

LA COUNTY WATER PLAN

Los Angeles County Nature-based Solutions Blue Ribbon Panel Workshop #4 – Summary

Meeting Details

Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2024

Time: 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Location: Conference Room C

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

Meeting Objectives

1. Finalize the definition, standard, and criteria for Nature-based Solutions (NbS)
2. Prioritize Nature-based Solutions in stormwater capture projects

Attendees

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

Panel Members:

Lee Alexanderson (LA County DPW),
Amanda Begley (TreePeople)
Maggie Gardner (LA Waterkeeper)
Keith Hala (LA County DPW)
Bruce Hamamoto (LA County DPW)
Kelsey Jessup (The Nature Conservancy)
Samantha Johnson (San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)
Wendy Katagi (McMiller)
Nurit Katz (UCLA)
Dan Knapp (Conservation Corps of Long Beach)
Gary Lai (Quixotic Nature-based Solutions)
Stephanie Landregan (UCLA)
Esther Lofton (UCCE)
Gabe Mason (LA County DPW)
Rowan Roderick-Jones (Stillwater Sciences)
Susie Santilena (City of LA Sanitation)
Andrea Vona (LA County DPR)

Panel Facilitation Support Team:

Tanishka Chellani (Council for Watershed Health)
Jason Casanova (Council for Watershed Health)
Shona Calzada Ganguly (Better World Group)
Colleen Easler (Better World Group)

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Agenda Item	Notes
1. Welcome and Agenda Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eileen gave an overview of the agenda, invited participants to introduce themselves, and gave a land acknowledgement. Shona reviewed the priority tasks from the Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Task Force Charter. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None from this section.
2. Review of Task Force Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tanishka provided updates from the Task Force Meeting earlier in the day. The group reviewed the updated NbS definition, performed a gut check exercise on the Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP) Standard & Criteria, and did an activity to discuss NbS in the context of the recent fires in Los Angeles. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task Force participants found the gut checks on the NbS standard and criteria to be both engaging and helpful. They posed and discussed questions, examined what is working and what is not, and used a Miro board to see each other's thoughts and comments in real time. A BRP participant asked if there were any sticking points or issues for the Task Force around the definition. Tanishka responded that there were none on the definition, but there was some feedback on the standard. She informed the BRP Workshop participants that those critiques would be shared later during Section 5 of the Workshop agenda. A BRP participant asked what comments the Task Force made concerning NbS and the fires. Tanishka reported that Task Force participants provided comments mostly about policy. She informed the panelists that Council for Watershed Health would share the wildfire Miro board developed by the Task Force following the BRP Workshop for closer review.
3. Review of Blue Ribbon Panel Workshop 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shona shared highlights from the last BRP Workshop, including feedback that panelists had on the NbS definition, standard, and criteria and Our Water LA's (OWLA) work on scoring suggestions for the Safe, Clean Water Plan (SCWP). <p>Discussion:</p> <p>Panelists expressed the following thoughts and concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is unclear how the BRP will codify this work to develop a framework for NbS and put it into practice. Engaging the community outside of this Panel and professional sphere is crucial and imminent. The NbS planning process requires greater community representation from the outset, ensuring that residents – who best understand their own communities/neighborhoods – have a voice at

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	<p>the table. While the BRP is comprised of professionals, the body recognized that it does not fully represent Los Angeles. Communities should articulate their needs, and then the BRP can apply its expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential next steps for community engagement and NbS implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporate NbS into planning for fire recovery. ○ Identify a few pilot projects in areas where NbS might get good press. Partner with LA County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to implement a high-visibility project like a park revitalization accompanied by a community celebration to demonstrate the success of NbS. ○ Identify existing projects that already integrate NbS to showcase and monitor their success rather than creating a new one. Use them to reflect on and refine the definition, standard, and criteria that the BRP has developed and consider how to retrofit projects that aren't quite successful. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Showcase and monitor the LA River Flows project, which is a connectivity project that is currently in the implementation phase. ▪ Leverage the excitement for existing projects that integrate NbS and already have extensive outreach underway to advance NbS across the County. ▪ Develop a short, engaging story or host a site-visit to demonstrate the success of an NbS project. ▪ Develop a “short list” of projects that integrate NbS for showcasing and monitoring. ○ Approach the LA County Supervisors about showcasing NbS. ○ Host tours for community members to understand the value and benefits of NbS. The SCWP still has education funding available. • Potential next steps for the development of the NbS framework (definition/standard/criteria) by the BRP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examine existing projects to determine if they meet the criteria that the BRP is developing. ○ Design an ideal project based on the framework that the BRP is developing. • Parallel to the BRP’s work, other groups are carrying out SCWP’s watershed planning and creating targets for each of the sub watersheds. The BRP is creating definitions that haven’t been clearly outlined in the past, like Nature-based Solutions, which will be helpful for the watershed plans.
4. Accelerating Nature-based Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shona laid the groundwork for this discussion, placing it in the context of the fires in Los Angeles and the worsening climate crisis. She also shared that what the BRP is doing matters going forward because it will guide its partner agencies in decision-making. • Shona organized the panelists into small groups and posed two discussion questions: (1) “How do we accelerate NbS in this urgent

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	<p>moment?" and (2) "How do we rebuild in a restorative way for our communities and ecosystems?"</p> <p>Discussion (small group discussion share-out): Panelists shared the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the County and City of Los Angeles River Environmental Flows framework that's in place right now to address threats to communities in terms of water supply, green infrastructure, biodiversity, and cooling needs. The framework has an integrated component with NbS and is watershed-wide. The timeline for completion is supposed to be within a year, so that could meet needs urgently. • Provide resources for projects in communities that have been drafted or are in progress but have very little resources. • Teach children how to create NbS and restorative solutions on school sites. This might inspire parents as well. • Start top-down and examine how contractors are hired and how funding is distributed. Change policies to prioritize NbS. • Educate communities on native plants that are fire resistant as they work to redesign their houses and landscaping. • Fasttrack and streamline permitting for NbS projects to make it easier for both agencies and actors. • Streamline NbS funding so projects don't need to piece it together from various sources. • Create an organized system around recovery and disasters. Many agencies are not clear on what they're doing or how they are working together. • As the BRP, develop a NbS disaster toolkit that outlines a process for collaborating across agencies to respond to disaster. • Work to understand and collect data on what was lost in the fires and how NbS function to mitigate disasters. Then, use this information to educate the public to quell misconceptions, such as the idea that grass lawns protected houses in the fires. • Evaluate land use in the County and reflect on where we are building infrastructure and where it is most at-risk. • Collaborate with the new LA County Water Plan communication task force that is coming together in the next few weeks. The BRP could develop communications or prompts for them to share to correct misinformation.
5. Nature-based Solutions Definition, Standard, and Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shona presented the NbS definition, standard, and criteria as developed by the BRP and invited participants to discuss the definition. • After the discussion on the definition, Tanishka presented a version of the standard and criteria that had been hybridized with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) framework for NbS. The proposed revisions aimed to incorporate biodiversity and tradeoffs as distinct criteria, addressing concerns about the absence

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	<p>of these principles that emerged from participants' discussion during the previous BRP Workshop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shona and Eileen decided to reserve the consensus decision-making process for the NbS definition, standard, and criteria for a future BRP Workshop, giving panelists more time to reflect.• Shona and Eileen also decided to pause on the discussion of NbS scoring. They encouraged participants to reflect on scoring and review the SCWP materials for the next workshop. <p>Discussion</p> <p>Feedback from panelists on the NbS definition, standard, and criteria included:</p> <p><i>Definition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The term "societal challenges" might be too limiting. Participants noted that NbS are solving for many problems, and the definition needs to be inclusive of that.• NbS are supposed to be using strategies that are rooted in natural systems to solve human challenges like wastewater treatment. Without the term "societal", it leaves the definition too broad. In the context of NbS for climate change, the term "societal" may be problematic, but for the purposes of the BRP, NbS should be alternatives to what would traditionally be gray infrastructure.• A potential alternative to the term "societal" could be "global."• The definition should be rearranged to improve logical read and flow, potentially employing a cause-and-effect structure. For example, it could be written as "NbS address societal challenges through sustainable actions that protect and restore living ecosystems and their functions to ensure human well-being and benefit biodiversity."• Another potential term to use instead of "societal" could be "socioecological." Many people understand that social problems are environmental and vice versa, but it is not always clear. The term "socioecological" makes it clear that the two are connected.• The term "societal" might limit projects that are on a very small scale such as backyard rain gardens.• On the contrary, the term "societal" can be scaled from the neighborhood to the country to even the world. <p><i>Standard and Criteria (hybridized with IUCN):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No discussion. Tanishka will send the slides to participants so that they can reflect on the proposed hybridization for the next BRP Workshop. <p><i>Scoring:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing on water in the scoring criteria might narrow the scope of NbS too much.• On the contrary, the scoring criteria should be focused on water because it is specific to the SCWP. Only the NbS definition and standard should be directly applicable to other agencies.
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<p>6. Presentation: The Nature Conservancy's Planting Stormwater Solutions Mapping Tool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kelsey presented on TNC's Planting Stormwater Solutions Mapping Tool. The tool was developed to compare multiple benefits of different proposed stormwater solutions, focusing on nature-based, and particularly, vegetated projects. The development process performed a region-wide assessment of benefits potentially provided by projects that would use NbS (social/public health, biodiversity, pollutant load), then assessed specific proposed projects. Kelsey will share the published paper, link to the interactive map, and slides from today's presentation if participants are interested. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A panelist asked if the LA County ecological areas of concern were used as a part of the metrics. Kelsey responded that it was not, but it is included as a map layer in the interactive tool. A panelist asked if this tool was shared with the Watershed Area Steering Committees created by the SCWP to aid in their watershed planning efforts. A panelist suggested that this tool be made shareable and kept updated. The data also needs to be updated, because some of the "pollution by land" data, for example, is from the 1990s. A panelist suggested that this tool be presented to LA County Department of Public Works' stormwater planning division to give the engineers a broader background. A panelist shared that mapping tools like this have also been used to convince elected officials that there is nature, and especially great potential for nature, in Los Angeles.
<p>7. Wrap-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shona adjourned the meeting and recapped the next steps. She outlined panelists' homework for the next meeting, which includes examining and reflecting on the proposed hybridized standard and criteria, assessing the scoring approach, and reading through the technical memo draft. She also proposed March 11, 2025, 1 – 4 pm, as the date for the next meeting. Tanishka provided an overview of the technical memo draft provided at the meeting. She also introduced the scoring discussion that will occur during the next BRP Workshop, including the tool that CWH is developing as a starting point, and informed panelists that they can expect to receive more information via email. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Another meeting is scheduled on March 11, 2025, from 1-2 pm, which several BRP participants need to attend. Planning team to consider a different date or time.

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Next Steps for Facilitators:

- Share out:
 - Task Force Miro Boards
 - Technical Memo
 - Scoring materials
 - Stormwater Solutions Mapping Tool materials (Kelsey)
- Identify and propose a new date for Workshop #5.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration with LA County Water Plan's new communication task force.
- Explore the development of a NbS Disaster Toolkit.
- Explore how to expand NbS tours.
 - Learn more about SCWP funding for education. The program is currently in Round 3, and there may be funds left over.
- Determine a process for developing a short list of projects to engage with and showcase to catalyze NbS implementation.
- Revisit the proposal to hybridize the BRP-developed Standard and Criteria with the IUCN framework.
- Revisit the scoring discussion.