

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS
SAFE, CLEAN WATER PROGRAM
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

OVERVIEW: The Safe Clean Water Program is a unique initiative emphasizing collaboration and equity to invest ~\$280M annually into multi-benefit projects and programs across the region.

CHALLENGE: Los Angeles County (County) has faced a multitude of water resilience challenges, including, but not limited to, reliance on imported water due to population growth and record droughts, limited and aging infrastructure, polluted waterways, climate change, hundreds of fragmented jurisdictions, and a need for equitable community benefits. The County has long led ongoing efforts to maximize the capture of stormwater and runoff in existing infrastructure. However, the infrastructure is not sufficient to capture and conserve the annual billions of gallons of stormwater that runs off roofs, roads, and other paved surfaces and is often lost to the ocean. Additionally, the County and the 86 municipalities within it are required to develop infrastructure projects to clean up stormwater as part of the region's compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act. To assist in compliance, various County water agencies collaborated to develop a list of key projects that would capture and clean the stormwater, however, there was no existing dedicated funding sources that could sustain the costs associated with their construction and operation and maintenance if implemented.

SOLUTION: In April 2016, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) to lead the Water Resilience Initiative (Initiative). The Initiative aimed to increase drought preparedness and local water self-reliance, improve water quality to protect public health, and increase the local communities' ability to adapt to the effects of climate change. In July 2018, Public Works finalized the Initiative, which is now called the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP). The SCWP applies a special parcel tax to properties within the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (District) boundary to generate approximately \$280M in revenue annually to fund multi-benefit stormwater capture projects and programs. The revenue is divided between the 86 municipalities (SCWP Municipal Program) and 9 watersheds (SCWP Regional Program) from which the funds were collected, with a small portion of the funds used for District-wide education programs and administration of the SCW Program. Robust tax relief options were also built into the SCWP for qualifying parcel owners.

On July 17, 2018, a public hearing was called to receive comments on the SCWP. With over 100 speakers and hundreds more in attendance in favor of the SCWP, the Board voted to approve sending the SCWP to the voters as Measure W, requiring a two-thirds voter majority. On November 6, 2018, the voters of Los Angeles County voted to approve adoption of the Safe Clean Water Program and Tax.

RESULTS: Since November 2018, the SCWP has successfully established over 150 regional governance committee members overseeing the nine Watershed Area Steering Committees, a Regional Oversight Committee, and a Scoring Committee to review regional projects. The District closed its fourth annual SCW Regional Program call-for-projects on July 31, 2022. To date, 78 multi-benefit infrastructure projects, 38 project concepts, eight scientific studies, and 12 Watershed Coordinators have been approved for funding through the SCWP Regional Program in the first two Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs). This represents nearly \$1 billion in investments over 5 years (capturing water from over 207,000 acres), with \$385 million in projects benefiting disadvantaged communities, and nearly \$500 million of other funding sources leveraged to maximize SCWP goals. The third annual SIP is anticipated to be approved by the LA County Board of Supervisors in Fall 2022. Additionally, \$111 million (a 40% local return) has been distributed annually to the 86 municipalities within the District boundaries. This funding is assisting municipalities to develop their own multi-benefit stormwater capture projects and programs and/or is being leveraged for regional-scale projects. Further, the SCWP is part of the Board's "WHAM" Task Force and Workforce Subcommittee, which facilitates the pathway for cross-sector partnerships related to County Measures W, H, A, and M, thus expanding the benefits of all these programs and promoting meaningful regional collaboration.

REPLICABILITY: The SCWP is a 'first of its kind' program, and other counties across the nation are taking notice of the program. Many counties are facing similar water resilience challenges to those experienced by Los Angeles County and have reached out to discuss a potential program of their own. The paradigm shift to multi-benefit stormwater planning based on SCWP code, governance, goals, and benefits is a reality for which many other areas are laying the groundwork to replicate. The SCWP includes many online resources and information at safecleanwaterla.org, including interactive maps, benefits dashboards, and reporting.

PROGRAM CONTACT: Matthew Frary, Principal Engineer, LA County Public Works. Phone: 626-458-6503. Email: mfrary@pw.lacounty.gov. Mailing Address: 900 S. Fremont Ave 11th Floor, Alhambra, CA 91803.