

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 the Blue Ribbon Panel's definition of nature-based solutions.*
 - *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)

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Shona Calzada Ganguly (Better World Group)
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. • Shona also went through meeting agreements and a land acknowledgement.
<p>2. COP-16 Debrief, Review of Task Force Meeting & County Report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurit Katz presented a debrief on COP-16. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nurit and other members recently returned from COP 16 in Columbia—the Conference of Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity. ○ Negotiations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Montreal a couple of years ago, most countries agreed on biodiversity action plans, but there are long paths to reaching targets. ▪ Major decisions and themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing Cali Fund for fair and equitable benefit sharing from use of digital sequence information on genetic resources. • Indigenous and Local Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informal working group of indigenous leaders elevated to have an official voice. ○ Protections for people of African descent living traditionally indigenous lifestyles. • Climate Change and its impact on parties. • Integration of health and biodiversity. ▪ Ran out of time and quorum to approve budget, so will need to reconvene—sometime in the next year in Bangkok. ○ ICLEI Subnational Summit and Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conference side events ranging from wildlife connectivity to NBS; CA hosted events on 30 by 30. ○ COP-17: Armenia will host the next UN Biodiversity Conference. • Eileen: Task Force Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The task force is trying to get up to speed on Blue Ribbon Panel events and provide some input. ○ Overview of NbS Task Force <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial findings have been submitted to County Board of Supervisors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including milestones, themes from definition discussions, and recommendations for more time to dive deeper and refine.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated 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: Review of Survey Trends from NbS Definition form. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 72% participation; 18 responses. ○ As part of the process of asking definition preferences, an optional column requested feedback on why certain choices were made. ○ Resonating themes under 4 categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecosystem Focus and Function <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting ecosystem health as the focus and societal changes as the benefit. ▪ Conserve, Preserve, Restore, Reclaim Open Space & Nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain land for nature as the priority—land for the purpose of the land itself, not other exploitation. • Holistic preservation and restorative approach with ecosystem mentality. ▪ Clarity of Outcome and Definitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put biodiversity first, to treat water and the living landscape with love and respect. • Clearly name defining elements to achieve highest bar in our region. ▪ Water: making sure it's not just one part of NbS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not limit the definition to stormwater and urban runoff, have a more expansive perspective. • Think of all our water sources as part of a living whole and totally integral to nature. ○ Definition prioritization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN definition was highest, LA County second, but each received de-prioritization based on specific points that people did not want included. • Open Discussion: NbS Solutions Definition Survey Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where is our recommendation going? Is it just for the county water plan, or should we be going broader than just the benefits to water? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Response: we are focused on the definition to be applied across the county for consistency in the LA County Water Plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They've had conversations with the County Office of Sustainability and how this definition impacts their work.

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- So focus on the more specific, hitting the task priorities.
- UN definition is a manifesto, while LA County definition is more implementable.
 - The element of applying it to the water side and including criteria/standards make this more feasible.
- There are beaches, harbors, and other water pieces that should fall under the county water plan.
- Resonating themes should be at the center, while definition is currently a tool.
 - We should think about economics as the future of our ecosystems.
 - We need to start with a powerful core before getting to the tools.
 - There is a false dichotomy between environment and economics—when nature thrives, the economy and people thrive.
 - Survival ecology—the notion that we need to protect the environment to survive ourselves.

Note: stormwater management will be changed to water management.

- Discussion questions:
 - What is missing?
 - What resonates?
 - What needs more clarity?
- Group share-out
 - Group 1: 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.
 - Remove “sustainably use,” “natural or modified,” “which address social environmental and economic challenges effectively and adaptively” (iwe have the while simultaneously providing section to target those elements), added living systems .
 - Group 2: “couldn’t get over the sustainability hurdle, so left the word in.”
 - Actions to protect, conserve, restore, and manage aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems which also address the socioeconomic and environmental (that coupled relationship must be in there, as it brings in tribes).
 - NbS for water definition: actions that use natural processes to protect water resources and increase groundwater infiltration, reduce flooding and

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	<p>improve water quality using nature-based solutions for water management to maintain the site's natural hydrology...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There's danger in too much broadness because people want something to act on. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Group 3: 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"> ▪ Changing stormwater to water, since we focus on stormwater as a liability or waste product. ▪ Spent most time on second part of definition, with the only change on the first part defining actions (you can sneak grey infrastructure pieces in there so they put in the natural process piece in). ▪ Second part: changed the wording to make it more expansive than stormwater—actions that use natural processes to enhance infiltration, reduce flooding, and improve water quality—needs to be more expansive, including protecting natural resources. ▪ What is the baseline we are trying to maintain on the site's natural hydrology and watershed placement? ▪ What is watershed placement? Unclear... ○ Hydrologically, a watershed's places have different functions, some with more or less infiltration, some uniquely situated to have high groundwater tables. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity to harness on a regional scale that cannot be harnessed if only looking at one thing at a time, more benefit if looking at larger swaths of land. ▪ Relates back to stormwater management tool from TNC. ○ Members of the panel seconded the need to expand beyond stormwater for 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.
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	<p>socioeconomic or environmental challenges.</p> <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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Actions to address socioeconomic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively by using processes to protect and conserve ecosystems, etc.” ○ Stephanie shared def from Low Tech by Julia Watson— instead of energy intensive, “ecologically intensive.” ○ Living systems and natural processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “We need to define nature.” ○ A broad definition would be helpful for standardization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could refer to it as adapted from UN programme. ▪ Pulling survival ecology to the front, along with the goals of protecting human health and wellbeing, ecosystem function and services, resiliency, and biodiversity. ○ A solid NbS definition makes the water application component more straightforward.
<p>4. Review Shared List of Nature-based Solutions Criteria & Standards for LA County Water Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision for LA County from sprinkle activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were four quadrants, photos, vision, etc— a donut with options and groups each chose two, with results displayed on the meeting slides. • IUCN NbS Criteria review: highlight of NbS result in a net gain to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. • Criteria for NbS from our activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equity ○ Increased open space ○ Reduction of heat island effect ○ Net gains in biodiversity and ecosystem integrity ○ Comparative cost (cost of NbS vs technological solutions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion determined that this part needs to be removed. ▪ Note: we have yet to use the word climate... ▪ County has not established scope free emissions or life cycle as criteria for projects. ▪ How do we want to assign value to this? How can we define economic benefit and cost. • Criteria for stormwater management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conversion of impervious surface to native habitat through natural processes. ○ Improvement of natural hydrologic function and functional flows of streams, rivers, and wetlands. • Discussion on standards for NbS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is missing?

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- What should be prioritized?
- What details need to be added to clarify their use or implementation?
- What are possible sources of data to measure these criteria?
- Group discussion after partner activity:
 - Net gains for biodiversity and ecosystem integrity—**how is that measured? What kind of targets should be applied?**

- If you are working in a park habitat, are you putting in native plants or enhancing for species living there?

- **Feasibility**

Note: there was not enough time to hear from everyone, so Shona selected quieter voices.

- Conversations highlighted a key difference between the conservation of existing natural sites and the improvement of asphalted areas.
- How would you then decide on how to do something about a particular site?
- Other systems have set natural processes as a baseline.
- Urban forestry has standards for air quality, greenhouse gas, etc.--what systems are already there for measurement that the panel or taskforce could use to help reflect nature's complexity?
 - How does the capture of data integrate with the program of the site?
- Criteria—if this is used to rate projects, there aren't enough...
 - **Standards are each required for every project, while criteria are additional optional ways for projects to demonstrate value... standards are an "and," while criteria are an "or"**
 - Core water management criteria and NbS criteria could become one, because both are important for both scenarios.
 - How to divide criteria that impact one another? E.g., heat island effect and drought.
 - What is ecosystem integrity?
 - Too often we do site specific solutions that don't integrate with the systems already in play.
 - Evidence based adaptive management—what is that? We need metrics, which would need a whole section involving recording, sharing, funding case studies.
 - Consulting certified native... what is a specialist? Who does that leave out? Are there licensed people from state already doing this? What would happen if there were a rogue person?
 - There are some programs, e.g. Theodore Payne that the panel can look to as examples.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We have no native ecological perspective on the panel. ▪ Evidence based adaptive management came from IUCN, who also has guidance and indicators for each criterion. ○ If the standards are our baseline to be a NbS, there needs to be a bullet point using living processes or using soil and vegetation. ○ Equity—if we’re talking about habitat connectivity and reduced flood risk, if you prioritize equity over everything you may not end up with regional wellbeing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are reflexive in putting equity first, but in this context, does that work? ▪ The concepts should go hand in hand—but do you add biodiversity in a place or expand existing biodiversity? ▪ Equity is a very broad term, but we know what tools we use to measure it... and those don’t capture what we are looking for. <p>Debbie—other relevant survey results, based on what people prioritized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is NbS—Prioritized Phrases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biodiversity, natural infiltration, ecosystem health, prioritizing native ecosystems, unpaving.
<p>5. Planning for Future Workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force—feedback—virtual meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preview of session 2—November 12—definitions (cont) ○ Report out on session 3—December 17—recommendations for SCWP ○ Same model for blue ribbon panel. • IUCN definition, standards, and criteria will be sent out to everyone. • Meeting in December with 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"> ▪ Will reach out to someone (likely Maggie) to help with that. ○ Prioritizing NbS solutions projects—who's been doing work there, mapping (Kelsie).
<p>6. Wrap Up & Next Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming event: national practice forum on nature based solutions. • 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.