TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING #6

AUGUST 24, 2026 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS FRAMEWORK LOS ANGELES RIVER

MEETING LOCATION: LOS ANGELES RIVER CENTER AND GARDENS
570 W AVE 26, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Attendees

Name		Affiliation	In person/virtual
Jose	**Alberola**	Stillwater Sciences	In-person
Brian	**Baldauf**	Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority	In-person
Jon	**Ball**	LA Sanitation Watershed Protection Program	In-person
Edward	**Belden**	City of LA Bureau of Engineering	In-person
Isaac	**Brown**	McMillen	In-person
Nate	**Butler**	Stillwater Sciences	In-person
Cara	**Campbell**	LA Department of Water and Power	Virtual
Irene	**Cordero**	Calrecycle	Virtual
Rebecca	**Correa**	Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority	In-person
Candice	**Dickens-Russell**	Friends of the LA River	In-person
Monica	**Eichler**	McMillen	In-person
Hannah	**Flynn**	Stillwater Sciences	In-person
Céline	**Gallon**	LA Regional Water Quality Control Board	Virtual
Mark	**Hanna**	Geosyntec	Virtual
Ben	**Harris**	LA Waterkeeper	In-person
Lara	**Jansen**	Southern California Coastal Water Research Project	In-person
Rita	**Kampalath**	LA County Chief Sustainability Office	Virtual
Stacee	**Karnya**	LA Department of Sanitation and Environment	In-person
Wendy	**Katagi**	McMillen	In-person
Nurit	**Katz**	LA Department of Water and Power	Virtual
AJ	**Keith**	Stillwater Sciences	In-person
Melissa	**Lane**	Stillwater Sciences	In-person
Madeline	**Laun**	Appleton Design	In-person
Gabriel	**Low**	LA Department of Water and Power	In-person

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Name		Affiliation	In person/virtual
Mayra	**Molina**	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Virtual
Carling	**Monder**	University of Southern California Public Exchange	Virtual
Jenny	**Newman**	LA Regional Water Quality Control Boart	In-person
Nathan	**Nunez**	Nunez and Nunez Consulting Services	Virtual
Matt	**Qassis**	LA Department of Water and Power	In-person
Ernesto	**Rivera**	LA County Public Works	Virtual
Alex	**Robinson**	University of Southern California	Virtual
Christian	**Romberger**	McMillen	In-person
William	**Saunders**	LA County Public Works	In-person
Ariana	**Siordia**	Council for Watershed Health	Virtual
Bronwen	**Stanford**	The Nature Conservancy	Virtual
Clark	**Stevens**	Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains	In-person
Kris	**Taniguchi-Quan**	Southern California Coastal Water Research Project	In-person
Ryan	**Thiha**	LA Department of Sanitation and Environment	In-person
Vicente	**Villasenor**	Heal the Bay	Virtual
Scott	**Webster**	Appleton Design	In-person
Patricia	**Wood**	LA County Public Works	In-person
Belle	**Zheng**	Council for Watershed Health	Virtual

Agencies, Organizations, and CEFF Terminology

Acronym	Meaning
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CWH	Council for Watershed Health
CEFF	California Environmental Flows Framework
FoLAR	Friends of the Los Angeles River
LABOE	City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering
LACPW	Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
LADWP	City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
LARWQCB	Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
LASAN	City of Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment
LLAR	Lower Los Angeles River
MRCA	Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
RCDSMM	Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains
SAS	Stewards of the Arroyo Seco
SCCWRP	Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
SDMP	Structured Decision-Making Process
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TTWG	Thematic Technical Working Group
TWG	LA River CEFF Technical Working Group
UCANR	University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USC	University of Southern California
USFS	US Forest Service
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	US Geological Survey
WCA	Watershed Conservation Authority

This table is a comprehensive list of terms used in the LA River CEFF Project documents. Some of the terms do not occur in this document.

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Overview

The purpose of this meeting was to provide a retrospective overview of the Los Angeles River California Environmental Flows Framework (CEFF) Project and to share the resulting recommendations with the TWG, including flow recommendations, implementation plan recommendations, management action recommendations, and other supplementary recommendations.

Meeting Summary

Welcome (start time in recording: 00:02:37)

Note: there was a technical issue with the recording. Sound begins at 00:02:37.

Wendy Katagi, McMillen: Welcomed the TWG members, reviewed the agenda, and held a moment of remembrance for TWG member, Steve Appleton**.**

Ryan Thiha, LASAN: Welcomed the TWG, stating that the LA River CEFF Project has broken down silos and given the City a meaningful, centralized tool to make decisions.

Brian Baldauf, MRCA: Shared excitement about the LA River CEFF process and what will happen in the next couple of years. Took a moment to reflect on Steve Appleton, who to many was a good friend and mentor, and is greatly missed. Emphasized that this meeting serves as a capstone on the LA River CEFF project and that the purpose of this meeting is to hear input on how these recommendations can be implemented.

CEFF Overview, Nate Butler (00:17:00)

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences presented an overview of the LA River CEFF Project, contextualized the purpose of the TWG 6 meeting, and summarized the LA River CEFF Section C methodology.

LA River CEFF Recommendations Part 1, Nate Butler (00:25:51)

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences presented introductory information about the flow recommendations and how they should be considered

Kris Taniguchi-Quan, SCCWRP: Asked what planned changes in flow and discharges to the river are included in the model, and what time period(s) the recommendations cover.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Confirmed that planned reductions in discharges from the Donald C. Tillman, Burbank, and Los Angeles-Glendale Water Reclamation Plants along with all watershed flow changes based on the MS4 flow reductions are included in the recommendations.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences continued to provide introductory information about the flow recommendations and how they should be considered.

Kris Taniguchi-Quan, SCCWRP: Asked whether the time period for the flow recommendations is referring to the seasonal time period or the modeling time period(s).

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Clarified the flow recommendations are seasonal and specified for each functional flow time period (e.g., dry-season baseflow)

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences continued to introduce the format of the flow recommendations, provided a high-level overview of the wet-season baseflow, spring recession, and dry-season baseflow flow recommendations, and summarized how the LA River CEFF Project results can be unpacked to better understand what performance measures are supported at different flows and how changes in channel form influence the flows that support performance measures.

Edward Belden, LABOE: Asked how TWG members can best get an overview of the channel form changes in each of the scenarios.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Explained that there is a publicly accessible ArcGIS Online map with the channel form in both existing and planned scenarios. Pointed out that the Reach 8a Fish Passage project helped Downtown LA achieve performance measures through consolidated flows.

Monica Eichler, McMillen: Asked if it is possible to give an example of the lower flow and fishing.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Clarified how the planned projects that took into account supporting 1-ft water depth at lower flows supported conditions better than previous projects that did not focus on supporting 1-ft water depths at lower flows.

Jenny Newman, Regional Water Quality Control Board: Asked whether there is a picture available in the slides of what changes in channel form might look like.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Showed example photos of two existing portions of the Glendale Narrows, with one photo showing flow spread out over a wide channel and the

other photo showing flow spread out over a narrow channel. It was emphasized that the narrower channel reaches a 1-ft water depth at a lower flow.

Kris Taniguchi-Quan, SCCWRP: Commended the project team for synthesis of detailed models and discussions. Asked whether performance measures weighted or treated as equal? Additionally, asked what achievement of performance measures in 50%+ of the reach means, spatially.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Explained that performance measure achievement was modeled at 200-foot segments based on suitability criteria, hydraulic data, and hydrologic data. Each 200-foot segment was evaluated individually, and then reaches were assessed to estimate the flows that would support performance measures in least for 50% of the 200-foot segments. Many of the plans for the river are in early planning phases (less than 30% design). As such, it was assumed that when the available information about channel form designs indicates that performance measures could be supported in at least 50% of the 200-ft segments at an estimated flow, then similar channel form designs could be made to the other 50% of segments to support meeting performance measures at the estimated flows, as well.

Kris Taniguchi-Quan, SCCWRP: Asked whether the analysis looked at how well performance measures would be met in downstream reaches when a flow recommendation is met for an upstream reach (i.e., the connection of the hydrology downstream).

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Clarified that flow recommendations for each reach were considered individually in the analysis and based primarily on the hydraulic characteristics of the reach. The hydrology was run through the reach, then the hydraulics were used to determine flow recommendations.

LA River CEFF Recommendations Part 2, Nate Butler (00:57:50)

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences summarized management action recommendations, additional supplementary recommendations, and Implementation Plan recommendations contained in the LA River CEFF Technical Report

Bob Blankenship, Trout Unlimited: Shared concern that existing measured flow data may be inaccurate and overstated due to inaccuracies in some existing gauges stationed in the middle and lower river. Explained that the existing measured flow data may be 30 – 40 cfs

too high such that a reduction in flow of 30 - 40 cfs from the existing flow to the flow recommendation would result in very minimal flow in the river.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Explained that flow recommendations are not necessarily dependent on measured flow, with the modeling evaluating a range of flows and the recommendation is not tied to only the existing measured flow. The project team searched and was unable to find calibration data for those gauges. The project team shares the concern and believes that more flow measurement validation and instrumentation is needed. Northern California rivers have many more gauges than the LA River watershed, especially given how much property and life is at risk. LA County Flood Control District has been able to do a lot with the data available, but it would be beneficial for everyone in the watershed for additional flow data to be collected to understand how flow is moving through the river and its tributaries.

Karen Barnett, Trout Unlimited: Added that the lower gauge [on the LA River] is read by the City of Burbank gauge, and emphasized the importance of using the same formula to measure all gauges. The City of Burbank and the LA River Master Plan by the county has the seasonal low flow in the river as 80 cfs or under, so there is some conflicting information that should be addressed in whatever technical review you did for the SCCWRP report.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Invited Trout Unlimited to talk after the presentation to get into the technical details and nuance.

Ryan Thiha, LASAN: Expressed that the recommendations feel achievable and that channel modifications seem like a win-win. Finds utility in the ability to look at different seasons and recommendations are grouped into these flow regimes. Shared excitement for how the flow recommendations provide options that can be applied in the future.

Lara Jansen, SCCWRP: Asked about magnitude metrics used for functional flows. Also asked whether the team explored timing related to functional flows or the rate of change in the spring recession flows that can be important for biodiversity and water quality.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Explained that spring recession flow rate of change was not part of the current flow recommendations because the rate of change relates to storm events. The LA River CEFF Project separated out the rate of change related to storm events from what could be operational during the spring recession flow period, but there was consideration for recession down to baseflow in the analysis. The spring recession flow rate of change should be considered in the future along with additional complexity, such as water year types, that have not been explored at this time because it was more important to

introduce these initial flow recommendations before adding more complexity to them. Noted that the Implementation Plan can include a process to add complexity to the flow recommendations, like potentially adjusting them based on water year types.

LA River CEFF Looking Ahead, Nate Butler (01:17:48)

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences summarized the Implementation Plan recommendations contained in the LA River CEFF Technical Report

LA River CEFF Looking Ahead Discussion, Wendy Katagi (01:20:52)

Wendy Katagi, McMillen: Initiated discussions regarding implementation of flow recommendations, including funding strategies, adaptive management and dynamic monitoring.

Ben Harris, LA Waterkeeper: Expressed that the LA River CEFF Project is a critical step forward for filling gaps around existing LA River planning, sharing appreciation for flow as a driver of management goals, and the LA River CEFF Project results provide the foundation for building an Implementation Plan. Emphasized the importance of collaboration and a unified governance structure. Shared that funding from Bureau of Reclamation may provide an opportunity to build that watershed governance entity geared toward implementation. Explained that LA Waterkeeper has been considering how to leverage Prop 4 funding at the State level to accomplish goals, take the next steps to develop an Implementation Plan, and do land use planning at the regional level to develop projects. The LA River CEFF Project provides the start for a vision that can be fleshed out and built off of effectively moving forward.

Scott Webster, Appleton Design: Shared Steve Appleton's foundational work for planning concrete implementation and management for dynamic flow. This management framework would use a model-predictive advisory system for baseflow adjustment to predict stage downstream, pair to desirable flow criteria, and dynamically suggest flow changes to the river from controls like an adjustable weir or other sources. He is currently working on the final report.

Wendy Katagi, McMillen: Supported the concept of continuing the Elysian Community Operations' methodology along with the Flow Optimization Project.

Isaac Brown, McMillen: Noted that the tradeoffs analysis may be further explored during the flows optimization process. Expressed concern about weighting of importance of the performance measure associated with fishing.

Nate Butler, Stillwater Sciences: Confirmed that suitability criteria for fishing were developed by the Recreation TTWG. Noted that LA River CEFF Project flow recommendations were intended to support all goals rather than explore weighting of performance measures, and that weighting of performance measures can be explored further in the Implementation Plan.

William Saunders, LACPW: Noted that storm flows can't be completely controlled. Acknowledged that the LA River CEFF Project has made an effort to listen to what everyone has to say and they [LACPW] are grateful for that. Emphasized that the river's capacity cannot be reduced in the design process because it will impact surrounding communities. Noted that LACWP evaluates each opportunity on a case by case basis. In many cases, projects bump up against rules and regulations to protect the public. Emphasized that there are competing interests with every decision that must be considered. Expressed gratitude for being asked to participate.

Ryan Thiha, LASAN: Thanked LA County Public Works and Flood Control for partnership in the watershed. Expressed gratitude to see Regional Water Board present since they have a lot of expertise that will be needed to tie everything together with the federal government (USACE) to move forward with recommendations.

Ben Harris, LA Waterkeeper: Expressed that expanding flood capacity will be an important part of the river's future and encouraged LA County to be as involved as possible during implementation to help shape creative flood control solutions. Recommends that a land use assessment of opportunities to capture flood flows be performed. The assessment must include an equity lens, making sure nobody is displaced along with security and safety. Implementation will have to be collaborative and multi-disciplinary.

Clark Stevens, RCDSMM: Shared the importance of the LA River as an ecological linkage, especially for terrestrial connectivity. Noted importance of weighting performance measures in the implementation processing and that quantitative parameters will inform future design. Expressed appreciation for including fishing as a performance measure, and curiosity about minimum flows for good quality fish habitat connectivity. Noted that the RCDSMM would be enthusiastic about participating in future work.

Wendy Katagi, McMillen: Closed the TWG meeting, reminded TWG participants that comments are welcomed, noted that MRCA and Brian are the main point of contact, and comments should be sent by September 14, 2026, to meet funding deadlines. Expressed gratitude to everyone who participated.