

South Orange County Watershed Management Area Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

Grant Applicant:



2301 N. Glassell Street
Orange, CA 92865

Project Manager: Beatrice Musacchia
2301 N. Glassell Street
Orange, CA 92865
Email: Beatrice.Musacchia@ocpw.ocgov.com
Phone: (714) 955 – 0612

Submitted on September 3, 2024

to:

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

Table of Contents

1.0	<i>Mandatory Federal Forms</i>	1 -
2.0	<i>Technical Proposal and Evaluation Criteria</i>	1 -
2.1	Executive Summary	1 -
2.2	Project Location	2 -
2.3	Applicant Category	4 -
2.4	Eligibility of Applicant	4 -
2.5	Project Description	4 -
2.6	Evaluation Criteria	5 -
2.6.1	Evaluation Criterion A – Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope (30 points)	5 -
2.6.2	Evaluation Criterion B – Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)	14 -
2.6.3	Evaluation Criterion C – Readiness to Proceed (20 points)	20 -
2.6.4.	Evaluation Criterion D – Presidential and DOI Priorities (15 points)	21 -
3.0	<i>Project Budget</i>	23 -
4.0	<i>Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance</i>	24 -
5.0	<i>Required Permits or Approvals</i>	25 -
6.0	<i>Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement</i>	25 -
7.0	<i>Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement</i>	25 -
8.0	<i>Uniform Audit Reporting Statement</i>	25 -

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 South Orange County Watershed Management Area (WMA) encompasses the San Juan Hydrologic Unit (SJHU) in the southernmost portion of the County of Orange, south of Newport Beach and north of San Diego County. Tribal and disadvantaged community (DAC) engagement remains a gap in stakeholder connection despite the South Orange County Integrated Regional Water Management Group's (South 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 Tribal, DAC, 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 districts, non-profits and environmental organizations, the local groundwater basin authority, regulatory agencies, real estate development groups, HOAs, and residents (the other members of the South OC IRWM Group). Currently, the two most critical needs in the South OC WMA, are increasing water supply reliability and improving water quality. The project will help alleviate impacts of these concerns by fostering watershed project input and support from and communicating 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 South 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 NOFO's 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 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 South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South OC WMA) encompasses the San Juan Hydrologic Unit (SJHU) and is located in southern Orange County, California. The SJHU covers 496 square miles within Orange, San Diego and Riverside Counties. **Figure 1** depicts the South OC WMA which includes the portion of the SJHU that falls within Orange County (approximately 70 percent) and spans 11 cities and six subwatersheds and their associated USGS HUCs: Aliso Creek (12-180703010301), Dana Point Coastal Streams (12-180703010302), Laguna Coastal Streams (12-180703010302), San Clemente Coastal Streams (12-180703010303), San Juan Creek (12-180703010101, 12-180703010102, 12-180703010103, 12-180703010104), and San Mateo Creek (12-180703010203).

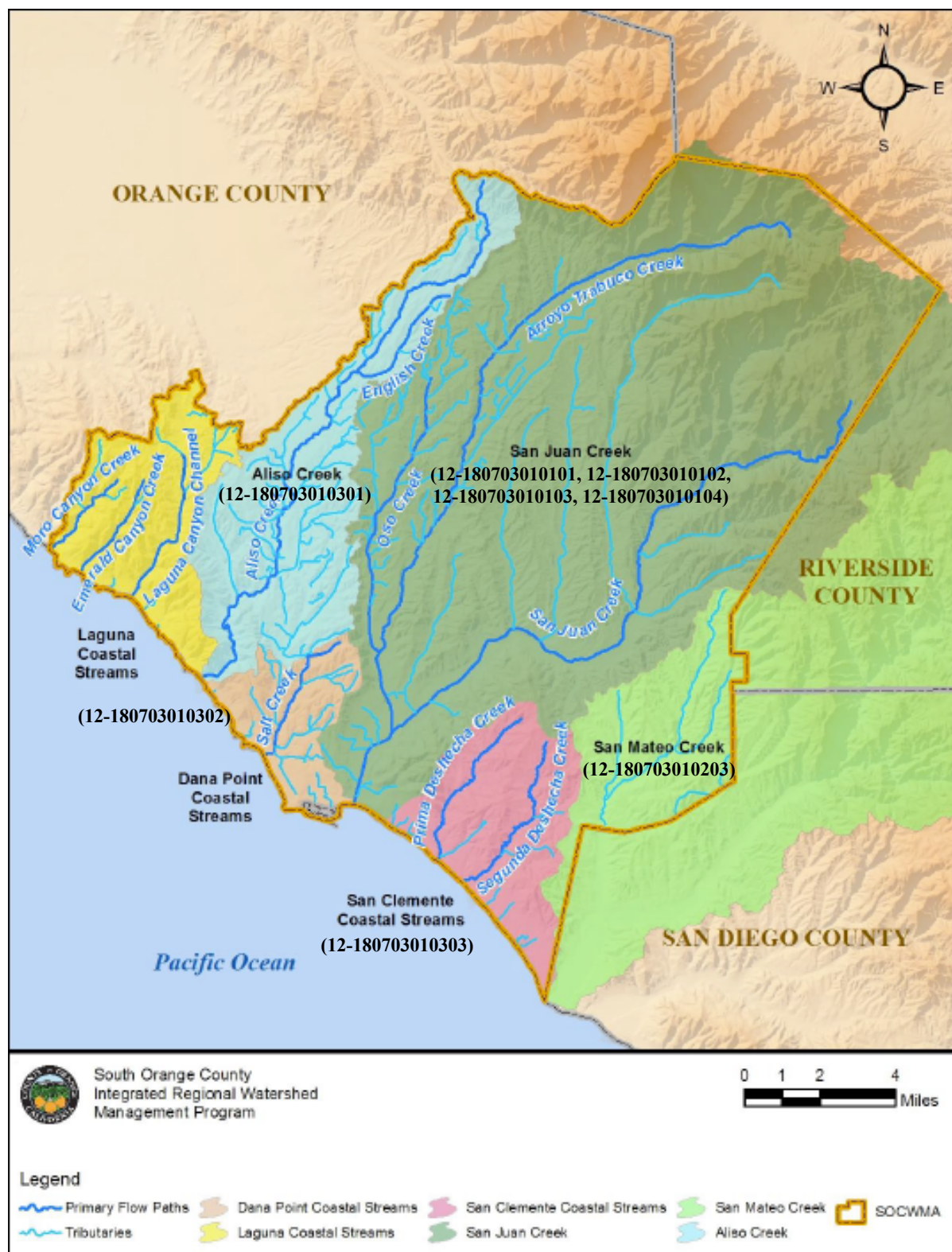


Figure 1 – South OC WMA Geographic Location

2.3 Applicant Category

The County is applying as an Existing Watershed Group because the South OC WMA's existing watershed group, the South OC IRWM Group, is already well-established with a nearly 20-year history, and significant watershed restoration planning completed to-date.

2.4 Eligibility of Applicant

The County meets the eligibility requirements because it is in the State of California and it is a fiscal sponsor of the existing watershed group for the South OC WMA. The existing watershed group, the South 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 project. The watershed group has not previously received a CWMP Phase I grant. Historically, tribal and disadvantaged community (DAC) involvement has been lacking from the South 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 Tribal and DAC interests, and any other underrepresented stakeholders identified through this process.

To do so, the County now 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-engage with previously committed stakeholders, to confirm under-represented groups/individuals and add any additional missing stakeholders to the list to target. (January 2026)
3. - Based on the missing stakeholders, identify the best strategy for meaningful engagement of these groups. Community-based organizations 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 South OC WMA, watershed needs, and feelings about watershed projects (e.g. generally favorable, or unfavorable) at the beginning of outreach and engagement. (September 2026 – August 2027).
7. - Survey newly engaged stakeholders on understanding of the South OC WMA, watershed needs, and feelings towards 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 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, South OC WMA projects can be designed to integrate benefits to those communities and ensure that projects are designed with community support. This will ensure that the implemented projects benefit all community members to the greatest extent possible and help the South OC WMAs achieve their water-related goals faster. As the South OC WMAs are developed and populated, watershed projects 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 those into future watershed projects. Nor will the project proponents be able to communicate the critical need for these projects. This could lead to future community misunderstandings and even potential opposition of 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.”¹

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 DACs 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 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.

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

The purpose of the proposed project is to ensure the inclusion of the full diversity of stakeholders in the South OC IRWM Group. The current composition of the South 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-based 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 water resource 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 municipal governments (cities and the County of Orange), local water districts, non-profits and environmental organizations, the local groundwater basin authority, regulatory agencies, real estate development groups, HOAs, and residents. **Table 1** lists the more details about existing watershed stakeholders.

Stakeholder Group	Role	Interaction with Water Resources
Municipal Government (County of Orange; Cities of Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano)	MS4 Permittees, lead South OC Watershed Management efforts	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), water delivery authority (City of San Clemente)
Water Districts (El Toro, Irvine Ranch, Laguna Beach County, Moulton Niguel, Municipal Water District of Orange County, Santa Margarita, South Coast, South Orange County Wastewater Authority, Trabuco Canyon)	Water Purveyors and partners to the local municipalities on South OC Watershed Management.	Land use, potable and recycled water service, water conservation, wastewater collection and treatment, habitat protection and restoration, water quality, groundwater management (Santa Margarita and Trabuco Canyon)
Local Non-Profits and Environmental Groups (Audubon California, Clean Water Now! Coalition, Latino Health Access, Natural Communities Coalition, Orange County Coastkeeper, Sierra Club, South Laguna Civic Association, Laguna Bluebelt Coalition, Pacific Marine Mammal Center, Surfrider Foundation - South Orange County Chapter)	Volunteers and organizational support	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 disadvantaged communities (Latino Health Access), ocean stewardship
Regulatory Agencies (CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, CA Department of Transportation, CA State Parks, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, USACE - Southern California offices, USDA Forest Service Cleveland National Forest)	Landowners, regulators, funding and organizational support	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
San Juan Basin Authority	Groundwater basin management	Groundwater management, water conservation, water quality
Rancho Mission Viejo	Real Estate Developer	Land use
HOAs	Project proponent for stacked stormwater incentives	Stormwater infiltration
Local Residents	Affected stakeholder	Resident perspective

Table 1 – Existing South OC IRWM Group Stakeholders

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 different entities and organizations already participating in the South OC WMA watershed group (South OC IRWM Group). Though already diverse, the current participation is not representative of all affected watershed stakeholders. Existing participants can be grouped as municipal governments, water districts, local non-profits and environmental groups, state and federal regulatory agencies, and a groundwater basin management authority. The letters of support included as **Appendix A** of this application demonstrate specific support from a subset of existing stakeholders.

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, underrepresented and Tribal communities is needed to ensure widespread representation within the South 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 South 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.”² To maximize meaningful and sustained engagement of traditionally under-represented 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. In terms of Tribes, the County intends to target the Acjachemen Nation, the original inhabitants of South OC. 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:

² 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

- 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 underserved 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?

The members of the South OC IRWM Group established a cooperative agreement amongst themselves. The agreement provides a framework for planning and implementing water management strategies in the South OC WMA and executing an effective decision-making process. The cooperative efforts may include but are not limited to addressing water quality impairments; establishing priorities for water resources needs; integrating water resource solutions across traditional disciplinary bounds; and jointly advocating for policies and funding that assist these goals. Through authority of the cooperative agreement, the South OC IRWM Group also established an Executive Committee (EC) which governs the South OC WMA and related decision making. A Management Committee (MC) was also formed to support the EC, and other Ad Hoc or Standing Committees, as created by the EC, may also be formed. **Figure 2** below shows the organizational structure of the South OC IRWM Group.³

³ County of Orange, 2018 SOC IRWMP FINAL

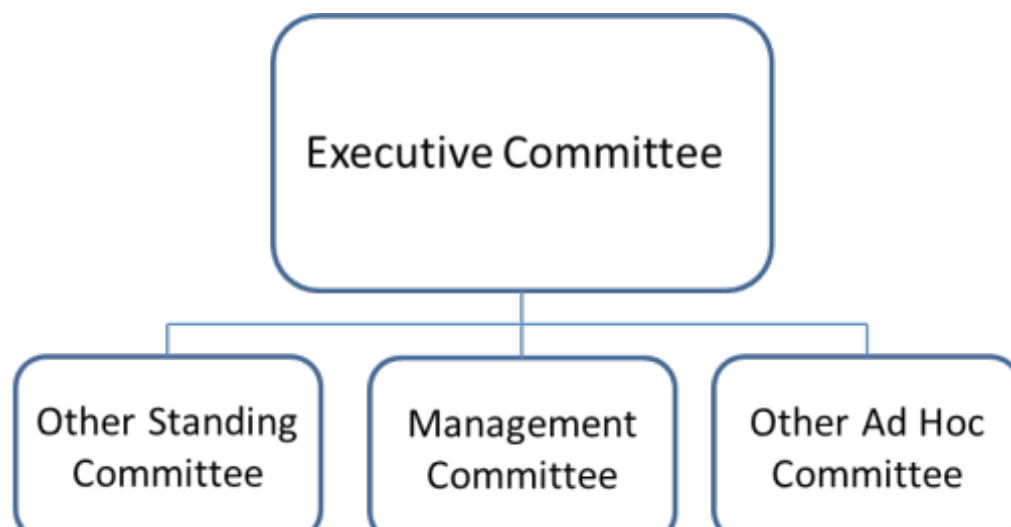


Figure 2 – Existing South OC WMA Governance Structure

The EC members are signatory to the South OC IRWM group cooperative agreement and the members have the following duties and powers:

- a. Identify and prioritize water resource issues, problems and improvement projects.
- b. Establish policy direction for the South Orange County WMA and its committees.
- c. Approve an annual work plan for the South Orange County WMA.
- d. Approve an annual cost-shared budget for the administration and activities of the South Orange County WMA, its committees, projects, or actions, including any administrative support for the South Orange County WMA.
- e. Approve significant updates of the South Orange County IRWM Plan and its prioritized lists of projects and activities.
- f. Approve grant applications for funding South Orange County WMA projects or programs.
- g. Allocate any new non-grant revenue sources available for South Orange County WMA projects based on capital improvement plan priorities.
- h. Encourage and facilitate voluntary agreements between the parties to fund and implement South Orange County WMA projects and programs.
- i. Review and report to the parties as to whether adequate and reasonable progress is being made on water quality and water resource issues in the South Orange County WMA.
- j. Elect a chair and vice-chair.
- k. Meet upon the request of the chair, but at least every six months unless the parties agree to meet less frequently.
- l. Convene committees and workshops as deemed appropriate.
- m. Establish procedures and rules of conduct for the group, as needed.

The EC cannot bind the parties' respective organizations. All recommendations of the EC requiring funding or action on behalf of any party are subject to approval by the parties' governing bodies and subject to the budget process governing those bodies.

The EC actively meets at least twice per year. Currently, the Aliso Creek Watershed Collaboration Group (the main active Ad Hoc Committee) also meets at least twice per year. The Aliso Creek Watershed Collaboration Group actively focuses on moving efforts forward to restore this creek with regional and statewide significance.

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

Please see the letters of support demonstrating that the watershed group will have 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 South 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 – South OC WMA Boundary -

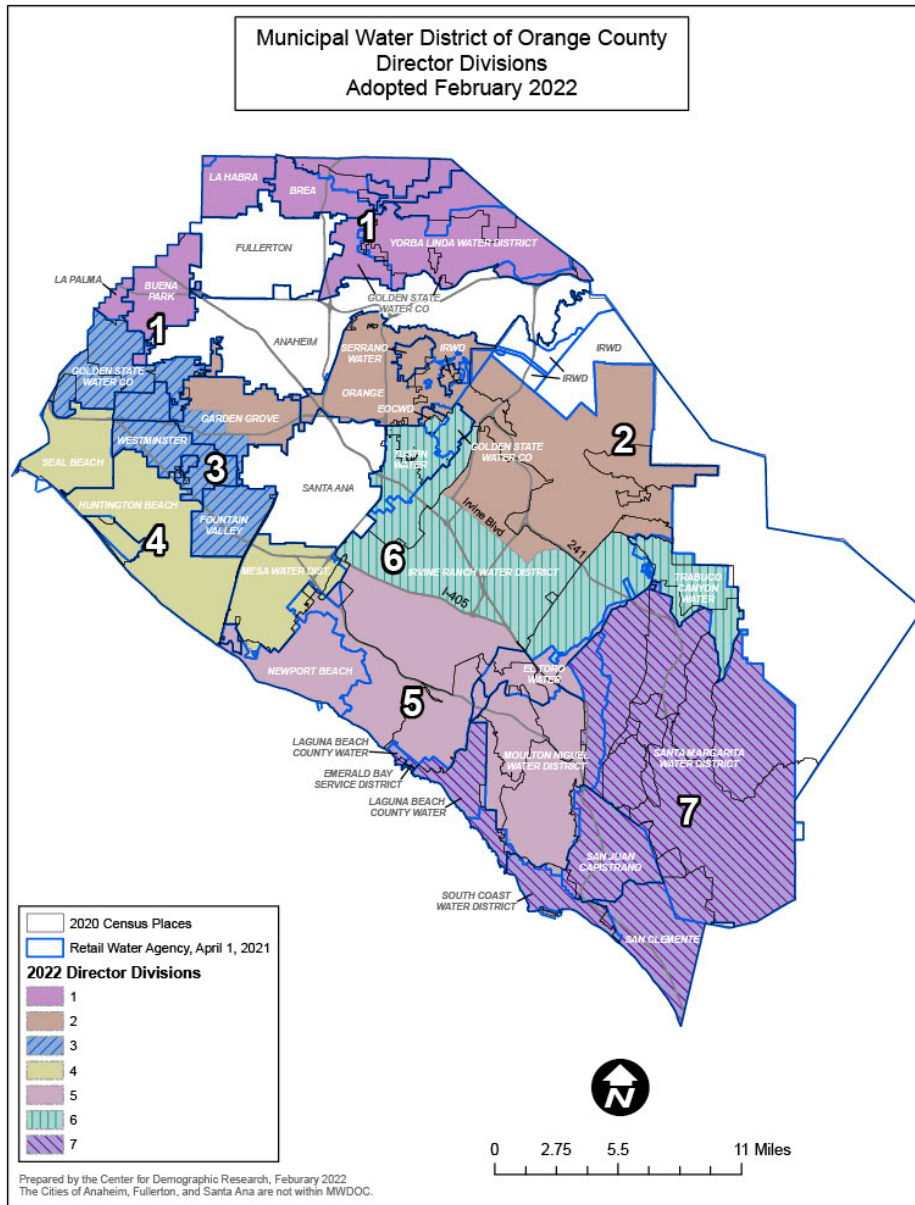


Figure 4 – MWDOC Member Agencies

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 11 cities which lie either fully or partially within the South OC WMA can be seen in different colors on **Figure 3 – South OC WMA Boundary**. The service areas for the special district and agency participants of the South OC IRWM Group can be seen on **Figure 4 –**

MWDOC Member Agencies. The WMA falls entirely within the boundaries of the County of Orange.

The numerous additional active stakeholders are located throughout the WMA, spanning the entire geographic area of the WMA, however with less defined boundaries. The additional affected stakeholders targeted by the County through the proposed Project have yet to be determined and 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 jurisdictional authority and service areas of the local cities and water districts that actively participate on the South OC IRWM Group Executive Committee extend across the full geographic scope of the South OC WMA. **Figures 3 and 4** demonstrate that the collective geographic scope of these entities covers the entire geographic scope of the South OC WMA. 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 the proposed Project is to ensure future representation of stakeholders throughout the South OC WMA that have historically not been represented in the watershed group. Outreach will focus most intently on Tribal and DAC communities. To maximize meaningful and sustained engagement, the County will develop an outreach strategy that may include collaboration with existing CBOs, community healthcare workers and/or coalitions to engage these traditionally under-represented populations.



Figure 5 – Spectrum of Engagement

As shown in **Figure 5**, more in-depth levels of engagement 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

⁴ 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>

recognizing that it may not be feasible in every case due to governance or other constraints. The South OC IRWM group governance is consensus-based and so all stakeholders included in this process, including the underserved 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 newly engaged stakeholders about the type of engagement offered through its watershed group outreach efforts 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 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 South OC WMA is an established watershed 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 South OC WMA represents the San Juan Hydrologic Unit and is governed by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. This area has a limited groundwater basin and relies heavily on imported water (90% of drinking water supplies are imported). The watershed group addresses all related issues in the WMA including drought and natural hazard risk reductions.

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 most critical needs in the South OC WMA, currently, are increasing water supply reliability and improving water quality and meeting state and federal regulatory requirements. Due to limited aquifer (San Juan groundwater basin) capacity, imported water supplies about 90% of the drinking water for the South OC WMA. Such heavy reliance on imported water carries inherent

risks due to the uncertainty of supplies and other demands on the imported supplies (e.g. stressed and overtapped resources), risk of service interruption, and high cost. South OC water districts continue to prioritize increasing local water supplies. Additionally, the County and the cities within the South OC WMA must comply with the San Diego Regional Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit. The MS4 permit regulates stormwater runoff from urbanized areas in the San Diego Region including South OC and requires the development and implementation of a water quality improvement plan (WQIP) for each WMA in the San Diego Region. In June 2018, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (state agency responsible for regulating water quality in the San Diego Region) accepted the WQIP developed by the County and the eleven cities within the South OC WMA.

The South OC WQIP requires compliance with a bacteria total maximum daily load (TMDL) for South OC streams by April 4, 2031. Although municipalities have been implementing non-structural best management practices as part of municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit compliance as well as implementation of low flow diversions for dry-weather flows, capture and treatment of stormwater is needed so that South OC streams and beaches meet water quality regulations during and after rain events.

The South OC MS4 permittees and local water district partners have been both collaboratively and simultaneously identifying and evaluating opportunities for stormwater capture and dry-weather urban runoff capture systems in South OC (which address water supply and water quality issues). This has included a comprehensive project planning effort by the County and the South OC cities for identification and evaluation of potential stormwater and urban runoff capture project locations across South OC as well as collaboration with potential project partners such as the local water districts. Additionally, the County and the South OC cities have been evaluating systematic approaches for planning implementation, and funding of stormwater capture systems on a large scale in South OC. The current approach being pursued is a regional stormwater capital improvement planning (CIP) approach that would provide a more collaborative and comprehensive approach to the funding, outreach, planning, design, construction, and operation and maintenance of stormwater capture systems.

Although some outreach has occurred with the identification of project opportunities for stormwater capture, a more comprehensive outreach approach is needed. Most of these projects will be in already developed and populated areas. To successfully implement a regional stormwater CIP approach and related projects, input and support from all community stakeholders will be key. The stormwater capture projects the County, cities, and water districts intend to develop within the South OC also have the potential be multi-benefit, incorporating additional benefits to meet other needs including those of the community (such as recreational benefits), where feasible. 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 those into future watershed projects. Nor will the project proponents be able to communicate the critical need for these stormwater capture projects to the underserved communities. This could lead to future community misunderstandings and even potential opposition of 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.”⁵

By conducting the proposed outreach and developing meaningful relationships with under-represented stakeholders, South OC WMA stormwater projects can be designed to integrate benefits to those communities and ensure that projects are designed with community support. This will ensure that the implemented projects benefit all community members to the greatest extent possible and help the South OC WMA achieve its water quality and water supply goals faster.

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.

Increasing Local Water Supply

As noted previously, South OC relies on imported water for nearly 90% of its drinking water supplies. Imported water supplies are already uncertain and expensive. As shown in **Figure 6**, imported water for South OC comes from the California and Colorado River Aqueducts, two already stressed and overallocated resources, and the added negative impacts of climate change will only exacerbate the tenuous nature of these supplies. South OC must increase local water supplies to the greatest extent possible. The South OC WMA’s water district partners understand this and are actively working with other South OC IRWM Group members to implement multi-benefit stormwater capture and infiltration projects that will benefit local supplies.

Supporting the severity of this critical issue, Moulton Niguel Water District, which imports 79% of its potable water, states on its website that, “due to the potential risk to the area’s water supply in the event of an earthquake or natural disaster, the District’s Board of Directors took prudent actions to invest more than \$70 million in regional projects to increase local reliability.”⁶ Another local South OC water district, the Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD), imports 100% of its potable water. These imported supplies are SMWD’s largest operating cost and are dependent on the rates from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the retail water provider for much of southern California.⁷ This highlights the existing significant cost burden of imported water supplies. If local water supplies are not increased, high imported water costs will continue to burden the South OC water districts and, without alternatives, the districts may be forced to raise customer rates.



Figure 6 – Imported Water Supplies for South OC

⁵ “Added scrutiny for Hermosa Beach stormwater project, <https://easyreadernews.com/added-scrutiny-for-hermosa-beach-stormwater-project/>, June 2018, accessed on August 28, 2024. -

⁶ Moulton Niguel Water District, Where Does Our Water Come From, <https://www.mnwd.com/watersupply/>. Accessed on August 28, 2024 -

⁷ Santa Margarita Water District, FAQs, <https://www.smwd.com/Faq.aspx?QID=102>. Accessed on August 28, 2024

USBR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Phase I for FYs 2023 and 2024

South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

Rate increases would negatively impact residents, especially those in DACs. -

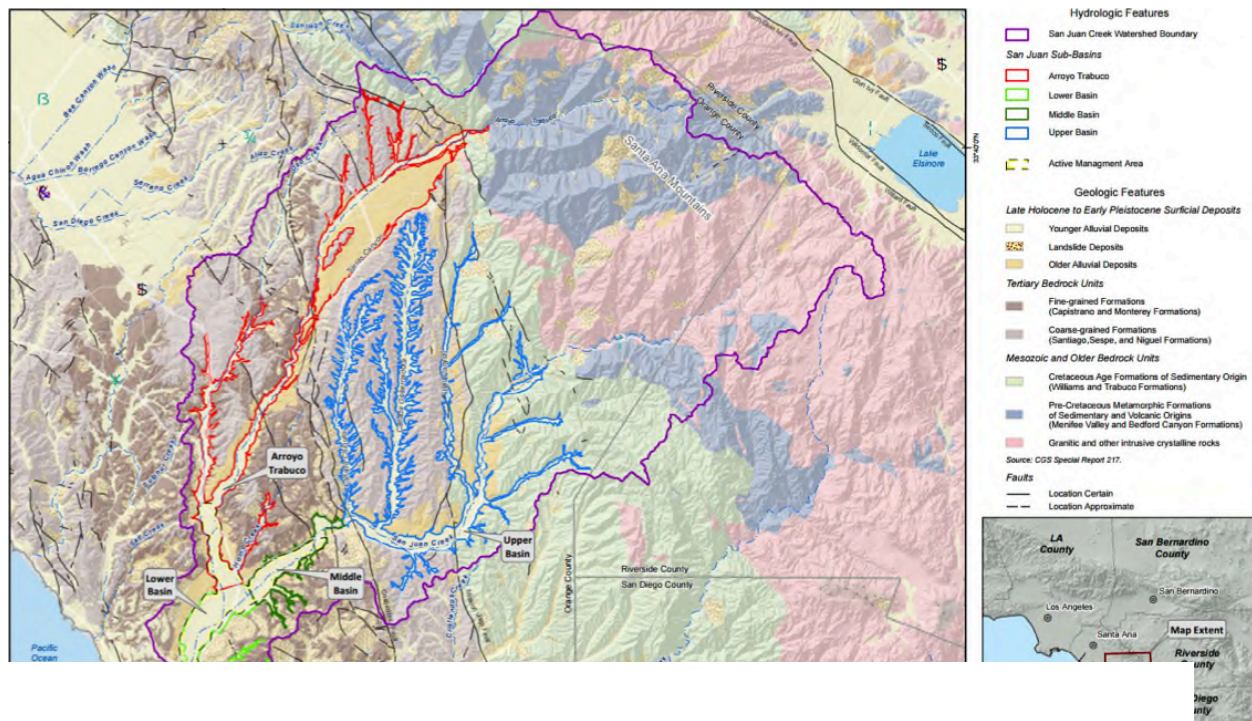


Figure 7 – Principal Groundwater Basins for the San Juan Groundwater Basin

In actuality, the California State Water Resources Control Board, the California state agency responsible for regulating water quality and water rights, “has determined that the San Juan Creek watershed is not a groundwater basin but is rather a surface and underground flowing stream. Therefore, it is subject to the SWRCB jurisdiction and its processes with respect to the appropriation and use of waters within the watershed.”⁸ This distinction means that when surface vegetation in San Juan Creek appears stressed, pumping from the groundwater basin stops. As climate change increases and droughts become more frequent, the ability to tap into supplies from this already constrained aquifer will become less.

Improving Water Quality

Water pollution impacts drinking water and surface waters used for fishing, swimming, and other activities. Increased stream flows may lead to erosion of riparian habitats and surface runoff carries non-point source pollutants into the watersheds. Several streams in the South OC WMA are listed as impaired on the federal 303 (d) list of water quality limited segments, affecting a total of 26.7 stream miles. As part of the development and implementation of the South OC WMA Water Quality Improvement Plan it has been estimated that between 5,600 to 8,500 acres of developed land will need stormwater treatment to achieve compliance with state and federal water quality regulations. The imminent bacteria TMDL compliance deadline of April 2031 increases the need to implement water quality improvement projects such as stormwater capture and infiltration projects quickly.

⁸ Arcadis, South Coast Water District 2020 Urban Water Management Plan, 2020 USBR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I for FYs 2023 and 2024
South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

Climate Change

An additional factor for why it is important to address these critical watershed issues now is climate change. Climate change threatens to exacerbate all issues within the South OC WMA, especially water supply and water quality. Based on the 2021 Climate Change Assessment of OCCAMP Plan Area by ICF⁹ (predictions 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:

1. - 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.
2. - Heat waves – more frequent, intense, and longer lasting heat waves. The number of extreme heat days could increase by 4 – 17 days.
3. - 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).
4. - 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.¹⁰ For beaches in South Orange County, SLR would worsen the already chronic beach erosion and reduce recreational beach areas. The effects of storm waves are projected to increase in magnitude with higher sea levels. Key SLR thresholds were identified at 1.6 feet of SLR, which could occur between 2040 and 2060 and at 3.3 feet of SLR, which could occur between 2050 to 2100 (City of Dana Point 2019; City of San Clemente 2019). Coastal flooding is anticipated to occur with regular frequency even during non-storm conditions with SLR greater than 1.6 feet. Additionally, even with just 1.6 feet of SLR, beach areas in South OC would be lost and access blocked, oceanfront homes could be subject to seasonal erosion impacts and the integrity of the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor would be threatened.¹¹
5. - 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.
6. - Less groundwater recharge - rates of direct runoff are expected to exceed soil infiltration capacity
7. - Increased soil erosion and creek sediment levels – anticipated to be caused by drier soil conditions and increased flood events.

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 South OC IRWM Plan, which included feedback from federal, state, and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other affected

⁹ ICF, *Climate Change Assessment of OCCAMP Plan Area*, 2021

¹⁰ ICF, *Climate Change Assessment of OCCAMP Plan Area*, 2021

¹¹ OC Parks, South Orange County Regional Coastal Resilience Strategic Plan Appendix H Draft Sea Level Rise Analysis, 2024

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 South OC IRWM Group is a stakeholder-driven collaborative 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 affected stakeholders not currently active within the South OC WMA will help ensure full stakeholder support for future critical watershed projects. Increasingly, the County, cities, and water districts are looking to stormwater capture projects as a means of improving water quality and increasing local water supplies. To prevent future barriers to the implementation of such projects, it is important to help all stakeholders understand the need for and significance of such projects as well as location, timing and duration. Since the projects will be constructed within existing communities, it is important 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 South OC WMA can be as resilient as possible and minimize any potential harm to 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 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 under-represented stakeholders, especially Tribal and DAC members. By establishing these relationships and listening to the needs of these stakeholders, the County will ensure the identification, consideration, and inclusion of the priorities of these groups in future watershed project planning efforts. This will also help the County secure support for future multi-benefit water resource projects such as stormwater capture within the South OC WMA. The project will foster greater opportunities for the County to collaborate with under-represented stakeholders on multi-benefit projects with quantitative benefits towards critical watershed issues.

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, under-represented groups will be specific beneficiaries of this 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, Olaunu, and Sunkist Solutions

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, Olaunu, and Sunkist Solutions

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

Lead: County Staff, Olaunu, and Sunkist Solutions

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

Cost: \$90,000.00

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

Lead: Outreach and Engagement Consultant

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

Cost: \$70,000.00

Task 8 – Survey newly engaged stakeholders (Sep 27)

Lead: Outreach and Engagement Consultant

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

Lead: Outreach and Engagement Consultant

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

Phase 5 – Incorporate Results into South OC WMA Watershed Project Planning (May 28-Aug 28)

Cost: \$20,000.00

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

Lead: County Staff, Olaunu, and Sunkist Solutions

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 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

USBR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Phase I for FYs 2023 and 2024

South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

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, in addition to the Acjachemen Nation (a Tribal community within the South OC), two disadvantaged communities fall within the South OC WMA and will benefit from the proposed project.

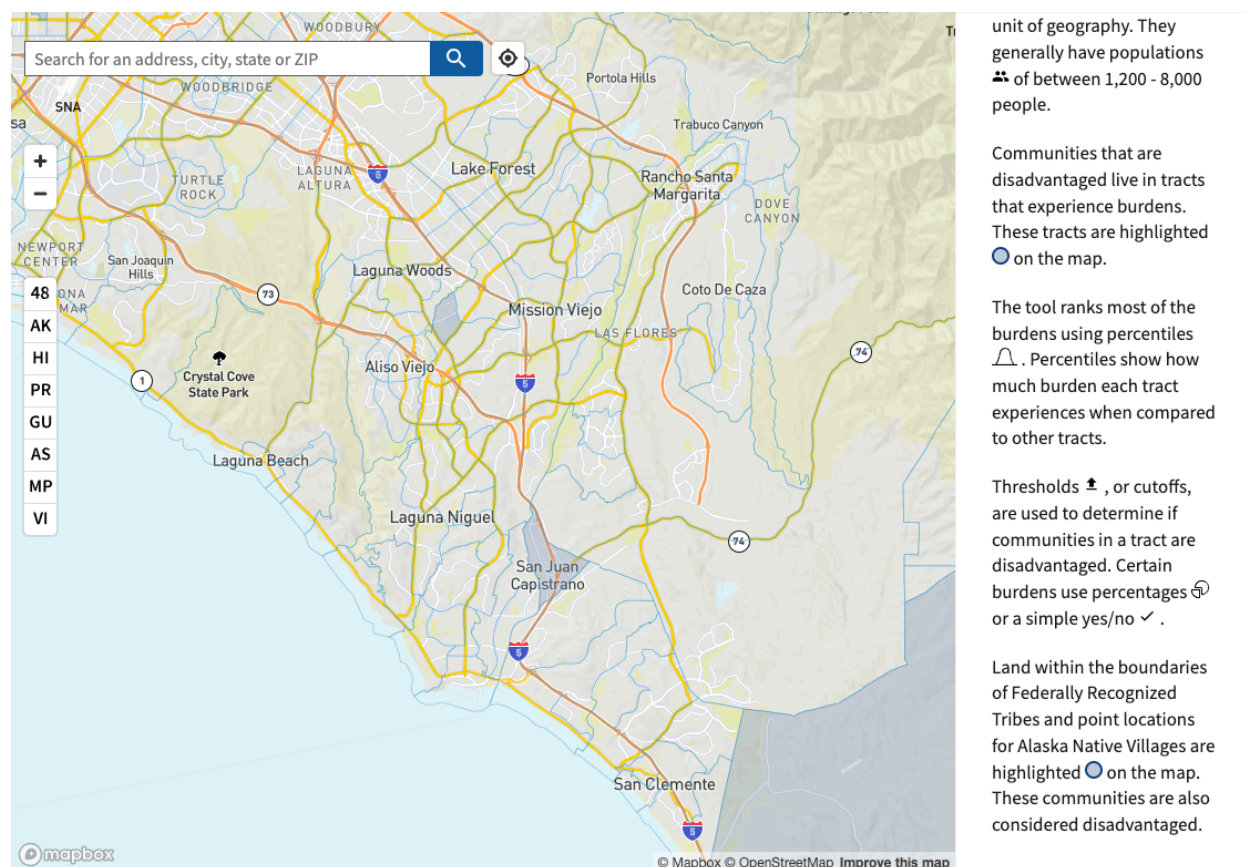


Figure 8 – White House EJ Screening Tool DACs in South OC

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 or underserved communities in the watershed group for South OC, the project will ensure the identification, consideration, and inclusion of their priorities in future planning efforts.

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 people of the Acjachemen Nation were the original inhabitants of the County of Orange and the lands of the project area. The largest concentration of Acjachemen villages was along lower San Juan Creek.¹² Today, the headquarters of the approximately 1,900 member Tribe resides within the City of San Juan Capistrano, within the South OC WMA. The Project will benefit the Acjachemen Nation by ensuring the consideration and inclusion of their priorities in future watershed planning efforts.

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 not federally-recognized, the Acjachemen Nation are the original landowners and represent valuable Tribal interests in the 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 Acjachemen Nation, has begun outreach to them, and would seek to continue that through this project and other related projects, finding ways to engage the Tribe and ensure their voices and priorities are heard and addressed.

3.0 Project Budget

Table 1. —Summary of Non-Federal and Federal Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
Non-Federal Entities	
1. County of Orange*	\$77,000.00
2.	
3.	
Non-Federal Subtotal	\$77,000.00
REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING	\$300,000

*in-kind

¹² <https://www.sanclementejournal.com/2016/08/25/120408/who-are-the-acjachemen->
USBR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Phase I for FYs 2023 and 2024
South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

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 project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations. Instead, the project intends to benefit low income and minority populations by targeting the engagement of these communities in watershed planning for multi-benefit water resources 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 North and Central OC WMAs. 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



El Toro Water District

"A District of Distinction"

Serving the Public – Respecting the Environment

August 29, 2024

Board of Directors

Mark L. Monin
President

Mike Gaskins
Vice President

Kathryn Freshley
Director

Kay Havens
Director

Fred Adjarian
Director

General Manager

Dennis P. Cafferty

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,

El Toro Water District (ETWD) is located in South Orange County and has a service area of about 5,430 acres including all of the City of Laguna Woods, and portions of the cities of Laguna Hills, Mission Viejo, Lake Forest, and Aliso Viejo. The mission of the El Toro Water District is to provide its customers a safe, adequate and reliable supply of water and wastewater service in an environmentally and economically responsible way.

El Toro Water District (ETWD) strongly supports the capture of urban runoff and stormwater as an alternative water supply and to improve water quality and watershed health. ETWD relies entirely on imported water supplies from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) via the Colorado River or the State Water Project (SWP) due to the lack of natural local sources, such as groundwater. ETWD is currently scoping out a plan for implementation of regional potable reuse, and urban runoff and stormwater capture are components of this plan which underscores the importance of these alternative water sources to help ETWD achieve the goal of establishing new local water supplies in South Orange County.

ETWD has been collaborating with the County of Orange regarding potential projects to capture urban runoff and stormwater. As part of these discussions, it has become apparent the importance of community outreach in implementing these types of projects. ETWD 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 South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project.

ETWD has realized based on its own outreach efforts that engagement to underserved and disadvantaged communities is essential to educate the community about the need for these projects, understand the needs of these communities which

El Toro Water District

in part may be addressed by some of the urban runoff and stormwater capture projects, and ultimately build capacity for these vulnerable communities. Due to this, ETWD will be a fully engaged stakeholder in the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project which will help to facilitate future collaboration between ETWD and the County of Orange and other potential project partners in South OC such as community-based organizations. ETWD will draw on its own previous community engagement in the ETWD service area to help the County of Orange plan the community engagement and will engage as appropriate as part of the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project.

El Toro Water District strongly encourages USBR's full consideration of the County's application for funds for the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. We are committed to the Project which will broaden stakeholder participation and increase stakeholder diversity for the South OC WMA. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned at (949) 837-7050.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Cafferty", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dennis P. Cafferty

General Manager



Mayor
Mark Tetterer

Mayor Pro Tem
Scott Voigts

Council Members
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 South Orange County Watershed Management Area ("South 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 South OC WMA stakeholder group is 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 South OC WMA stakeholder agencies have completed to date. The Project is needed to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged communities (DAC), 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 South 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 for the

Lake Forest, Remember the Past ~ Challenge the Future



www.lakeforestca.gov
Lake Forest City Hall
100 Civic Center Drive
Lake Forest, CA 92630
General: (949) 461-3400
Fax: (949) 461-3511

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 South 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 South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South 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 committed to advancing community involvement in watershed management initiatives that prioritize environmental sustainability and public health.

At Orange Coast College, our CHW program equips CHWs and Las Promotoras with the skills needed to address various public health issues, including those that intersect with environmental challenges such as water quality and availability. Having developed the program's curriculum to meet C3 Community Health Worker Core Consensus Project, I have trained CHWs to engage with communities on a wide range of issues, from health access among underserved populations in Orange County to drug prevention and maternal health support. This training emphasizes cultural sensitivity and grassroots engagement, making CHWs ideal partners for the South OC WMA project.

In South Orange County, CHWs will facilitate outreach and engagement efforts by working directly with community members, stakeholders, and partners to promote sustainable water resource management. Their ability to communicate effectively across diverse groups will help ensure that the project reflects the community's needs and values, fostering a collaborative approach to watershed restoration. By involving CHWs, the project will be able to build stronger, more resilient communities that are actively engaged in protecting and managing their local water resources.

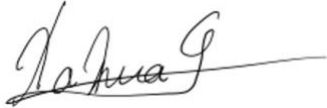
As the program director, I am dedicated to supporting the success of this initiative and ensuring that our CHWs contribute effectively to the project's outreach and engagement goals. Their participation



will be instrumental in promoting a more inclusive and equitable approach to watershed management that benefits all stakeholders, including those from disadvantaged communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical initiative. I am eager to see the positive impact that the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project will have on our communities.

Sincerely,

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

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



August 27, 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,

On behalf of Moulton Niguel Water District (Moulton Niguel), I am writing to express our strong support for the County of Orange's (County) application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds under the FY 2024 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program. We believe that the South Orange County (South OC) Watershed Management Area (WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project (Project) is vital for ensuring that the South OC Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Group represents the full diversity of stakeholders and communities within the watershed.

With a nearly 20-year history of effective stakeholder outreach and engagement, the South OC IRWM Group has been instrumental in fostering collaborative water management in our region. A grant award from the USBR would significantly enhance these efforts, building on the investments made by the County and its local partners. Targeted outreach efforts through this Project will ensure that the South OC WMA is inclusive of disadvantaged, underserved, and tribal communities, and that the South OC IRWM Group addresses the needs of vulnerable populations across the watershed.

The County's Project is closely aligned with and enhances the outreach efforts connected to Moulton Niguel's pioneering OASIS Water Resources Center project (OASIS), which has received the WaterSMART Planning and Project Design Grant. OASIS aims to generate new sources of drinking and recycled water by maximizing wastewater reuse and capturing runoff throughout the watershed. Under this grant-funded initiative, Moulton Niguel is actively collaborating with local agencies, environmental organizations, regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders to refine this groundbreaking project. Additionally, Moulton Niguel is committed to engaging with tribal and disadvantaged communities to ensure their voices are heard. The County's Project will play a crucial role in ensuring that the perspectives of disadvantaged, underserved, and tribal communities are fully integrated into both OASIS and broader watershed management efforts.

Moulton Niguel's OASIS project has ambitious goals for urban runoff and stormwater capture. Our planning efforts focus on evaluating the potential for a cooperative runoff diversion project within the

BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

Duane D. Cave
PRESIDENT

Richard Fiore
DIRECTOR

Donald Froelich
DIRECTOR

Bill Moorhead
DIRECTOR

Brian S. Probolsky
VICE PRESIDENT

Diane Rifkin
VICE PRESIDENT

Sherry Wanninger
DIRECTOR

Aliso Creek Watershed. This initiative, in collaboration with the County, involves assessing the feasibility of a joint project to capture, contain, characterize, and treat runoff, ultimately allowing for controlled discharge into Laguna Niguel Lake for storage and reuse, thereby augmenting local water resources. To advance these collaborative efforts, Moulton Niguel and the County are in the process of signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize and enhance our ongoing collaboration, particularly in relation to the OASIS Program and its associated studies. The County's Project would be instrumental in supporting these efforts.

We strongly encourage USBR's full consideration of the County's application for funding the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. Moulton Niguel is fully committed to the success of this Project, as it is crucial for broadening stakeholder participation and increasing diversity within the South OC WMA. Laura Rocha, Water Resources Manager, will happily answer any questions by phone at (949) 416-4550 or email at lrocha@mnwd.com.

Sincerely,



Joone Lopez, General Manager
26161 Gordon Road
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
(949) 853-2500
jlopez@mnwd.com





ORANGE COUNTY
CONSERVATION CORPS

Earn...Learn...Serve...
Tools to Green the Future!

toll free: (888) 641-CORP (2677)

1853 north raymond avenue | anaheim, ca 92801

www.hireyouth.org

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 South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South 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 South 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 South 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 South Orange County.

OCCC is committed to conservation driven projects and to developing a workforce to assist with these projects and the South 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 South 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@occorps.org.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Newton, OCCC Director of Operations

Orange County Conservation Corps



City of San Clemente

David Rebensdorf, Public Works Director

Phone: (949) 361-6130

rebensdorfd@san-clemente.org

August 27, 2024

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:

On behalf of the City of San Clemente, I am pleased to support the County of Orange's (County's) application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program. The City is an active member of the South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South OC WMA), and the County's proposed Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project (Project) will greatly enhance the City's ability to incorporate the needs of its diverse, significantly Hispanic, population and its 3 disadvantaged community (DAC) census tracts into its stormwater management planning and projects.

The City is currently pursuing grant and other funding to support a large project to divert and reclaim dry-weather runoff at Poche Beach, which a centrally located recreational site adjacent to the outlet of the City's largest watershed, also consisting of some underserved populations. Engaging lower-income households on the importance of stormwater quality improvement through small behavior changes, while educating residents on the City's progress on this Poche Beach Water Reclamation Project (Poche Project) as proposed, is an important step in moving this project forward. The County has been a pivotal partner in developing the Poche Project concept thus far; if they receive funding for and implement their Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project, they will be able to provide ample support in communicating the benefits of the Poche Project to various neighborhoods in the watershed, moving this project closer towards successful completion.

The City also stands to benefit from the County's South OC WMA Outreach and Engagement Project as it moves forward on both a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and an Urban Forest Management Plan in the coming year(s), both of which will require substantial engagement with community members of various socioeconomic backgrounds in order to be successful in broadly addressing climate change, and specifically addressing stormwater management, retention, and reuse.

For these reasons the City strongly urges USBR to consider awarding funding to the County's application for the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. We are enthusiastic about any regional efforts within the South OC WMA that can support our equitable

stormwater management programs and projects locally, but while tapping into regional economies of scale. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Niki Beach of my staff at (949) 361-8354 or via email at BeachN@san-clemente.org.

Sincerely,



David Rebensdorf
Public Works Director

32400 PASEO ADELANTO
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA 92675
(949) 493-1171
(949) 493-1053 FAX
www.sanjuancapistrano.org



MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

TROY BOURNE
JOHN CAMPBELL
SERGIO FARIAS
HOWARD HART
JOHN TAYLOR

August 29, 2024

The Honorable Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton
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,

On behalf of the City of San Juan Capistrano I am pleased to provide support to the County of Orange's application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program with the South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. The City of San Juan Capistrano strives to enhance clean water efforts through stormwater capture projects. The City has worked closely with the County of Orange and their stormwater capture project planning efforts for the past several years and has identified several locations in the City for the implementation of stormwater capture projects. The City worked with the County to apply for and was successful in obtaining Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) funding for the Calle Arroyo – La Novia Stormwater Park, which is a multi-benefit stormwater capture project including educational and recreational amenities to be constructed on vacant land in the City. The drainage area for the project is located partially within an area designated as a Disadvantaged Community (DAC) and will provide water quality improvement and educational and recreational benefits to this DAC.

The City plans to collaborate with the County, the Santa Margarita Water District, and others on additional stormwater capture facilities in the City. The City recognizes the importance of public outreach in the development of these stormwater capture projects. Outreach and input from DACs and the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation in the jurisdiction is vital to assuring benefits to all parties on these projects. The City developed a close working relationship with the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation in the development of the Putuidem Village Park in 2021.

The City's commitment to engagement, knowledge and experience working with the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation and the DACs in the City will provide support to the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. This essential project will help to engage underserved communities as well as build on the City's public outreach efforts with the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation. The City is committed to educating the public about stormwater capture and why it is so important both for improving water quality and as water supply in South Orange County. The City of San Juan Capistrano strongly supports the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (949) 443-6322 or via email at CView@SanJuanCapistrano.org.

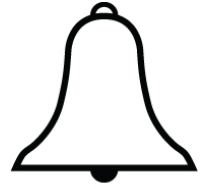
Sincerely,

Charlie View,
Engineering and Environmental Services Department Acting Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LAURA FREESE
CHARLES T. GIBSON
SAUNDRA F. JACOBS
BETTY H. OLSON, PH.D
FRANK URY

ROBERT S. GRANTHAM
GENERAL MANAGER



Santa Margarita Water District

August 30, 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,

On behalf of Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD), I am pleased to write in strong support of the County of Orange's (County) application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program. The South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project (Project) will not only benefit the region but specifically SMWD in identifying potential projects that may be able to supplement our extensive non-potable water systems or be included in our ground water recharge efforts. Utilizing the proposed process will expand the wide variety of stakeholders and provide a forum for the greater acceptance of those projects that are identified.

SMWD is located within the South OC WMA which encompasses the San Juan Hydrologic Unit (SJHU) in South Orange County. The SJHU is naturally divided by major water bodies and thereby represents a potentially important water resource in one of the nation's more arid regions. We understand the importance of including all potential stakeholders, including representation of disadvantaged, underserved, and tribal interests, in this process. Having as many stakeholder groups represented and heard during the development phase is essential to project success. Receiving financial support from USBR in this effort will provide the ability to leverage the time and resource investments that have been expended over the last 20 years with the goal of furthering the collaborative water management in South OC watershed areas.

SMWD strongly encourages USBR's full consideration of the County's application for fund assistance to support the South OC WMA Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project. We are excited about and remain committed to the Project which will broaden stakeholder participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (949) 459-6602 or via email at donb@smwd.com.

Sincerely,

Don Bunts
Deputy General Manager



August 28, 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,

On behalf of South Coast Water District (SCWD), I am pleased to write in strong support of the County of Orange's (County) application for United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) funds from the FY 2024 WaterSMART Watershed Management Program. The South Orange County Watershed Management Area (South OC WMA) Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Project (Project) will target affected stakeholders to confirm that the South OC Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Group represents the full diversity of stakeholders within the watershed. Guaranteeing the representation of diverse stakeholder interests will increase decision quality for the South OC IRWM Group.

The South OC WMA encompasses the San Juan Hydrologic Unit (SJHU) in South Orange County. The SJHU is naturally divided by major water bodies and represents an important water resource in one of the nation's more arid regions. Over its nearly 20 years of existence, much stakeholder outreach and engagement has already taken place for the South OC IRWM Group. However, the County recognizes that additional targeted outreach would be beneficial at this time, specifically to ensure the representation of disadvantaged, underserved, and tribal interests in the South OC WMA. Safeguarding the representation of these interests makes certain that the South OC IRWM Group addresses the needs of these vulnerable populations. A USBR award would build on investments that the County and its local partners have already made towards collaborative water management in this region.

As a coastal water district dedicated to environmental stewardship, SCWD is committed to stormwater and urban runoff capture and treatment. The District has various stormwater diversion agreements with cities in our service area to capture stormwater and divert it to the collection system so it doesn't reach the ocean. Additionally, we have a robust water conservation program that focuses on identifying urban runoff in a timely manner, contacting the customer and working with them to

Board of Directors

Doug Erdman
President

Scott Goldman
Vice President

Rick Erkeneff
Director

Bill Green
Director

Joe Muller
Director



remedy the situation. We have a dedicated water waste hotline that addresses such issues immediately.

South Coast Water District strongly encourages USBR's full consideration of the County's application for funds for the South 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 South OC WMA. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 949-499-4555 or via email at mserna@scwd.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marc Serna', is displayed within a light gray rectangular box.

Marc Serna
Assistant General Manager/Chief Engineer