projects such as what happened in Hermosa Beach with community opposition to the Hermosa Greenbelt Subsurface Infiltration Project. As noted by Hermosa Beach City Councilmember Mary Campbell, “if we blundered something here, it might be the close engagement with our community members who are most affected.”<sup>1</sup>

The County wishes to acknowledge its awareness that the term “disadvantaged community” may be seen as disrespectful, especially by members of such communities. Therefore, while the County does not intend to use this term during outreach, it has, for consistency with the NOFO and official Federal and State of California references, maintained the reference to disadvantaged communities throughout this application.

## 2.6 Evaluation Criteria

### 2.6.1 Evaluation Criterion A – Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope (30 points)

#### *Sub-Criterion A1. Watershed Group Diversity*

**Please describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will include a diverse array of stakeholders. If the watershed itself does not include a diverse set of interests and sectors, please also provide an explanation of this (e.g., some watersheds may not include affected stakeholders in all the sectors identified in the definition of a “watershed group” provided in Section A.2. Objective of this Notice of Funding**

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<sup>1</sup> “Added scrutiny for Hermosa Beach stormwater project, <https://easyreadernews.com/added-scrutiny-for-hermosa-beach-stormwater-project/>, June 2018, accessed on August 28, 2024.

**Opportunity). If your proposed project is for site-specific planning or project design, rather than watershed wide planning, please still discuss the stakeholder diversity throughout the entire watershed in which the watershed group works.**

The purpose of the proposed project is to ensure the inclusion of the full diversity of stakeholders in the North OC IRWM Group (see **Table 1** for a list of group members). The current composition of the North OC IRWM Group includes a wide range of local, state, and federal agencies, as well as several non-governmental organizations; however, there is an identified gap in representation of disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities in the region as they intersect with watershed priorities. Safeguarding the representation of these interests will enable community involvement in watershed project planning, supporting the development of solutions that are best suited to local needs and preferences, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. Developing meaningful, ongoing relationships with previously underrepresented communities will also aid in the establishment of trust and transparency, leading to a better understanding of how public funds and watershed projects support regional goals and provide benefits to the community.

**For New and Existing Watershed Groups, a description of the stakeholder groups (e.g., agriculture, municipal, recreation, environmental, Tribal) within the watershed that affect or are affected by the quantity or quality of water within the watershed (“affected stakeholders”). Describe their role in the watershed and how they interact with the water resources and identify specific organizations, entities, or individuals that make up these groups.**

Stakeholder groups within the watershed that affect or are affected by the quantity or quality of water within the watershed (e.g., “affected stakeholders”) include local residents, local municipal governments (cities and the County of Orange), local water districts, non-profits and environmental organizations, and regulatory agencies. **Table 1** lists the 63 organizations, entities, or individuals that make up these groups.



**Table 1 – Existing North OC IRWM Group Stakeholders -**

		Water Resources*
<b>Municipal Government</b> (County of Orange; Cities of Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Habra, La Palma, Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster, and Yorba Linda)	IRWM Plan Group Stakeholders  Regional Water Management Group Member (County of Orange)	Jurisdictional authority over land use, recreational facilities, stormwater management/protection, water quality, flood control, floodplain management, water quality, water conservation, ocean water quality (for the County and beach cities), potable
<b>Water Supply and Sanitation Districts</b> (Costa Mesa Sanitary District, East Orange County Water District, El Toro Water District, Golden State Water Company, Irvine Ranch Water District, Mesa Water District, Midway City Sanitary District, Municipal Water District of Orange County, Orange County Sanitation District, Orange County Water District, Orange County Sanitation District, Serrano Water District, and Yorba Linda Water District)	IRWM Plan Group Stakeholders  Regional Water Management Group Member (Orange County Sanitation District and Orange County Water District)	Land use, potable and recycled water service, water conservation, wastewater collection and treatment, habitat protection and restoration, water quality, groundwater management
<b>Other Special Districts and Research Organizations</b> (Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, Orange County Flood Control District, Orange County Council of Governments, Orange County Department of Education, Orange County Vector Control, Southern California Coastal Waters Research Project, University of California Cooperative Extension)	IRWM Plan Group Stakeholders	Regional planning, municipal services, research and development, scientific study
<b>Local Non-Profits and Environmental Groups</b> (Latino Health Access, Natural Communities Coalition, OC Coastkeeper, OC Conservation Corps, OC Farm Bureau, Surfrider Foundation)	IRWM Plan Group Stakeholders	Projects and programs for habitat and open space protection and restoration, the environment, public education and water quality, coastal water quality, programs and facilities related to protecting the health of underserved communities, ocean stewardship
<b>Regulatory Agencies</b> (California State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Transportation, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Los Angeles District, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service - Cleveland National Forest, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. National Park Service)	IRWM Plan Group Stakeholders	Projects and programs that will benefit the State's resources; regulatory oversight and permit issuance, and enforcement actions; project planning and implementation related to waters of the United States, forest and watershed management, and natural resources

**For New Watershed Groups, a description of the affected stakeholders within the watershed that already support the formation of watershed group. To the extent possible, please identify the specific stakeholders or groups that already support the formation of the**

**watershed group, describe their interest in the watershed, what their involvement in the group entails, and reference any letters of support or pledges/donations from affected stakeholders. – N/A, existing watershed group**

**For Existing Watershed Groups, an explanation of the specific individuals, entities, and organizations already participating in the watershed group and whether the current participation is representative of the affected stakeholders within the watershed. In other words, if the watershed group is already diverse, please provide support demonstrating the diversity of the group. Provide a description of the stakeholders that are involved, what their involvement in the group entails, and reference any letters of support or pledges/donations from affected stakeholders and how.**

**Table 1** lists the 63 specific entities and organizations already participating in the North OC IRWM Group. The County, Orange County Water District (OCWD), and Orange County Sanitation District (OCSd) participate as members of the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) with responsibility for guiding long-range water planning and watershed project prioritization. The remaining participating agencies and organizations represent many of the affected watershed stakeholders. However, the County is aware that there are participation gaps and wants to ensure participation of all affected stakeholders. The proposed project will support inclusion of disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities, identification of any additional stakeholder gaps, and the development and implementation of an effective strategy for engagement of these stakeholders. Current North OC IRWM Group stakeholders are supportive of the proposed project, as evidenced by the letters of support included as **Appendix A** of this application.

**For New and Existing Watershed Groups, if the group does not already represent the full stakeholder diversity of the watershed, provide details on how you plan to target affected stakeholders to ensure that your group will represent a diverse set of stakeholders within the watershed, such as engaging in outreach to include new members, or collaborating with different groups or partners (e.g., outreach or partnership activities, public meetings, newsletters, marketing materials, or recruitment of new members).**

County staff started an initial stakeholder gaps analysis and determined that targeted outreach to disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities is needed to ensure widespread representation within the North OC IRWM Group. A more thorough gaps analysis, including engagement of existing stakeholders, will be conducted as part of the proposed project to identify additional missing stakeholders. A targeted outreach approach will be developed once all missing stakeholders have been identified. Methods of outreach will include online engagement through existing webpages such as H2OC, the North OC IRWM webpage, and partner webpages; public meetings; and direct connections through community-based organizations and/or community healthcare workers. Outreach messages will be provided in additional languages, as relevant.

As noted by the Institute for Local Government in its publication, *Partnering with Community-Based Organizations for More Broad-Based Public Engagement*, “many local agencies use a strategy of nurturing relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) to better reach

and engage a broader cross section of residents.”<sup>2</sup> To maximize meaningful and sustained engagement of traditionally underrepresented populations (mostly disadvantaged, underserved and Tribal populations), the County may collaborate with existing CBOs and coalitions that already work with these populations. Relevant CBOs may include groups such as Latino Health Access and the Sacred Places Initiative. Tribes the County intends to target include the Acjachemen Nation and the Gabrielino-Tongva Indian Tribe. The County has also held initial discussions with Dr. Georgia Halkia (please see support letter in **Appendix A**) who leads the Community Health Worker (CHW) program – Las Promotoras – at Orange Coast College regarding potential support for community outreach. A potential strategy for engagement based on those discussions could entail:

- 1) Training the CHWs/Las Promotoras to have an understanding of local water resource needs, such as stormwater and urban runoff capture and why it is important for both watershed and public health;
- 2) Having the CHWs/Las Promotoras engage in the community with a focus on the disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities to educate them about local water resource needs, such as stormwater and urban runoff capture and why it is important for both watershed and public health; and
- 3) Having the CHWs/Las Promotoras engage in the community with a focus on promoting consensus-based decision-making as part of the implementation of multi-benefit water resource projects, such as stormwater and urban runoff capture projects and watershed improvement projects.

**For Existing Watershed Groups, a description of the structure of the watershed group, and for New Watershed Groups, a description of the anticipated structure of the watershed group. Is there a formal membership process or is participation more informal? If a formal membership process exists, ensure your responses under this criterion make it clear which watershed group participants are formal members and which act as partner organizations. How are decisions made within the watershed group? Does a board of directors make decisions or are decisions made on a consensus basis? If the watershed group has a board of directors, how are board members chosen?**

In September 2018, the Orange County Water District (OCWD), Orange County Sanitation District (OCSd), and the County executed a Memorandum of Understanding, which provides a framework for administration of the North OC IRWM Plan. This framework includes the following Governance structure:

*Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) – formal members*

The RWMG for the North OC IRWM Plan includes OCWD, OCSd, and the County. These three agencies are responsible for guiding the updating and execution of the IRWM Plan, establishing priorities for water resource needs, integrating water resource solutions across

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<sup>2</sup> Institute for Local Government, *Partnering with Community-Based Organizations for More Broad-based Public Engagement*, [https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/partnering\\_with\\_comm\\_based\\_orgs\\_final.pdf](https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/partnering_with_comm_based_orgs_final.pdf)

traditional bounds, and jointly advocating for policies and funding that assist these goals. The RWMG will provide administrative support for the region and will develop plans to fund implementation of the IRWM Plan as necessary.

*Advisory Committee to the RWMG – formal members*

The Advisory Committee consists of representatives of the RWMG and representatives of the Newport Bay Watershed Executive Committee. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide leadership and guidance to the RWMG on implementation of the IRWM Plan.

*Planning Group – formal members*

The Planning Group consists of staff members of the Advisory Committee and provides day-to-day support for the development and implementation of the IRWM Plan, including managing stakeholder involvement.

*Stakeholder Group – open to all stakeholders*

The Stakeholder Group, consisting of agencies, cities, interest groups, and any other stakeholders within North and Central Orange County, provides leadership in developing and updating the IRWM Plan<sup>3</sup>, proposes watershed projects to be included in the plan, and develops and approves the project prioritization process and project ranking. The Stakeholder Group may create ad hoc working groups and assign them specific tasks to be completed.

Decisions are made on a consensus basis within the watershed group. **Figure 2** depicts the governance of the North OC IRWM Group.

**Figure 2 – Existing North OC IRWM Group Governance**

**Regional Water Management Group**

County of Orange, OCWD, OC San

**Advisory Committee**

Executive Committee

**Stakeholder Group**

**Planning Group**

**Ad Hoc**

volunteers

<sup>3</sup> County of Orange, *The OC Plan: Integrated Regional Water Management for North and Central Orange County*, 2018, <https://www.northocirwm.org/documents/9d69325aea4a45e0908177351cd08149/explore>

**Any other support demonstrating that the watershed group will include a diverse membership.**

The proposed project will provide for additional outreach to and engagement of community members not historically active with the existing watershed group. These targeted efforts will ensure the greatest possible diversity for the North OC IRWM Group.

*Sub-Criterion A2. Geographic Scope*

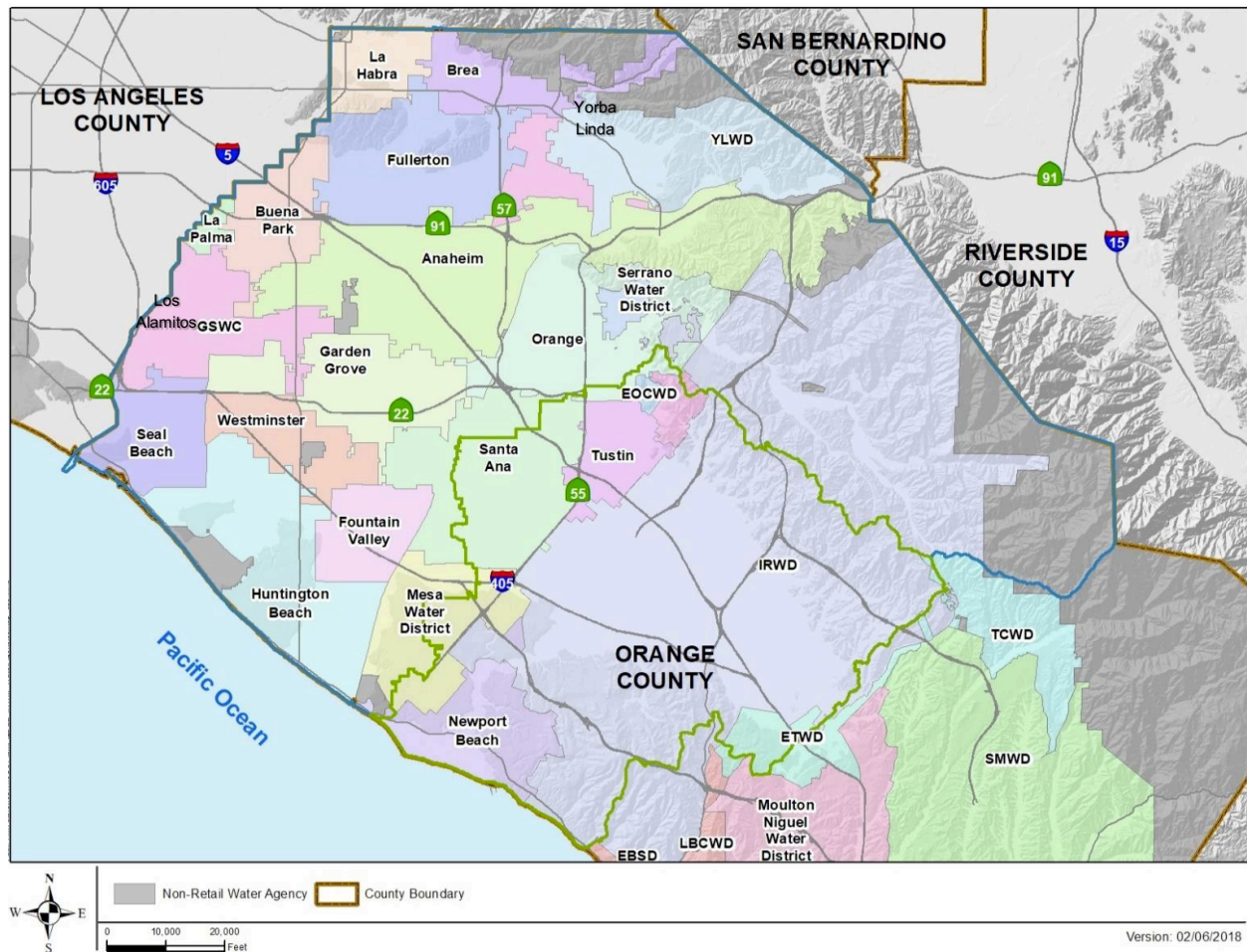
**Provide a map illustrating the geographic boundaries of the area in which the watershed group will work.**

**Figure 3 – Watersheds in the North OC IRWM Region**





**Figure 4 – Cities and Water Districts in North and Central OC**



The map should also identify the location or boundaries of the stakeholder groups within the area and indicate which stakeholders are currently involved in the group and which will be targeted through outreach. If a map of stakeholder locations cannot be provided, please describe the geographic scope of the area to the best of your knowledge, including where specific stakeholders are located within the watershed.

The five watersheds which lie either fully or partially within the North and Central OC WMAs can be seen in different colors on **Figure 3 – Watersheds in the North OC IRWM Region**. The region falls entirely within the boundaries of the County of Orange. The service areas for some of the local agencies participating in the North OC IRWM Group can be seen on **Figure 4 – Cities and Water Districts in North and Central OC**. Additional active stakeholders are located throughout the WMA, spanning the entire geographic area of the WMA. The additional affected stakeholders the County will target through the proposed project are yet to be identified so it is not yet possible to include those on a map.

**Describe the extent to which the planned membership of the watershed group will represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the group intends to work. If applicable, describe the extent to which the watershed group already represents the geographic scope of the area.**

The North OC IRWM Group already represents the full geographic scope of the area. However, certain populations of affected stakeholders may not be actively participating in the watershed group. The County seeks to remedy this through the proposed project.

**Describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will target stakeholders that represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the watershed group will work. For example, will outreach focus on stakeholders in a certain part of the watershed the have historically not been represented in the watershed group.**

The intent of this proposed project is to ensure future representation of stakeholders throughout the North and Central OC WMAs that have historically not been represented in the watershed group. Outreach will focus most intently on disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities, as these have been identified as stakeholders missing from the North OC IRWM Group. To maximize meaningful and sustained engagement, the County will develop an outreach strategy, which may include collaboration with existing CBOs, community healthcare workers, and/or coalitions to engage these traditionally underrepresented populations.

**Figure 5 – Spectrum of Engagement**



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As shown in **Figure 5**, more in-depth levels of engagement can lead to increasing levels of public impact. An empowered level of engagement places final decision-making authority in the hands of the engaged party. The County acknowledges the benefit of such engagement while also recognizing that it may not be feasible in every case due to governance or other constraints. The North and Central IRWM group governance is consensus-based and so all stakeholders included in this process, including the disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities that are the target of the proposed project, will contribute towards consensus-based decision-making. To prevent frustration and engender trust with the populations it seeks to engage, the County will take great care to communicate clearly to the affected communities about the type of engagement offered through the watershed group outreach as part of the proposed project. It will also seek to offer the greatest level of engagement possible within recognized constraints.

**Describe why you have chosen to work within the watershed area you described. For example, if the watershed group is only working along the river corridor, describe why**

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<sup>4</sup> Institute for Local Government, *Partnering with Community-Based Organizations for More Broad-Based Public Engagement*, 2015. <https://www.ca-ilg.org/post/partnering-community-based-organizations-more-broad-based-public-engagement>



**they are not working within the larger watershed area. In addition to drought resiliency measures, does the proposed project include other natural hazard risk reductions for hazards such as wildfires or floods?**

The County has chosen to work within the North and Central OC WMAs because they are collectively an established watershed group – The North OC IRWM Group – that encompasses the full watershed hydrologic area with similarities of needs and priorities, while not expanding its focus across neighboring but dissimilar watersheds. The proposed project aims to address regional goals established by the North OC IRWM Group through targeted engagement of underrepresented stakeholders.

**If your proposed project is for site-specific planning (e.g., completing planning for a specific stream reach) or watershed management project design, rather than watershed wide planning, please first address the above question for the entire watershed area in which the watershed group works and then address the following related to the smaller area for which you are completing planning or design. – N/A the proposed project is not for site specific planning.**

**o Provide a map illustrating the location of the planning or design. – N/A**

**o Briefly describe why you have chosen to complete site-specific planning or project design in this location. – N/A**

2.6.2 Evaluation Criterion B – Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)

*Sub-Criterion B1.Critical Watershed Needs or Issues*

**Please describe in detail the critical issues or needs of the watershed, for example: declining ecological resiliency, water supply shortages, wildfire risk or post-fire concerns, flooding, water quality impairments, endangered species concerns, drought impacts, aquatic and riparian ecosystem degradation, habitat fragmentation and degradation, conflicts over water supply, and other related issues faced by affected stakeholders.**

The North and Central OC Watershed Management Areas have unique challenges and opportunities for water resources management related to the specific geology, topography, regulatory schema, and water management structure within the region.

The Orange County Groundwater Basin, managed by the Orange County Water District (OCWD), provides the greatest opportunity for water storage and recharge of this groundwater basin is one of the primary approaches to water supply in North and Central OC. However, the geology of North and Central OC limits recharge feasibility to inland portions of the region, an area identified by OCWD as the forebay; recharge of the basin is not feasible in the areas near the coast, an area identified by OCWD as the pressure zone. Recharge is also constrained by significant areas of poor infiltrating soils in the forebay area of the groundwater basin, areas of groundwater contamination where infiltration is not feasible, and numerous earthquake faults. Additionally, the geology is variable within the watersheds of North and Central OC. For example, the Newport Coast Watershed contains consolidated sandstone, shale, and volcanic rocks that are overlain along the coastline by terrace deposits and along the larger streams by thin

and narrow alluvial deposits. In the Newport Bay Watershed, the Monterey Formation, which is a Miocene marine formation that is the likely source of selenium causing water quality impacts.

The topography of North and Central OC also varies. While the majority of the region is largely flat, comprising the Orange County Coastal Plain, the terrain of Newport Coast is more undulating. The flat areas are prime opportunities for integration of stormwater and urban runoff capture projects, however some low-lying areas are subject to flooding, which is a significant challenge. Due to historic flooding, much of the stream network in North and Central OC has been channelized, contributing to issues like channel erosion and geomorphic impacts.

Stormwater in North and Central OC is regulated through a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit<sup>5</sup> issued by the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (SARWQCB) to the County, Flood Control District, and the cities within North and Central OC (collectively referred to as “Permittees”). There are numerous listings of water quality impairments for a variety of pollutants, including bacteria, trash, pesticides, metals, and nutrients, within the watersheds of North and Central OC, with bacteria being a common pollutant in all of the watersheds. Numerous TMDLs have been developed for the Newport Bay Watershed and there are also TMDLs for the Coyote Creek Watershed, which is a watershed shared with Los Angeles County to the north.

To address water quality impairments, the stormwater Permittees have been systematically identifying, evaluating, and implementing regional stormwater capture projects in North and Central OC through various watershed planning efforts, as well as establishing a Watershed Improvement Projects Subcommittee (WIPS) in recent years to coalesce and facilitate these activities. These efforts have resulted in a geographical information system (GIS) based screening of regional stormwater capture project locations across the North and Central WMAs, collaboration with various water agencies and potential watershed project partners, a review of potential watershed project funding concepts, development of technical tools for watershed project evaluation, and establishment of multiple benefit concepts.

Most recently, a Regional Stormwater Capital Improvement Program (CIP) has been proposed as a collaborative and comprehensive approach to the funding, outreach, planning, design, construction, and operation and maintenance of stormwater capture systems, which can utilize and build upon the prior watershed planning efforts. Many of the stormwater capture projects that will be developed in North OC will have the opportunity to integrate multiple benefits that will help serve the community. The proposed project can directly support and enhance the outreach component of the Regional Stormwater CIP and other related watershed planning efforts.

Water supply management in North and Central Orange County is focused on reducing reliance on imported water. Over the past two decades, this strategy has included the development of the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) which is a joint partnership between OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation District (OC San). GWRS takes highly treated wastewater that would have previously been discharged into the Pacific Ocean, purifies it using a three-step advanced treatment process, and conveys the treated water to recharge the Orange County Groundwater Basin. Currently, GWRS produces 130 million gallons per day, providing 35% of

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<sup>5</sup> [Order R8-2009-0030, NPDES No. CAS618030](#)) and subsequently amended by Order No. No. R8-2010-0062

the total water demand in North and Central OC. Collaboration between stormwater Permittees, OC San and OCWD has been in place since the 1999 inception of OC San's Urban Runoff Program, which diverts dry-weather urban runoff to the OC San sewer system network. These diverted dry-weather flows are now also included in the water that goes to GWRS. With GWRS contributions, approximately 85% of North and Central OC's water supply comes from the Orange County Groundwater Basin. The remaining 15% of water supply in North and Central OC is from imported supplies brought in by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and served wholesale through its local subsidiary member agency, the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC). There are several water agencies and some cities in North and Central OC that then provide water directly to residential and business customers.

Stormwater Permittees have also coordinated with OC San, OCWD and other water districts in North and Central OC since 2018 regarding the capture and conveyance of additional dry-weather urban runoff and stormwater to their facilities. As part of this effort, OC San has recently undertaken an Urban Runoff Optimization Study to evaluate additional dry-weather urban runoff and potentially stormwater capture and conveyance to their sewer system network. The capture of stormwater presents several challenges for OC San, including timing stormwater capture and associated storage needed prior to discharge to the sewer system and the potential need for pre-treatment. Coordination with OCWD has focused on conveying dry-weather urban runoff and stormwater to some of their groundwater recharge facilities, as well as the development of joint projects in the forebay area of the Orange County Groundwater Basin. One of the major challenges to recharging stormwater in North and Central OC is the presence of emerging contaminants of concern (ECOCs), such as PFAS, in dry-weather urban runoff and stormwater. Concerns related to ECOCs have recently slowed joint planning efforts on stormwater capture projects with OCWD.

**Provide quantitative and qualitative support to describe the severity of the critical issues or needs. If the concerns are not yet severe, describe why it is important to address the concerns preemptively and explain the potential impacts of not addressing the concerns.**

The following critical issues and needs were identified by the North OC IRWM Group through extensive assessment of the region as part of the OC Plan<sup>6</sup> development.

#### *Water Supply*

Demand for potable water exceeds local water supplies. According to the OC Plan, the region imports about 25 percent of its water supply. Although the region has made great strides in water conservation and management, a gap still exists between local demand for potable water and local supplies. This gap necessitates more water conservation, local potable water supply projects, including stormwater capture projects and diversions to the Orange County Sanitation District and its Groundwater Replenishment System, and expanded use of recycled water. Ensuring the provision of adequate and reliable water supplies is an established goal of the North OC IRWM Group.

#### *Flood Management*

As stated in the OC Plan, areas within the region are not fully protected from a 100-year flood as

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<sup>6</sup> [The OC Plan for Integrated Regional Water Management in North and Central Orange County](#), 2018

some Orange County regional and local facilities cannot convey the 100-year storm discharge. Many sub-regional facilities are also deficient, and there are aging facilities in the region that do not meet current standards. Several existing flood control facilities are approaching or have exceeded their expected useful life, making the threat of flood damage from these facilities imminent and requiring upgrades to adequately manage risk of floods. Repairs are also needed for frequently occurring problems such as bank erosion and invert aggradation or degradation. Limited funding, primarily through property tax revenue, is available for flood control capital improvement projects and regulatory requirements – including the need to obtain permits – can burden the design process, cause delays, and add to the cost of improvements. Most permits require mitigation for soft bottom or earthen slopes, which require a wider right-of-way, but the facilities are in urban or suburban settings where right-of-way is limited and oftentimes improvements are designed to maintain the same right-of-way without purchasing private property. Obtaining right-of-way for naturalization efforts is extremely challenging. Reducing scour and erosion on canyons and channels while supporting natural systems and minimizing use of concrete and riprap is essential yet can be challenging to accomplish. Integrating flood management is an established goal of the North OC IRWM Group.

#### *Surface Water Quality*

Some receiving waters in the region do not meet the water quality objectives as defined by the SARWQCB in the Basin Plan for the Santa Ana Region, which includes North and Central OC. Pollutants of concern in each of the watersheds within the region include: (1) Anaheim Bay / Huntington Harbour: bacteria, trash, and pesticides; (2) Coyote Creek: bacteria, trash, and metals; (3) Newport Bay: bacteria, trash, pesticides, and nutrients; (4) Newport Coastal Streams: bacteria, pesticides, and nutrients; and, (5) Santa Ana River: bacteria, trash, and pesticides. Bacteria is a common pollutant of concern in all five watersheds. Sewage spills, which can result in bacteria impairments to surface and ocean water quality, result from inadequate capacity to handle increased wastewater flows. Local agencies in the region are challenged to meet regulatory water quality standards in a cost-effective manner to maintain lasting results. Most existing drainage infrastructure was not designed and constructed for a 100-year storm event or for water quality control. Existing development prior to 2011 did not incorporate low impact development (LID) design principles. Multi-benefit water resource projects that include the rehabilitation of water and wastewater infrastructure are vital for improving water quality.

Additionally, emerging contaminants have been identified as a potential public health concern. These constituents are being detected at low concentrations in drinking water but their risks to public health are not known. Water quality protection needs to be consistent with the Basin Plan, including protection of groundwater resources from contamination. Protecting and enhancing water quality is an established goal of the North OC IRWM Group.

#### *Habitat Restoration*

Key habitats in the region include rivers, creeks, wetlands, bays, beaches, coastal shorelines, wildlife refuges and preserves, and regional and state parks. Urban development of the region over the last several decades, coupled with a general lack of master planning for designated open-space areas, has led to habitat fragmentation. Additionally, wildfires, channelized flood conveyance systems, and heavy erosion of natural channels due to hydromodification have resulted in the loss and degradation of the riparian and estuarine habitat. Stormwater and urban runoff, wastewater spills, invasive species, and erosion impact regional ecosystems, including

challenges sustaining eelgrass in Upper Newport Bay. Functioning ecosystems offer a wide range of benefits and their restoration as well as the improvement of native habitat is an established goal of the North OC IRWM Group.

### *Quality of Life*

Quality of life encompasses many different facets. In the context of critical watershed needs, addressing the aforementioned issues within the region will also support improvements in quality of life. For example, Orange County has a strong outdoor recreation legacy because of its pleasant climate, natural beauty, diversity of natural habitats, and fish and wildlife resources. The County alone operates an extensive regional parks system comprising 39,000 acres in 25 urban and wilderness parks, including seven regional historic sites, 7,000 acres of open space and 230 miles of regional riding and hiking trails.<sup>7</sup> Yet, according to the policy report, *Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities, Green Access and Equity for Orange County*<sup>8</sup>, there are significant disparities in access to green space between North and South Orange County. The report found wide-ranging benefits associated with access to parks and recreational areas, including increased physical activity, better health, enhanced community and cultural pride, environmental conservation, and economic viability, supporting job creation, boosting local businesses, and raising property values by five to ten percent in both high- and low-income communities. Multi-benefit water resource projects, such as stormwater capture projects, often have the potential to augment green spaces and recreational resources and / or improve water quality impacting beaches and creeks, thereby providing additional benefits to affected communities.

Similarly, flood control projects may improve the quality of life by protecting residents' homes and properties. Watershed projects that address surface water quality impairments may improve environmental health for vulnerable populations. The provision of water education helps people to think about the actions they take individually and collectively – and that understanding the real value of water promotes the management, conservation and protection of the resource.<sup>9</sup> As continual regional population growth increases the demand for both potable water as well as the volumes of wastewater generated, cost-effective solutions are imperative to ensure economic stability and ensure low-income water customers can continue to afford the cost of water. Improving the quality of life in Orange County is an established goal of the North OC IRWM Group.

### *Climate Change*

Based on the 2021 Climate Change Assessment of OCCAMP Plan Area by ICF<sup>10</sup> (specific to Orange County), climate models predict warmer average annual temperatures with more variable precipitation. The OCCAMP assessment also notes changes are expected to generate the following secondary effects, which will only increase the severity of the aforementioned critical regional issues:

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<sup>7</sup> Orange County, Regional Wilderness & Parks, <http://www.ocgov.com/visitors/wilderness>

<sup>8</sup> *Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Green Access and Equity in Orange County* ([issuelab.org](http://issuelab.org))

<sup>9</sup> Dennis Nelson, CEO & President, Project WET Foundation, Using Water Education to Conserve Water, 2011

<sup>10</sup> ICF, *Climate Change Assessment of OCCAMP Plan Area*, 2021

- Drought – more frequent, intense, and longer lasting droughts. Climate models predict an increase in dry days due to more dry days in spring, summer, and fall.
- Heat waves – more frequent, intense, and longer lasting heat waves. The number of extreme heat days could increase by 4 – 17 days.
- Extreme precipitation and flooding – extreme precipitation and flooding are predicted to increase by one to two events per year over the historical number of events (four).
- Sea-Level Rise – Cal-Adapt projections show that areas of Orange County may be inundated by rising sea levels by the latter half of this century.
- Wildfire – an increase in destructive fires (caused by drought and increased ignitions and fuel availability) is expected. Inland, the average annual area projected to burn is expected to increase by close to 50 percent.
- Less groundwater recharge - rates of direct runoff are expected to exceed soil infiltration capacity
- Increased soil erosion and creek sediment levels – anticipated to be caused by drier soil conditions and increased flood events.

Addressing climate change is an established goal of the North OC IRWM Group. Additionally, the County and several other cities within the County have recently been working on developing and adopting local Climate Adaptation Plans to mitigate and build resiliency against anticipated local impacts of climate change.

**Applicants should consider contacting Federal, state, and local agencies; non-governmental organizations; and other affected stakeholders to discuss what critical issues are affecting the watershed.**

Critical issues for the region were identified through an extensive stakeholder-driven assessment process as part of the development of The OC Plan, which included feedback from federal, state, and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other affected stakeholders. As the County re-engages with these existing stakeholders and engages new stakeholders, it will also seek feedback on critical watershed issues.

#### *Sub-Criterion B2. Project Benefits*

Please respond to the following questions as applicable to your proposed project.

#### **All Applicants:**

**Linking your response to the critical watershed issues you identified in response to Criterion B1, please provide an explanation of why your proposed watershed group activities are an important next step for addressing the issues.**

The North OC IRWM Group is a stakeholder-driven collaborative effort to address local critical watershed issues by leveraging financial resources through the development of multi-benefit / multi-jurisdictional projects. Identifying, conducting outreach to, and fostering meaningful engagement of underrepresented communities not currently active within the North OC IRWM Group is the next step to ensure full stakeholder participation in developing solutions to address critical watershed issues and to provide local context of needs that may support the incorporation of additional features – such as recreational components – into multi-benefit water resource



projects. This engagement is especially key in addressing quality of life issues for affected but historically underrepresented communities.

Increasingly, the County, cities and other agencies are looking to stormwater capture projects as a means of improving water quality, increasing local water supplies, and addressing other critical watershed issues. To prevent future barriers to the implementation of such watershed projects, it is important to help all stakeholders understand the need for and significance of such watershed projects as well as the reasons for chosen location, timing and duration. Since the watershed projects will be constructed across communities within the region, it is essential to engage all underrepresented groups now. Completing the outreach proposed by this project will help the County identify the watershed-related benefits desired by underrepresented groups, to integrate those benefits where feasible, and to gain the communities' trust and support. Also, as climate change and other impacts become more prescient, it is critical that the voices of all affected stakeholders be heard so that the North OC IRWM Group region can be as resilient as possible and minimize any potential harm to disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities.

**Based on current information, what are the expected benefits of the proposed activities? To the extent possible, describe the anticipated benefits. Provide quantitative and qualitative support for the expected benefits (e.g., cite to relevant data sources or literature, provide examples where applicable). Does the proposed project implement a goal or need identified in the drought plan? Is the supported goal or need prioritized within the plan?**

Exact benefits of the proposed project will be identified in-depth as part of the project through the engagement of target stakeholders. At a minimum, the County expects to build trust and to establish meaningful and ongoing relationships with formerly underrepresented groups, especially disadvantaged, underserved, and Tribal communities. By establishing these relationships and listening to the needs of these stakeholders, the County and its partners will be in a better position to identify, consider, and include their local priorities in future watershed project planning efforts. This will also help the County and its partners secure support for future multi-benefit water resource projects, such as stormwater capture and infiltration projects within the Central and North OC WMAs. The proposed project will foster opportunities that are currently lacking for the County to collaborate with underrepresented stakeholders on multi-benefit water resource projects with quantitative benefits towards critical watershed issues and established OC Plan goals.

**What stakeholders will benefit from the proposed project?**

All stakeholders will benefit from the proposed project because when decision making includes input from all affected stakeholders, this results in improved outcomes for all. Additionally, underrepresented groups will be specific beneficiaries of this proposed project, as they will be newly engaged in water resource planning and be able to share their specific needs and priorities.

**Applicants proposing activities under Task C: Watershed Management Project Design – N/A** as no activities are proposed under Task C.

**To the extent known, describe the project(s) for which the watershed group will complete a design. – N/A**

**What type of site-specific project design and engineering will the watershed group complete? – N/A**



**To the extent possible, describe and quantify the potential benefits of the watershed management project that would result from the design process. – N/A**

#### 2.6.3 Evaluation Criterion C – Readiness to Proceed (20 points)

**Up to 20 points may be awarded to proposals based on the extent to which the application demonstrates that the applicant understands program requirements, is able to proceed with proposed activities upon entering into a financial assistance agreement, and able to complete proposed activities within the required three-year time frame.**

**Include a preliminary project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work including major tasks, milestones, and dates. For each task and milestone, indicate who will have the primary responsibility for completion. Proposals that provide a detailed project schedule broken down by tasks and subtasks with identified milestones will be prioritized.**

##### **Phase 1 – Project Management and Outreach Kickoff (Oct 25 – Sept 28)**

**Cost: \$50,000.00**

Task 1 – Project Management and Administration (Oct 25 – Sept 28)

*Lead: County Staff*

Task 2 – Internal Review/Gaps Analysis (Oct – Dec 25)

*Lead: County Staff*

Task 3 – Stakeholder Engagement Kickoff Workshop (Jan 26)

*Lead: County Staff & Environmental Consultant - Olaunu*

##### **Phase 2 – Evaluate and Select Outreach/Engagement Strategy (Feb 26 – Sept 26)**

**Cost: \$50,000.00**

Task 4 – Evaluate outreach and engagement strategies for the missing stakeholders. (Feb – Mar 26)

*Lead: County Staff*

Task 5 - Select and finalize the best engagement methods (CBOs, Las Promotoras, etc.). Draft and release requests for qualifications for third-party outreach and engagement consultant (Apr – June 26)

*Lead: County Staff & Environmental Consultant - Olaunu*

Task 6 – Select outreach and engagement consultant(s), and finalize partnerships and scopes; provide training to selected partners (CBOs, Las Promotoras, etc.) (Jul – Aug 26)

*Lead: County Staff & Environmental Consultant - Olaunu*

##### **Phase 3 – Outreach and Engagement (Sep 26 – Aug 27)**

**Cost: \$100,000.00**

Task 7 – Conduct outreach and engagement (Sep 26 – Aug 27)

*Lead: Outreach and Engagement Consultant - TBD*

#### **Phase 4 – Evaluation and Adjustment (Sep 27 – Apr 28)**

**Cost: \$75,000.00**

Task 8 – Survey newly engaged stakeholders (Sep 27)

*Lead: Outreach and Engagement Consultant - TBD*

Task 9 – Adjust and continue process (Sep 27 – Apr 28)

*Lead: Outreach and Engagement Consultant - TBD*

**Key Deliverables Due from Outreach and Engagement Consultant: Report on outreach and engagement; roadmap for continuing outreach and engagement**

#### **Phase 5 – Incorporate Results into North OC IRWM Watershed Project Planning (May 28-Aug 28)**

**Cost: \$25,000.00**

Task 10 – Incorporate outreach and engagement into regional stormwater CIP process (May 28 – Aug 28)

*Lead: County Staff & Environmental Consultant - Olaunu*

**Proposals with a budget and budget narrative that provide a reasonable explanation of project costs will be prioritized.**

Please see attached budget narrative file for full explanation of proposed project costs.

**Describe any new policies or administrative actions required to implement the plan or project being designed.**

No new policies or administrative actions are required to implement the proposed project.

#### **2.6.4. Evaluation Criterion D – Presidential and DOI Priorities (15 points)**

##### ***E.1.4.2 Benefits to Disadvantaged, Underserved, and Tribal Communities***

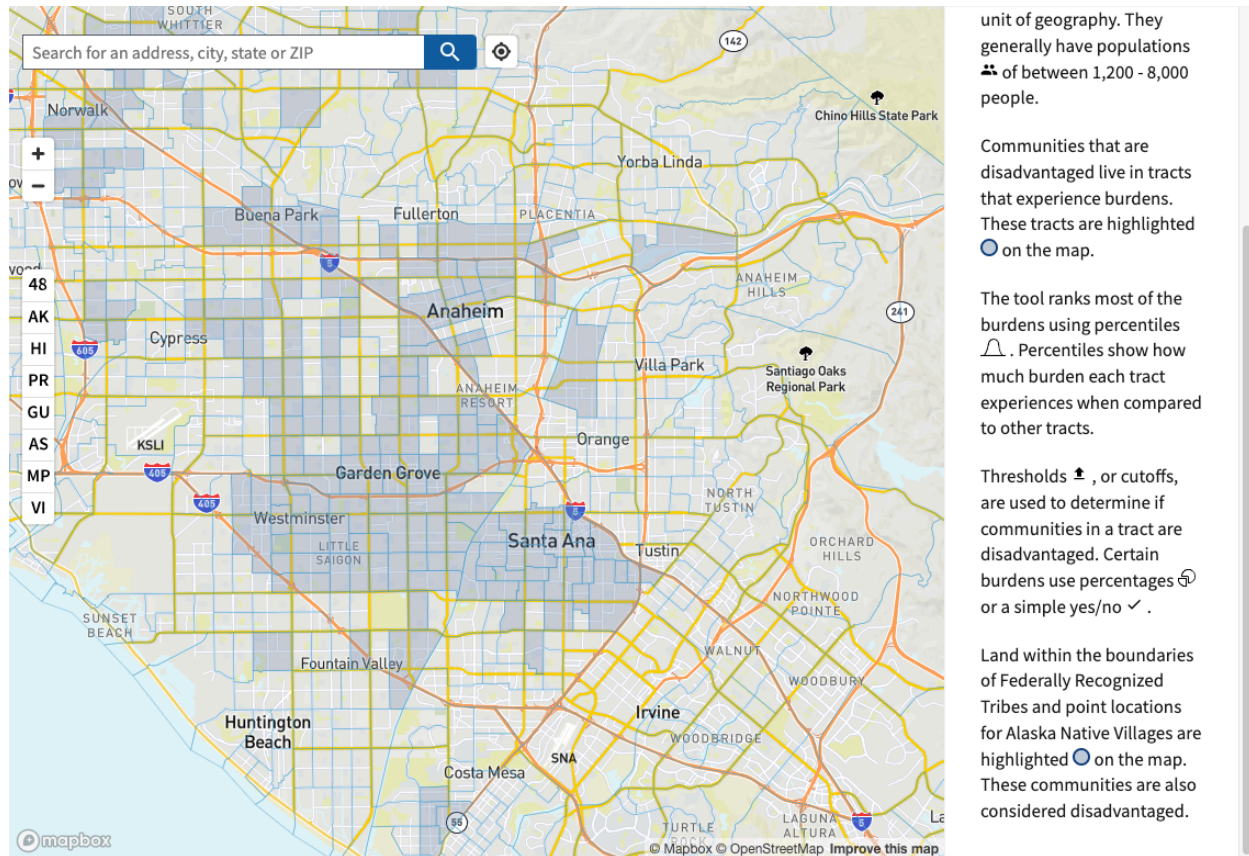
**Points will be awarded based on the extent to which the project directly serves disadvantaged, underserved, or Tribal communities. For the purposes of this criterion, Tribes and insular areas (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands) are considered disadvantaged.**

*Disadvantaged and Underserved Community Benefits*

**Please use the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, available online at Explore the map – Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov>) to identify the disadvantaged communities that will benefit from your project.**

According to the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s Interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, disadvantaged communities make up approximately one third to one half of the communities within the geographic area of the North OC IRWM Group region and will benefit from the proposed project.

**Figure 6 – White House EJ Screening Tool Disadvantaged Communities in North and Central OC**



**If applicable, describe how the proposed project will serve or benefit a disadvantaged or underserved community, identified using the tool described above. For example, will the project improve public health and safety by addressing water quality, add new water supplies, provide economic growth opportunities, or provide other benefits in a disadvantages or underserved community?**

By targeting meaningful engagement of these disadvantaged and underserved communities by the watershed group for North and Central OC, the County and its partners will be in a better position to identify, consider, and include their local priorities in future watershed project planning efforts. The proposed project will foster opportunities that are currently lacking for the County to collaborate with underrepresented stakeholders on multi-benefit water resource projects with quantitative benefits towards critical watershed issues and established OC Plan goals.

### ***Tribal Benefits***

**Does the proposed project directly serve and/or benefit a Tribe? Benefits can include, but are not limited to, public health and safety by addressing water quality, new water supplies, economic growth opportunities, or improving water management.**

The Tongva and the Acjachemen were the original indigenous inhabitants of the North and Central OC WMAs. Though these tribes do not currently have a federally recognized presence in the area, Tribal members do exist and groups such as the Sacred Places Institute can help the County outreach and connect with such Tribal members. California Native American Tribes care deeply about water and the land, so building strong relationships with Tribal members and partnering with them to provide solutions to critical watershed issues will benefit all parties.

### **Does the proposed project support Reclamation’s Tribal trust responsibilities or a Reclamation activity with a Tribe?**

As noted in the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Secretarial Order 3335, “the Federal trust responsibility can often be achieved best by empowering tribes.” Though without an organized presence in the North and Central OC WMAs, the Tongva and Acjachemen peoples are the original landowners and represent valuable Tribal interests in the proposed project area. Similar to the Bureau’s goals of building new or better working relationships with tribes, the County desires to build a working relationship with the Tribal interests in the area and, through the proposed project will investigate the most effective means to accomplish this. As expressed by a participant at a Tribal listening session related to watershed planning for the Santa Ana River, Tribal members desire to be, “involved at all levels not just a gestural act ... but a genuine collaboration, a seat at the table and a voice in the process from the very beginning at all levels because within our communities we have experts and professionals, we have cultural and academic scholars that are more than qualified to respond to these things and probably can educate them on how to proceed.”<sup>11</sup> The County seeks this genuine collaboration with local Tribal partners in the North and Central OC WMAs and the proposed project can help achieve this.

## 3.0 Project Budget

**Table 2 —Summary of Non-Federal and Federal Funding Sources**

<b>FUNDING SOURCES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
<b>Non-Federal Entities</b>	
1. County of Orange*	\$76,815.00
2.	
3.	
<b>Non-Federal Subtotal</b>	\$76,815.00
<b>REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING</b>	\$300,000

\*in-kind

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.legacy.civicwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Angela-Mooney-DArcy-Sacred-Places-Institute-for-Indigenous-Peoples\\_COMPRESSED.pdf](https://www.legacy.civicwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Angela-Mooney-DArcy-Sacred-Places-Institute-for-Indigenous-Peoples_COMPRESSED.pdf)

## 4.0 Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

Due to the planning nature of the proposed project, the following questions related to environmental and cultural resources compliance are not applicable. The proposed project involves no earth-disturbing work and will have no impacts on the physical environment.

**Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)? Please briefly describe all earth-disturbing work and any work that will affect the air, water, or animal habitat in the project area. Please also explain the impacts of such work on the surrounding environment and any steps that could be taken to minimize the impacts.**

N/A - the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to impact the surrounding environment.

**Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project?**

N/A - the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to impact any species.

**Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as “Waters of the United States?” If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have.**

N/A - the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to impact wetlands or other surface waters.

**When was the water delivery system constructed?**

N/A – the proposed project does not involve any work on a water delivery system.

**Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? If so, state when those features were constructed and describe the nature and timing of any extensive alterations or modifications to those features completed previously.**

N/A – the proposed project involves planning activities only and will not result in any modification of or effect to individual features of an irrigation system.

**Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? *A cultural resources specialist at your local Reclamation office or the State Historic Preservation Office can assist in answering this question.***

N/A - the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to impact historic or cultural resources.

**Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?**

N/A – the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to impact any archaeological sites.

**Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?**

No, the proposed project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations. Instead, the proposed project intends to benefit low income and minority populations by targeting the engagement of these and other underserved communities in watershed planning for multi-benefit water resource projects within the region.

**Will the proposed project limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on Tribal lands?**

N/A – the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to impact any Tribal lands.

**Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area?**

N/A – the proposed project involves planning activities only and has no potential to noxious weed or invasive species issues in the area.

## 5.0 Required Permits or Approvals

Due to the planning nature of the proposed project, no necessary permits or approvals are required.

## 6.0 Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

No overlap exists between the proposed project and any other active or anticipated proposals or projects in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel. The County is submitting another application for CWMP Phase I funds to complete similar outreach and engagement for its South OC WMA. However, there will be no overlap in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel.

## 7.0 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

No actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of application submission.

## 8.0 Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

The County was required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year of FY 22/23. The Employer Identification Number (EIN) associated with that report is 956000928. The report is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse.

# Appendix A

## Letters of Support





# CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

## Public Works Department

Chau L. Vu  
Director of Public Works

August 29, 2024

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 202440-0001

**Re: FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I  
for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362**

Dear Commissioner Touton,

The City of Huntington Beach (City) endorses the County of Orange's (County) application for FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program funds from the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). The City is a participating stakeholder within the North Orange County Watershed Management Area (North OC WMA). This collaborative effort identifies and implements feasible projects aligned with the North OC WMA's goals within the City's jurisdiction.

Situated within the Anaheim Bay-Huntington Harbour and Santa Ana River watersheds, the City prioritizes initiatives that promote groundwater recharge and the development of sustainable urban runoff harvesting and reuse strategies. To achieve this, the City currently diverts approximately 250 million gallons annually of urban runoff during dry weather periods to the sanitary sewer system for primary and secondary treatment. Subsequent to treatment at Orange County Sanitation District Plant #1 in Fountain Valley, the treated effluent is conveyed to infiltration basins located in the upper Santa Ana River watershed. This process serves to replenish the County's groundwater aquifer, a critical resource that provides over two-thirds of the City's potable water supply. This managed aquifer recharge (MAR) program has been operational for the past two decades.

Recognizing the increasing variability in precipitation patterns attributed to climate change, including the cyclical nature of drought and above-average rainfall events, the City actively supports programs and projects that ensure

sustainable sources of potable water. The City fosters collaboration with various agencies, including Caltrans, for project identification and negotiates with the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board staff regarding the allocation of water quality credits associated with proposed projects.

The City of Huntington Beach strongly encourages the USBR to give full consideration to the County's application for funding the North and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project.

Sincerely,



Jim Merid  
Environmental Services Manager  
Public Works Department  
2000 Main Street  
Huntington Beach, CA 92648  
[Jmerid@surfcity-hb.org](mailto:Jmerid@surfcity-hb.org)  
(714) 374-1548

MAYOR  
Valerie Amezcua  
MAYOR PRO TEM  
Thai Viet Phan  
COUNCILMEMBERS  
Phil Bacerra  
Johnathan Ryan Hernandez  
Jessie Lopez  
David Penalzoa  
Benjamin Vazquez



CITY MANAGER  
Alvaro Nuñez  
CITY ATTORNEY  
Sonia R. Carvalho  
CITY CLERK  
Jennifer L. Hall

## CITY OF SANTA ANA

### PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY

20 Civic Center Plaza • P.O. Box 1988  
Santa Ana, California 92702  
(714) 647-5659  
[www.santa-ana.org](http://www.santa-ana.org)

August 29, 2024

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240-0001

**Re: FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362**

Dear Commissioner Touton,

The City of Santa Ana is a strong advocate for and is actively engaged in implementing stormwater capture and treatment projects. Since 2018, the City has secured \$14.7 million in grant funding to implement several stormwater capture projects, including the Mabury Park Stormwater Capture Project, the Raitt & Myrtle Park Project, the Downtown Flood Reduction and Stormwater Infiltration Project, the King Street Urban Greening Project, the Santa Ana Zoo Stormwater Capture and Diversion Project, and the Bristol-Tolliver Street Urban Greening Project. These projects provide numerous benefits to the community and environment, including water quality improvement, enhanced neighborhood aesthetics, new recreational opportunities, reduction in the urban heat island effect, providing new parks and green spaces, reducing flooding, increasing local water supplies, and addressing climate change.

A critical step to successful implementation of these projects is community outreach and public education. Engagement with neighborhood associations and other community organizations early in project development helps the City understand if there is support for the project as conceived or if modifications are needed. Community support is critical for implementation of these projects and letters of support are an essential component of a strong grant application. Community engagement not only helps identify the benefits a project would provide, but also highlights community needs and preferred project features (i.e. new park, trail, open space, playground or exercise equipment, etc.).

As the City has learned how important community outreach is to implementation of stormwater capture projects, the City strongly supports the County of Orange's application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program with the North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area (North OC WMA and Central OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. As a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) copermittee in the Santa Ana Region of Orange County, the City has been collaborating with the County for more than 20 years to improve stormwater quality, including the recent planning and evaluation of regional stormwater capture and watershed improvement projects in North Orange County.

#### SANTA ANA CITY COUNCIL

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Critical to the success of these regional stormwater capture and watershed improvement projects is effective community engagement, especially in disadvantaged communities, which encompass a large portion of Santa Ana.

The North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project will help identify communities and community-based organizations (CBO) that may be affected by or may benefit from stormwater capture and watershed improvement projects in North Orange County. The project will engage these communities and CBOs so they better understand the purpose of these projects and help identify the desired benefits of the community that may be incorporated into these projects. The City can attest to how challenging yet rewarding community outreach for stormwater capture projects can be and therefore underscores the vital importance of the North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. The City will be fully engaged and will share our experience and lessons learned with the County for the North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project.

The City strongly supports the North and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project and urges USBR to fund this critical project with funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (714) 647-5659 or via email at [cfoster@santa-ana.org](mailto:cfoster@santa-ana.org).

Sincerely,



Craig Foster, EIT, CPSWQ, QSD/P  
NPDES Manager

SANTA ANA CITY COUNCIL

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Doug Cirbo  
Robert Pequeño  
Benjamin Yu

**City Manager**  
Debra DeBruhl Rose

August 29, 2024

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

**RE: FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362**

Dear Commissioner Touton:

The City of Lake Forest ("City") is pleased to inform you of our support for the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) application developed by the County of Orange ("County") for funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program. The County's application proposes a crucial Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project ("Project") which is a vital component of our collaborative planning and initiative efforts in south Orange County.

The City remains an active member of the North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area ("North and Central OC WMA"), in both the management and executive committee levels, to develop and advance integrated multi-benefit projects incorporating watershed, water supply, water resiliency, and environmental concerns in collaboration with numerous governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. The North and Central OC WMA stakeholder group is long recognized as a leading and successful multi-agency body to blend elected officials and management of numerous agencies to identify and prioritize potential joint multi-benefit project opportunities through an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan and other planning processes.

The County's proposed Project is an urgent and crucial component to update the foundational underpinning of our region's plan and is integral and necessary to advance the substantial amount of work the City and North and Central OC WMA stakeholder agencies have completed to date. The Project is needed to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged communities, including underserved communities and tribal interests, are heard, understood, and considered in order to substantively incorporate equity and environmental justice to our region's integrated regional project development, planning, and construction.

The City requests your support in recognizing the regional benefits as well as the benefits to the City as we continue to develop and plan regional projects in collaboration with our North and Central OC WMA partner agencies and stakeholders. For example, the City is currently developing a project which considers stormwater capture and reuse, as well as stream restoration. The multiple benefits identified

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for the project currently include, but are not limited to, stormwater capture to reduce potential pollutants, increased water supply and resiliency in a region which relies on approximately 80% or more imported water, improved flood and stormwater management, and environmental/habitat restoration and recreational opportunities directly benefiting a disadvantaged community. Therefore, the City recognizes the importance of public outreach in the development and planning of these and other stormwater capture projects. Outreach and input from DACs and other underserved communities is vital to ensuring benefits to all parties on these projects.

For these reasons, the City strongly urges USBR to award funding to the County's proposed project for the North and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project.

Respectfully,  
CITY OF LAKE FOREST



Devin Slaven, CPSWQ, QSD/QSP  
Environmental Manager

cc: Thomas Wheeler, P.E., Director of Public Works/City Engineer



The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

**SUBJECT: FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I  
for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362**

Dear Commissioner Touton,

I am writing to express my strong support for the North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area (North OC WMA and Central OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project under the FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program. As the Director and faculty member of the Community Health Worker (CHW) Program at Orange Coast College, I am deeply committed to the success of this initiative, which aligns with our ongoing efforts to enhance community engagement in environmental sustainability and public health.

Our CHW program at Orange Coast College, which I had the privilege of developing in adherence to the C3 Community Health Worker Core Consensus Project, trains CHWs and Las Promotoras to address a wide range of public health challenges within Orange County, including health access among underserved populations, drug education and prevention, tobacco cessation, and maternal health programs like MOMS OC. CHWs are trusted members of their communities and are uniquely positioned to engage stakeholders in culturally sensitive ways, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in the planning and decision-making processes of watershed management.

In the North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area, CHWs and Las Promotoras will play a critical role in facilitating community outreach and education, fostering grassroots support for sustainable water resource management, and promoting the consensus-based decision-making that is vital for the program's success. Their involvement will help bridge the gap between technical planning and community needs, ensuring that all voices, especially those from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, are heard and respected.

As an educator and director of the CHW program, I am fully committed to supporting this project and ensuring that our CHWs are well-prepared to contribute effectively to the stakeholder



engagement efforts. I am confident that their involvement will not only enhance the project's impact but also promote a more inclusive and sustainable approach to watershed management.

Thank you for considering this important initiative. I look forward to seeing the positive outcomes that this partnership will bring to the communities of North and Central Orange County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Georgia Halkia", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Georgia Halkia, MPH, Ph.D.  
Director, Community Health Worker Program  
Orange Coast College  
Email: ghalkia@occ.cccd.edu



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The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
Commissioner Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street NW,  
Washington DC 20240-0001

August 30, 2024

**Re: FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362**

Dear Commissioner Touton,

The Orange County Conservation Corps strongly support of the County of Orange's application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program with the North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area (North OC WMA and Central OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. The Orange County Conservation Corps serves young, at-risk adults through employment, training and educational programs that build self-sufficiency and benefit the community through conservation-driven projects. In recent years OCCC has collaborated with the County of Orange and Olaunu on the training of Corp members with the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) a certification program for workers who construct, inspect and maintain green infrastructure (GI) projects. As the County of Orange in recent years has been engaged in planning of stormwater capture projects including green infrastructure OCCC is envisioned to play a critical role in helping to inspect and maintain these stormwater capture projects.

OCCC knows firsthand the importance of community engagement as many of the OCCC corps members come from Disadvantaged Communities (DACs). OCCC has learned that community engagement is essential to education and participation from the community and is a big part of the success of OCCC and its programs. The North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project will help to engage DACs and other communities to educate them about the importance of stormwater capture and green infrastructure projects as well as understand community needs which may be able to be addressed by the planned of stormwater capture and green infrastructure projects. One of these needs that both OCCC and the County of Orange have identified is the need for workforce development related to construction, inspection, and maintenance of stormwater capture and green infrastructure projects. The North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project may assist with identifying future OCCC members that can be trained utilizing the NGICP and provide the much-needed services of construction, inspection, and maintenance of the future stormwater capture and green infrastructure projects in North Orange County.

OCCC is committed to conservation driven projects and to developing a workforce to assist with these projects and the North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project will help to facilitate the conservation driven projects of stormwater capture and green infrastructure projects. OCCC fully supports the North OC WMA and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project and is committed to engage with the implementation of the project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (714) 956-6222 or via email at [jnewton@occrcps.org](mailto:jnewton@occrcps.org).

Sincerely,

Jeremy Newton, OCCC Director of Operations

Orange County Conservation Corps

August 28, 2024

United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)

**SUBJECT: Letter of Support for Funding Opportunity (NOFO) No. R23AS00362  
– WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase  
I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024**

On behalf of Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) I am pleased to write in strong support of the County of Orange's (County) application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funding opportunity from the Watershed Management Program Phase I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024.

The North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area (North OC WMA and Central OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project (Project) will target affected stakeholders to confirm that the North and Central OC Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Group represents the full diversity of stakeholders within the watershed with the focus of additional targeted outreach including to ensure the representation of disadvantaged, underserved, and tribal interests in the North OC WMA and the Central OC WMA.

OC San provides essential wastewater, water and biosolids reuse, and dry urban runoff capture and reuse services to the aforementioned stakeholders and is a governing member of the IRWM. OC San is currently investing approximately \$1M on a study to optimize dry and wet weather urban runoff capture and reuse to improve water supply resilience for over 2.6 million Orange County residents. As a part of this effort, extensive outreach efforts have been made to coordinate stakeholders representing water supply, water quality, and natural resource protection sectors across the North and Central OC WMAs.

We strongly believe in the value of the Project and look forward to contributing toward its planning, outreach, implementation, and ongoing maintenance in order to ensure the IRWM working group is inclusive of stakeholders within the watershed with special attention to outreach to disadvantaged, underserved, and tribal interests in the North and Central OC WMA.

We look forward to participating in this important project.

Sincerely



Lan C. Wiborg  
Director of Environmental Services

H:\dept\es\610\Admin\Gen\_Letters-Memos\2024\20240828

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Costa Mesa  
Sanitary District

Midway City  
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Irvine Ranch  
Water District

Yorba Linda  
Water District



September 3, 2024

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

**Re: FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362**

Dear Commissioner Touton,

Orange County Water District (OCWD) is a groundwater wholesale agency responsible for managing and protecting the Orange County Groundwater Basin. The basin is a vital local resource that provides 85% of the drinking water supply to 19 cities and retail water districts, who serve a collective 2.5 million people in North and Central Orange County. OCWD has a long-standing relationship with the County of Orange and the north and Central OC cities and the Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) regarding integrated water management and more recently on the capture of urban runoff and stormwater in North Orange County.

OCWD strongly supports the capture of urban runoff and stormwater as an alternative water supply and to improve water quality and watershed health. OCWD relies on a portion of its water supply on imported water supplies and so capturing urban runoff and stormwater can help to reduce the reliance on imported water in North and Central Orange County. OCWD has been collaborating with the County of Orange regarding potential projects to capture urban runoff and stormwater. Based on these discussions and its own outreach experience OCWD recognizes the importance of outreach in implementing stormwater capture projects. OCWD therefore strongly supports the County of Orange's (County) application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program with the North and Central Orange County Watershed Management Area (North OC WMA and Central OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project.

OCWD strongly encourages USBR's full consideration of the County's application for funds for the North and Central OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. We are excited about and remain committed to the Project which will broaden stakeholder participation and increase stakeholder diversity for the North OC WMA and the Central OC WMA. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned at (714) 378-3304 or via email at [jkennedy@ocwd.com](mailto:jkennedy@ocwd.com).

Sincerely,



John Kennedy  
General Manager  
Orange County Water District

