NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

TASK FORCE MEETING 4

MAY 2026

LA COUNTY WATER PLAN

COUNCIL FOR WATERSHED HEALTH

Public Works LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Background & Purpose

Nature-based Solutions Task Force "NbS Task Force" goals:
Champion the implementation of NbS to improve the health of communities and ecosystems throughout Los Angeles County by:

1. Developing a countywide definition and standard for Nature-based Solutions
2. Creating a framework to more effectively prioritize Nature-based Solutions in stormwater capture projects, and
3. Building upon the LA County Safe, Clean Water Program's (SCWP) Metrics & Monitoring Study and 2025 Interim Guidance.

Phase 2 Purpose

Recommend metrics tied to the Task Force's proposed Definition, Standard, and Criteria, ensuring they are measurable, tangible, and rooted in ecological and social outcomes.

- **Frame metrics to encourage comprehensive, systems-based assessment of Nature-based Solutions**, capturing benefits across hydrology, soil health, vegetation, climate resilience, and long-term functionality.

Discuss the integration of these metrics into the Safe, Clean Water Program, including Watershed Area reporting, tracking progress, and longer-term program evaluation.

Explore approaches for Countywide Application, exploring how Nature-based Solutions metrics may be adopted or adapted across planning processes, departmental initiatives, and multi-agency collaborations beyond SCWP.

Meeting Objectives

- Share updates on the metrics-setting process in collaboration with Paradigm
- Outline final deliverables for Nature-based Solutions Task Force Phase 2
- Provide an overview of Watershed Planning scoring process to support transparency

Draft NbS Task Force Recommendations Report

Visual 2-page Summary

NbS Definition(s)

NbS Definition: Nature-based Solutions address societal challenges through **sustainable actions** that **protect and restore living ecosystems and their functions** to ensure **human well-being** and benefit **biodiversity** by meeting the established NbS standard and associated criteria.

Water-specific Definition: Nature-based Solutions address **water quality, water supply and stormwater challenges** through **sustainable actions** that **protect and restore living ecosystems and their functions** to ensure **human well-being** and benefit **biodiversity** by meeting the established NbS standard and associated criteria.

NbS Standard:

NbS Standard: Nature-based Solutions must implement **place-appropriate** and **evidence-backed living processes and infrastructure**, such as soil and vegetation, to improve **long-term ecosystem function, habitat connectivity, and community health and well-being**. Success of Nature-based Solutions should be **qualitatively and quantitatively evaluated** using the following criteria and indicators (full set of criteria outlined in the Standard, to be read as an integrated framework, can be found in the report).

NbS Criteria

Key NbS Criteria

Foundational for any project to qualify as a Nature-based Solution

Criterion 1: NbS result in a benefit to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

Criterion 2: Design of NbS is informed by scale.

Criterion 3: NbS effectively respond to societal and communal challenges.

Criterion 4: NbS are a communal asset cared for through adaptive management and stewardship.

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Project-Level Guidance

Criteria for application across all projects including NbS

Criterion 5: Economic viability over time.

Criterion 6: Projects balance trade-offs and ensure equitable outcomes.

Program-Level Guidance

Criteria for broader policy and governance structures that enable NbS

Criterion 7: Inclusive, transparent, and empowering governance.

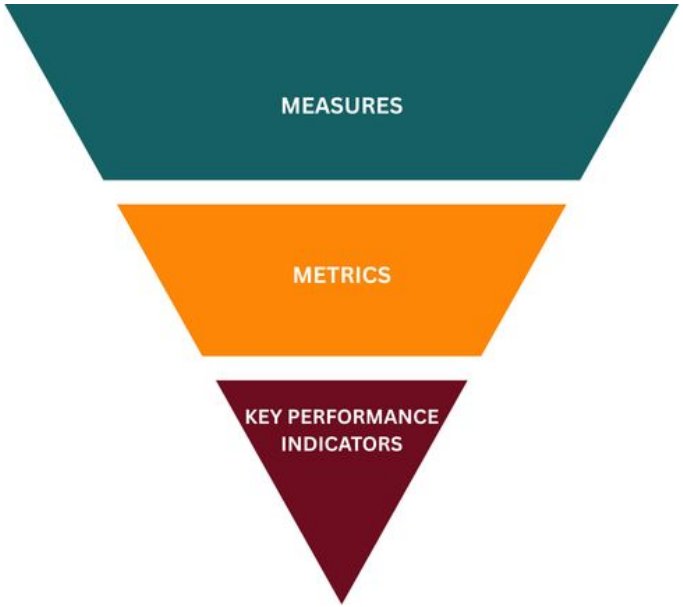
Criterion 8: Alignment across jurisdictions and agencies.

Metrics and Indicators

Measures
Measures are raw pieces of data that quantify a specific attribute or condition (e.g., square feet of permeable surface installed, number of trees planted, gallons of stormwater captured).

Metrics (PMs)
Metrics, referred to interchangeably in the SCWP as **Performance Measures (PMs)**, are standardized values derived from one or more measures. **Metrics quantify benefits provided by individual projects or programs and may express relationships among data points** (e.g., gallons captured per acre, trees planted per project). While metrics are measurable and used for analysis, they do not necessarily correspond directly to a target or objective.

Indicators (Key Performance Indicators)
Indicators (or KPIs) are a subset of metrics that measure progress toward defined goals or targets. In the context of the Safe, Clean Water Program, indicators aggregate or summarize Metrics (PMs) at the Watershed Area scale and at the SCWP-wide scale. Indicators are used to quantify cumulative benefits of SCWP-funded projects and to communicate and track progress toward Watershed and Program goals.



Metrics Setting Process

Metrics Setting Process

Meeting 1: Challenge Framing

- Established key challenges and priorities for Nature-based Solutions Task Force
- Aligned on overall goals and framing for Phase 2

Meeting 2: Metrics Alignment + Expansion

- Crosswalked Watershed Planning metrics with Task Force metrics and NbS Criteria
- Exercise Focus:
    - Defined what must be demonstrated for each NbS criterion
    - Identified ideal projects that meet each criterion
    - Expanded and validated a comprehensive set of metrics
    - Identified key gaps to inform next steps

Post Meeting Feedback: NbS Metrics Survey

Deliverable: Proposed Metrics Structure

Proposed Metrics Structure

Working NbS Evaluation Framework

1. **Site Context**
2. **Design Intent**
3. **NbS Assessment**
4. **Pre- and Post-Implementation Assessment**

Metrics Setting Process

Meeting 3: Metrics Structure + Implementation

- Reviewed Proposed Metrics Structure
- Discussed application within SCWP and Countywide contexts
- Exercise Focus:
    - Refined Design Intent categories and definitions
    - Iterated on NbS assessment questions for clarity and usability
    - Explored pre- and post-implementation assessment approaches
        i. Evaluated applicability of existing models (e.g., CRAM, 5-point frameworks)

Metrics Setting Process

Questions?

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Approach for SCWP

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Approach for SCWP

Framing Shift:

Instead of being new standalone metrics, the NbS metric will measure how existing SCWP outcomes are delivered through Nature-based Solutions

What % of project benefits (water quality, supply, community) are achieved through NbS?

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Approach for SCWP

Indicators measure **progress towards goals**.
(e.g., Water quality can be measured by zinc, bacteria, and phosphorus load reduction. Zinc, bacteria, and phosphorus load reduction are Indicators)

NbS is not a new "benefit" category, it is a **delivery method for existing SCW Program Goals**.

The SCW Program Goal we are looking to measure is *prioritization* of NbS (Goal F), that is, how much total project benefits are being delivered through the use of NbS.

Metric: Proportion of Project Benefits Delivered via NbS (%)

Helps identify and measure design intent by evaluating how much of a project's benefits are delivered through Nature-based Solutions (NbS), relative to the project itself.

Example:

A green street project creates 1 acre of shading surfaces

- That acre is created through tree planting/new canopy, rather than man-made shade structures
- Result: 100% of cooling and shading benefits are attributable to NbS

Proposed SCWP NbS Metric Framework

SCW Portal Integration:

1. **Quantitative assessment**
    a. What proportion of project outcomes (water quality, water supply, and community investment benefits) are achieved through NbS?
        i. Focuses on measurable NbS contributions where applicable
        ii. Assessed prioritization of NbS within each project, not relative capabilities of other projects
        iii. Can be streamlined using existing metrics & data where possible
2. **Qualitative assessment**
    a. "How much of this benefit was accomplished with NbS, and why do you think that?"
        i. Captures design intent where benefits cannot be easily quantified
            1. Reflects intentional outcomes (e.g., "The project was designed to deliver 50% of this benefit through NbS")
            2. Distinguishes planned NbS integration from incidental outcomes (e.g., "The project happened to achieve 50%")
        ii. Encourages explanation of tradeoffs and constraints

Metric: Proportion of Project Benefits Delivered via NbS (%)

SCW Program Goal		Ex. Supporting Metrics & Those for Assessing NbS Prioritization
A.	Improve water quality and contribute to attainment of water-quality requirements.	

B.	Increase drought preparedness by capturing more Stormwater and/or Urban Runoff to store, clean, reuse, and/or recharge groundwater basins.	• Average Annual Stormwater Capture for Water Supply
		  • Treated and Discharged to Storm Drain
		  • Treated and Discharged to a Receiving Water Body or Aquatic Ecosystem
		  • Infiltrated to Managed Usable Aquifer
		  • Infiltrated Over Confined or Unmanaged Aquifer
		  • Diverted to Existing Treatment and Reuse Plants
		  • Diverted to Future Planned Treatment and Reuse Plants
		  • Used On Site for Potable Offset
		  • Other

C.	Improve public health by preventing and cleaning up contaminated water, increasing access to open space, providing additional recreational opportunities, and helping communities mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change through activities such as increasing shade and green space.	• Habitat Created, Enhanced, or Restored
		  • Native Vegetation
		  • Climate Appropriate Vegetation
		  • Irrigated Non-Native Vegetation
		  • Non-Vegetated Habitat
		• Park and Green Space Created
		  • Park Space Created
		  • Lawn/Turf + Habitat Created

F.	Prioritize Nature-Based Solutions.	Metric for assessing design intents? Aka did you achieve these benefits/goals intentionally with NbS, or incidentally

Questions for Task Force

What counts as a Nature-based Solution?

How do we calculate NbS metrics? Using existing metrics & measures, what would a formula for calculating NbS look like? What new data might we need to collect to calculate this metric?

Additional Considerations

- Where does the Site Context live on the SCWP Portal
- How can Qualitative NbS Evaluation be incorporated into the SCWP Portal integration

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Process for the Safe Clean Water Program

1. **Frame the Role of NbS Metrics**
   - Define NbS as how SCWP outcomes are delivered, not a new metric
2. **Align NbS Criteria with SCWP Goals**
   - Translate NbS concepts into existing SCWP Goals
3. **Reverse the Mapping**
   - Ensure each SCWP goal includes NbS-relevant components
4. **Review Existing Metrics Infrastructure**
   - Identify existing Project Portal data that can support NbS evaluation
5. **Define Metrics (Numerators + Denominators)**
   - Use existing fields to quantify NbS contribution with minimal burden
6. **Define What Needs to Be Measured**
   - Identify required data, gaps, and alignment with NbS priorities
7. **Integrate Qualitative Assessment**
   - Capture NbS elements that cannot be fully quantified
8. **Establish Within-Project Comparison**
   - Measure what % of a project's total benefits are delivered via NbS
9. **Design Project Portal Integration**
   - Determine what is auto-calculated vs. reported vs. reviewed
10. **Roll-Up Metric**
    - Report final output as % of project outcomes achieved through NbS across WAs and the SCWP

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Approach for SCWP

COMPLETED STEPS:

1. Leverage Existing Infrastructure

- Reviewed SCWP Project Portal
- Identified existing data, reporting structures, and crosswalk opportunities

2. Within-Project Assessment

- Evaluate NbS **relative to each project's total benefits**

3. Align + Translate

- Mapped NbS Criteria onto SCWP Goals and vice versa to translate NbS concepts into Watershed Planning framework
- Reverse-mapped to ensure NbS opportunities are embedded across goals

4. Define What to Measure

- What data already exists vs. gaps?
- How can this be operationalized within SCWP metrics?

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Approach for SCWP

ONGOING STEPS:

5. Build Metrics (Quantitative)

- Use existing data fields where possible
- Define numerators + denominators
- Minimize additional applicant burden

6. Integrate Qualitative Assessment

- Capture criteria not fully quantifiable
- Incorporate into scoring / review processes

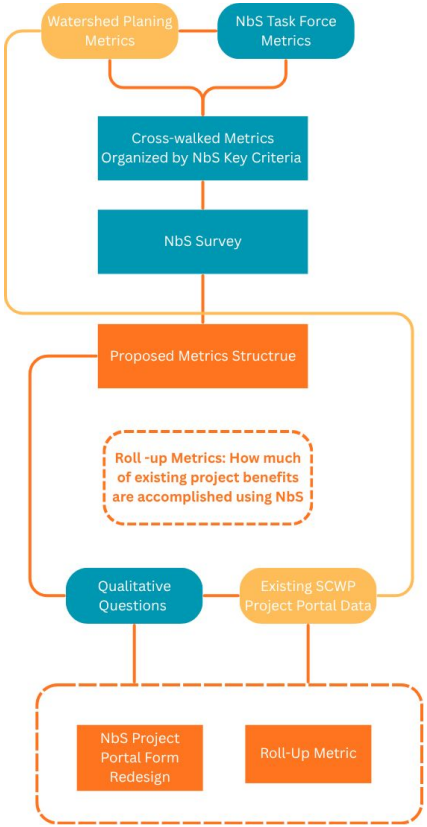
7. Project Portal Integration

- Identify:
  - Auto-calculated fields
  - Applicant-reported inputs
  - Reviewer-assessed components

Refined NbS Metrics-Setting Approach for SCWP

OUTCOME:

- Roll-Up Metric: % of total project outcomes achieved through Nature-based Solutions
- SCWP Project Portal: Integration of Site Assessment + Qualitative NbS Questions on the SCWP Project Portal to compliment NbS Roll-up Metrics



Refined Metrics Setting Approach

Questions?

Phase 2 Deliverables

1. COMPLETED: Definition, Standard and Criteria for NbS
2. Proposed Metrics Structure
    a. SCWP Application
    b. County-wide Application
3. Singular Roll-Up Metric Recommendation + Form ReDesign Recommendation
4. Summary of Phase 2

Scoring Updates

- *Release Public Survey (30 Days) - May 2026*
- *Draft Feasibility Study Guidelines and Scoring Criteria for Public Review Period (30 Days)*

  - Early Q1 2027
- *Final FSG and Scoring Guide Release - Late Q1 2027*

Deliverables + Scoring

Questions?

Next Steps

- Indicate if you would like to provide additional feedback on the Proposed Metrics
- Upcoming Event: Malibu Creek Lagoon Restoration
  - Thursday May 7th, 9:30 AM
- Final Task Force meeting (In-Person): June 2

Phase 2 Anticipated Schedule

~~Jan. 20, 2026 | Kick-off Meeting~~

~~Feb. 10, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 1~~

~~Mar. 10, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 2~~

~~Mar. 20, 2026 | Virtual Report Out 1~~

~~Apr. 7, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 3~~

~~May 5, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 4~~

June 2, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 5