

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

TASK FORCE Phase 2 Kick-off

January 2026

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.

December 2023

A Los Angeles County [Board of Supervisors Motion](#) established a NbS Task Force with the purpose of establishing standard definitions for Nature-based Solutions for Countywide use, aligned with the goals of the Los Angeles County Water Plan.

June 2025

Completed Phase 1 Work: Developed a Definition and Standard for NbS, along with criteria adapted from the IUCN to reflect the ecological, urbanization, and priority needs of Los Angeles County.

For a full review of findings, see the completed Nature-based Solutions Task Force Recommendations Report.

June 2026

Anticipated completion of Phase 2.

Phase 1: August 2024

In response to [the County Water Plan's](#) call for clearer guidance around Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and to help achieve the County Water Plan's goal to equitably achieve safe, clean, and reliable water resources for Los Angeles County by 2045, Los Angeles County Public Works "Public Works" convened the Nature-based Solutions Task Force in August 2024.

Task Force Charter Priorities

- Develop Countywide definitions and standards for nature-based solutions.
- Prioritize Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in stormwater capture projects.

Build upon the [Safe, Clean Water Program's Metrics & Monitoring Study](#) and [2025 Interim Guidance](#).

Phase 2: January 2026

Phase 2 of the NbS Task Force will build on this work by developing metrics aligned with Task Force Recommendations made in Phase 1 and promoting regional coordination.

PHASE 1 RECAP

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.

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.

Countywide Recommendations

- **Holistic Assessment of Project:** In all County Programs, NbS projects should be designed and evaluated holistically– based on how well they function as integrated Nature-based Solutions, not just on individual features.
- **Scoring on a Spectrum:** Evaluate projects along a spectrum from gray to nature-based infrastructure to reflect degrees of alignment with the NbS Standard, rather than placing them in a singular category based on a set of features.
- **Parallel Tracks for Open Space + Conservation NbS Projects:** Create dedicated evaluation and funding pathways for open space acquisition, conservation, and restoration projects that align with Measure W goals.

SCWP Recommendations

- **Holistic Assessment of Project:** In all County Programs, NbS projects should be designed and evaluated holistically– based on how well they function as integrated Nature-based Solutions, not just on individual features.
 - **Scoring on a Spectrum**
- **Restructure the SCWP Scoring:** Revise the SCWP scoring to meaningfully prioritize and incentivize Nature-based Solutions.
 - **Letter of Intent (LOI):** A qualitative tool for applicants to describe site context, demonstrate systems-based design, and show alignment with the Nature-based Solutions Definition and Standard.
 - **Peer Review Panel (PRP):** A funded, interdisciplinary body to assess projects holistically, determine NbS qualification, and classify them along the Gray-to-NbS Spectrum.

Comprehensive Assessment Recommendation

Letter of Intent Project Concept

- Project proponent describes project site, ecological context, and design intent
- Introduces site context + NbS integration
- Allows early feedback before full application

Peer Review Panel Expert Review

- Interdisciplinary experts assess project feasibility and ecological potential
- Confirms alignment with NbS Definition & Standard
- Recommends refinements and classifies preliminary Spectrum placement

Spectrum Scoring Evaluation Continuum

- Projects scored from Gray → Green → Nature-Mimicking → Nature-Based
- Reflects context, design integration, and ecosystem performance
- Informs SCWP scoring and funding eligibility

Tiered Funding Incentivizing NbS

- Funding scaled by Spectrum position:
- Gray = No funding
 - Green / Nature-Mimicking = Partial
 - Fully NbS = Full funding

Additional Recommendations

Regional

Develop a Tribal Engagement Framework to formalize government-to-government relations and embed Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in project planning.

Integrate **Indigenous land and care practices into Operations and Maintenance (O&M)** training for Nature-based Solutions.

Los Angeles **County should hire botanists and ecologists on staff** to ensure projects are designed with ecological integrity, native biodiverse, and resilience benefits

Center **community-based stewardship** and workforce development in the long-term care of Nature-based Solutions.

Enhance interagency coordination to reduce silos and strengthen adaptive management of Nature-based Solutions.

SCWP

Reassess and **improve the SCWP Technical Resources Program** to better support Nature-based Solutions and expand access for community-based organizations.



**Draft NbS Task Force
Recommendations Report**



Visual 2-page Summary

PHASE 2

Metrics and Indicators

Measures

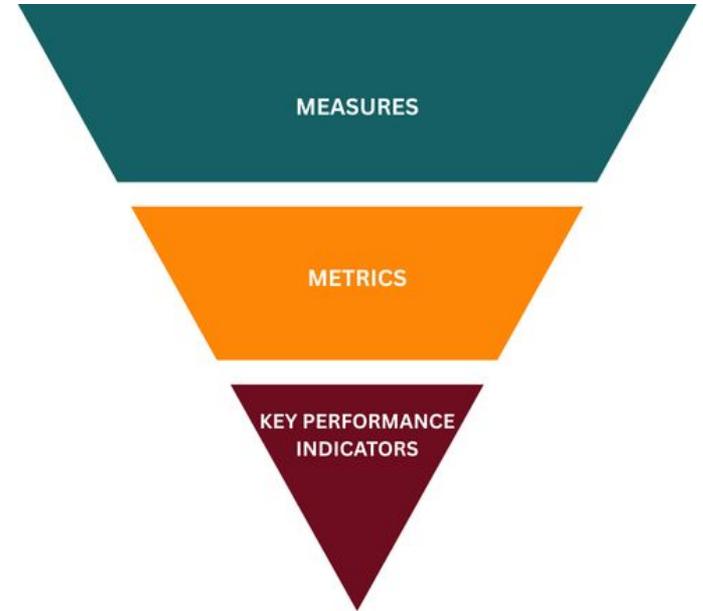
Measures are raw pieces of data that quantify a specific attribute or condition (e.g., square feet of permeable surface installed, number of trees planted, gallons of stormwater captured).

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.



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.

Additional Considerations

Task Force Role

- Recommend metrics aligned with **Nature-based Solutions criteria**
- Identify **priority metrics**
- Consider level of effort (LOE), with final metrics informed by TF recommendations and a comprehensive County-led level of effort analysis.

Key Challenge

- Isolated metrics risk undermining a **systems-based, regenerative approach**
- Discrete measures cannot fully capture **Nature-based Solutions**

Constraints

- Metrics are **recommended**, not approved, by the Task Force
- Indicators are developed by **Public Works Subcontractors**
- County will develop a **Nature-based Solutions addendum** to the Watershed Plans and update scoring criteria, with periodic check-ins with the Task Force.

NbS Draft Meeting Plan

In-Person Convening 1:

- PW Teams will share how Metrics recommended as part of this process will be integrated and used into Watershed Plans and beyond
- Review the work on Metrics developed in Phase 1 of the NbS Task Force.
- Review of existing Metrics (PW)

In-Person Convening 2:

- Review existing metrics included in the Phase 1 report related to the assessment of Nature-based Solutions.
- Consider how to balance qualitative and quantitative assessment mechanisms
- Begin identify key categories where additional qualitative and quantitative metrics should be developed further

In-Person Convening 3:

- Prioritize metrics recommended by the Task Force according to their relevance for measuring Nature-based Solutions and their potential to align with and inform the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) implementation and evaluation process.

In-Person Convening 4:

- Finalize key metrics
- Discuss how Task Force metrics can be anchored to performance measures and be integrated into the SCWP process with input from Public Works Teams.
 - Consider how NbS Metrics and Nbs Indicators may be used by Watershed Area and on a SCW Program-wide scale.

In-Person Convening 5:

- Explore a model for a Countywide NbS metrics that support standardized evaluation and reporting across programs.

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

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

May 5, 2026 | Feb. 10, 2026 | In-person Task Force Meeting 4

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

Countywide Collaboration Opportunities

Task Forces & Commissions

- Chief Sustainability Office
- SCWP Watershed Coordinators
- Regional Oversight Committee (ROC)
- Blue Ribbon Commission on Fire Recovery + Climate Resilience
- County Water Plan: Communications Task Force
- County Water Plan: Regional Water Supply Task Force
- County Regional Planning Division/Planning Commission

Utilities & Partner Programs

- Metropolitan Water District (MWD)/ARLA Turf Rebates
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)

County Departments & Public Agencies

- Department of Beaches & Harbors
- LA County Parks & Recreation
- Department of Regional Planning
- County Agricultural Commissioner's Office
- County Fire
- County Public Health
- Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
- Regional Parks and Open Space District (RPOSD)

Community-Based & Partner Organizations (CBOs/NGOs)

- The Nature Conservancy
- TreePeople
- U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)



Q&A