

LA COUNTY WATER PLAN

Nature-based Solutions Blue Ribbon Panel Workshop #2 Meeting Notes

Tuesday, November 12, 2024 from 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Alhambra Room, 900 S. Fremont Ave,
Alhambra, CA 91803

Objectives

- *Reach consensus on BRP's Nature-based Solutions definition.*
 - *Review and refine criteria and standards for nature-based solutions.*
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Attendees

Panel Co-Chair: Eileen Alduenda (Council for Watershed Health)

Panel Members:

Claudia Arends (USFS)
Amanda Begley (TreePeople)
Dan Cooper (RCD—Santa Monica Mountains)
Maggie Gardner (LA Waterkeeper)
Keith Hala (LA County DPW)
Bruce Hamamoto (LA County DPW)
Kelsey Jessup (TNC)
Nurit Katz (UCLA)
Dan Knapp (Conservation Corps of Long Beach)
Gary Lai (Quixotic Nature-Based Solutions)
Stephanie Landregan (UCLA)
Claire Latané (Cal Poly Pomona)
Annelisa Moe (Heal the Bay)
Mark Nguyen (City of LA Sanitation)
Natalie Ouwersloot (Foothill Municipal Water District)
Claire Robinson (Amigos de los Rios)
Rowan Roderick-Jones (Stillwater Sciences)
Geraldine Trivedi (City of Redondo Beach)
Jane Tsong (Watershed Conservation Authority)
Andrea Vona (LA County Parks and Rec)
Melina Watts (SCWP)
Melanie Winter (The River Project)

Panel Facilitation Support Team:

Jason Casanova (Council for Watershed Health)
Debbie Enos (Council for Watershed Health)
Tanishka Chellani (Council for Watershed Health)
Shona Calzada Ganguly (Better World Group)
Drew Ready (Council for Watershed Health)
Charvi Reddy (Better World Group)

Agenda Item	Notes
<p>1. Welcome & Agenda Overview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shona started the meeting with a welcome, introductions, an agenda overview, and an icebreaker activity.
<p>2. COP-16 Debrief, Review of Task Force Meeting & County Report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurit Katz presented a debrief of COP 16, highlighting major events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An informal working group of indigenous leaders was elevated to a permanent body of the Convention on Biological Diversity. ○ The Cali Fund was established for fair and equitable benefit sharing from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources. ○ COP 16 negotiators did not reach a consensus on the budget, and will reconvene in Bangkok sometime next year. ○ California hosted events on 30x30 outside of COP 16. ○ COP-17: Armenia will host the next UN Biodiversity Conference. • Eileen shared an overview of the Task Force: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial findings were submitted to the LA County Board of Supervisors. Findings include milestones, major themes from discussions on the definition of nature-based solutions, and recommendations for future discussions. ○ The Task Force has updated its timeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BRP Workshop #3: Tuesday, December 17 (TBC) ▪ Task Force meeting: Tuesday, December 17 (TBC) ▪ Final Report: Q1 2025
<p>3. Review of Blue Ribbon Panel Pre-Workshop Survey Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debbie provided an overview of findings from the Blue Ribbon Panel pre-workshop survey. • The survey received 18 responses, with a participation rate of 72%. • Four major themes emerged from the survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on Ecosystem Function: Respondents recommended focusing on ecosystem health in the definition of nature-based solutions, and reframing societal changes as the benefit. ○ Conserve, Preserve, Restore, and Reclaim Open Space & Nature: Respondents recommended that nature-based solutions prioritize land for the purpose of ecosystems and nature. ○ Clarity of Outcome and Definitions: Respondents recommended that, to increase clarity of the NbS definition and outcome, the definition should put clearly name defining elements to achieve the highest standard possible for the region. The elements should prioritize biodiversity and treat water and the living landscape with love and respect. ○ Expand beyond stormwater and urban runoff: Respondents recommended taking a more expansive perspective to water in NbS, and to think of water sources from a holistic and integral part of nature.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents ranked the UN’s definition of NbS highest, with LA County’s definition second. However, each definition contained elements identified by respondents as undesirable. • Open Discussion: NbS Solutions Definition Survey Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outcome of the NbS definition: Definition would be applied across LA County for consistency in the LA County Water Plan and across the County, such as with the County Chief Sustainability Office. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attendees noted that the definition should be implementable. Creating a specific NbS definition for water management and including criteria and standards would help make the definition more achievable. ▪ Attendees noted that the County Water Plan should include beaches, harbors, and other water bodies. • Breakout Group Discussion: NbS Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendees participated in group discussions to refine the definition that received the highest number of votes in the pre-workshop survey. ○ Group 1 definition: Actions to protect, conserve, restore, and/or manage terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems, which use living systems while simultaneously providing or enhancing human wellbeing, ecosystem function, resilience and biodiversity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removed “sustainably use,” “natural or modified,” “which address social environmental and economic challenges effectively and adaptively,” and added “living systems.” ○ Group 2 definition: Actions to protect, conserve, restore, and manage aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems which also address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NbS for water definition: Actions that use natural processes to protect water resources and increase groundwater infiltration, reduce flooding and improve water quality using nature-based solutions for water management to maintain the site’s natural hydrology... ▪ Group 2 emphasized the need for an actionable and useful definition. ○ Group 3 definition: Actions to protect, conserve, sustainably manage, and restore living ecological functions of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems, which address wellbeing for all species and ecosystem function, resilience, and biodiversity benefits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changed stormwater to water, given perceptions of stormwater as a liability or waste product. ▪ Group 3 defined actions to prevent gray infrastructure from being included in the definition. ▪ To the NbS water definition, Group 3 changed the wording to make it more expansive than stormwater and to include the protection of natural resources—“actions that use natural processes to enhance
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	<p>infiltration, reduce flooding, and improve water quality”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group 3 requested more clarity regarding the phrases “watershed placement” and “natural hydrology” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrologically, a watershed’s places have different functions, some with more or less infiltration, some uniquely situated to have high groundwater tables. • Attendees referenced the stormwater management tool from TNC. ○ Attendees emphasized the need to expand beyond stormwater for the LA county water plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NbSs most used for stormwater but also goes to wastewater treatment (e.g. in wetlands instead of concrete). ▪ Last part about natural hydrology—could use similar language to last blue-ribbon panel about local context. ▪ Like about second one: actions that use natural processes TO do a thing; very important and first definition must do that too. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature based solutions are not doing TO nature, but doing to accomplish a thing, e.g. socioeconomic or environmental challenges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trying to solve a problem using nature and natural processes. ○ Could switch it to have language like the second one. ▪ “Actions to address socioeconomic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively by using processes to protect and conserve ecosystems, etc.” ▪ Stephanie shared definition from Low Tech by Julia Watson—instead of energy intensive, “ecologically intensive.” ▪ Attendees stated the need to define the term “nature.” ○ Attendees recommended establishing a broad and solid definition of NbS to enhance standardization across the County and to strengthen the water sub-definition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pulling survival ecology to the front, along with the goals of protecting human health and wellbeing, ecosystem function and services, resiliency, and biodiversity.
<p>4. Review Shared List of Nature-based Solutions Criteria & Standards for LA County Water Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shona reviewed findings from the sprinkle activity conducted at Workshop 1 before leading a group discussion. • Facilitators differentiated between criteria and standards. Each standard is required for every project, while criteria are additional optional ways for projects to demonstrate value.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendees recommended removing “comparative cost” as a criterion. They noted that the County has not established scope three emissions or life cycle as criteria for projects, so there are questions on the method of assigning value, costs, and benefits. ○ Attendees noted that climate should be added as a criterion. ○ Attendees requested clarity on how net gains for biodiversity and ecosystem integrity would be defined or measured, and what targets would be applied. They recommended refining or removing based on feasibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conversations highlighted a key difference between the conservation of existing natural sites and the improvement of asphalted areas. ○ Attendees recommended combining NbS and core water management criteria. ○ Attendees noted that some criteria may impact each other, for example, heat island effect and drought. ○ Attendees discussed challenges in measuring progress towards nature-based solutions. ○ Attendees requested greater clarity on defining “evidence-based adaptive management” and on understanding who certified native plant specialists are. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitators clarified that “evidence-based adaptive management” is from IUCN, who also provide guidance and indicators for each of IUCN’s criterion. ○ Attendees noted that greater native ecological perspective is needed at the Blue Ribbon Panel. ○ Attendees recommended added “use of living processes” or “use soil and vegetation” as standards. ○ Attendees recommended providing more specificity on the term “equity” to ensure that equity is balanced with regional wellbeing, and is measurable.
<p>5. Planning for Future Workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eileen shared upcoming topics for the Task Force and Blue Ribbon Panel, and announced that the IUCN definition of NbS, standards, and criteria would be shared following the meeting. • At the next workshop in December, the Panel will revisit a refined NbS definition and clear standards and criteria, then move onto implementation strategies. • Next meeting has 2 topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guidelines for scoring and criteria for safe clean water program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maggie of LA Waterkeeper may share OurWater LA’s recommendations. ○ Prioritizing NbS solutions projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kelsey of TNC may share TNC’s mapping and recommendations.
<p>6. Wrap Up & Next Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming event: national practice forum on nature based solutions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• February 4-5, 2025, Nas Beckman Center in Irvine with Zoom option available.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ No cost to attend (watershedhealth.org/nbs).• The meeting ended with a tour of the building's green roof project.
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