

VENTURA COUNTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT SUMMARY

WHAT IS WATERTALKS?

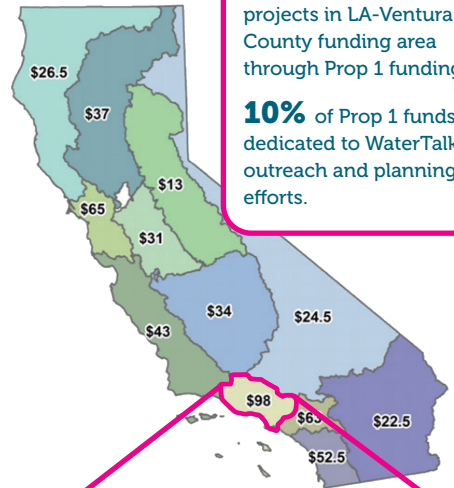
WaterTalks is a public program designed to increase community involvement in planning a sustainable water future for California. Its goal is to help underserved communities identify and prioritize needs and develop proposals for grant funding. To prioritize and recommend water-related projects based on issues of greatest concern, the program explores the strengths and opportunities of 128 communities in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties that face ongoing economic and environmental pressure.

In 2014, voters approved “The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act”—Proposition 1—to meet the state’s long-term water needs. Prop 1 funds are managed by the California Department of Water Resources. WaterTalks is funded by Prop 1.



\$98M will go to projects in LA-Ventura County funding area through Prop 1 funding.

10% of Prop 1 funds are dedicated to WaterTalks outreach and planning efforts.



WATERTALKS PROCESS

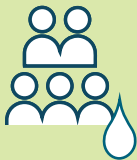
WATERTALKS IS BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THREE PHASES:



1

OUTREACH/COMMUNITY INPUT

Inform through community workshops and gather input from surveys.



2

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Assess community needs and priorities based on outreach.

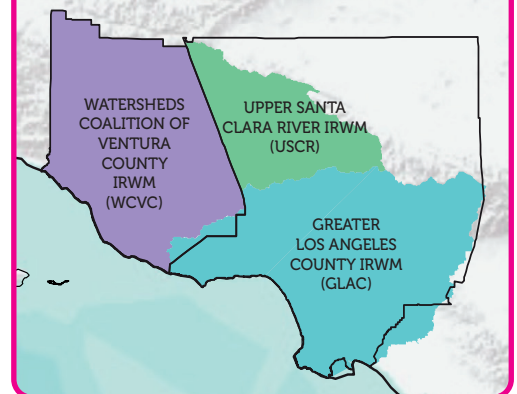


3

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Help develop selected projects and move them to implementation.

PROP 1 LOS ANGELES-VENTURA FUNDING AREA



WHAT IS IRWM?

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a collaborative effort to identify and implement water management solutions on a regional scale. There are three IRWM regions in the LA-Ventura funding area:

- Greater Los Angeles County
- Watershed Coalition of Ventura County
- Upper Santa Clara River

Prepared by:



In Collaboration with:

- » TreePeople
- » The Council for Watershed Health
- » Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County

Learn more about WaterTalks and funding opportunities at: watertalks.csusb.edu

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1 OUTREACH

The first phase of WaterTalks outreach events was designed to educate and engage disadvantaged communities (DAC) in Los Angeles and Ventura counties, empowering them to engage in water planning including subsequent phases of WaterTalks. Workshops were held and a survey was distributed throughout the communities during 2019–2020 to identify community needs and priorities. The survey is still live and accessible via the WaterTalks website.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey was developed to collect feedback from people living in identified DACs in each region.

The survey was translated to Spanish, Korean, Cantonese, and Farsi to meet the language needs of all three IRWM regions.

The survey included questions about:

- Demographics
- Community character
- Water-related concerns in the community
- Interest and involvement in community programs, politics, and planning

INSTITUTIONAL INTERVIEWS AND SURVEY

An email blast was sent to a list of institutions based on the percentage of people in their service area that live in DACs. Institutions were also chosen based on their willingness to assist in spreading knowledge about WaterTalks and their ability to get community members to take the survey. Institutions that responded either filled out the institutional survey or were interviewed.

The survey included questions about:

- Needs and strengths of the community they serve and are a part of.
- Barriers to equitable access to the benefits of water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure
- Their own governance and decision-making processes and engagement strategies
- Future challenges and opportunities

TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT

Outreach is currently underway to gather feedback on water-related strengths and needs from Tribal members in Ventura County. Data and responses will be reflected in this section when the process is complete.

OUTREACH METHODS USED:



Virtual events



Printed WaterTalks newspapers and WaterTalks surveys mailed to community residences



WaterTalks bookmarks distributed to local libraries



Social media posts



Paid online and newsletter advertisements



Email blasts (eblasts) to community partners, institutions, and agencies



Phone banking to residents



Institutional and school outreach

Take the WaterTalks Survey: <https://watertalks.csusb.edu/>
Find Community Toolkits here: <https://watertalks.csusb.edu/ventura-county>

2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The second phase of WaterTalks entailed compiling and analyzing the data received during the outreach and surveys conducted in Phase 1.



COMMUNITIES

Respondents noted that community strengths included a strong sense of community; the availability of recreational areas, green spaces, and clean beaches; the weather; social service programs; and local businesses. The *Needs Assessment Report* for the WCVV region identified these water-related issues:

- Water contamination due to trash and industrial facilities
- Drinking water quality
- High cost of water
- Water availability for fire suppression and agriculture
- Access to clean, safe water
- Inadequate wastewater collection and treatment
- Drinking water availability
- Recreational water safety
- Flooding
- Compliance with new regulatory requirements

Broader concerns with crossover to water-related issues included the need to increase green space and recreational opportunities, provide adequate assistance to unsheltered and homeless community members, increase affordable housing, and support higher paying jobs. In inland high-stress DACs, respondents highlighted a need to ensure adequate transportation routes during floods and hazardous conditions.

Results from the *Community Needs Assessment* will inform future outreach and engagement in the following ways:

- Provide a database of contacts for future outreach and engagement
- Help the County match suggested/potential projects with agencies and community groups in those areas
- Assist community groups and the County with generating new project ideas that further help meet community needs.

"I like the small town, great school, friendly neighbors, caring and family oriented." - Ventura Resident

"We need more affordable housing, more affordable clean water and improved agricultural sustainability." - Ventura Resident

FACT SHEETS

Fact sheets have been developed for each DAC included in the survey to highlight its specific needs. The communities within Ventura are:

- Casitas Springs
- Oxnard
- El Rio
- Nyeland Acres
- Saticoy
- Santa Paula
- Fillmore
- Piru
- Ventura Avenue

NEEDS ASSESSMENT DASHBOARD

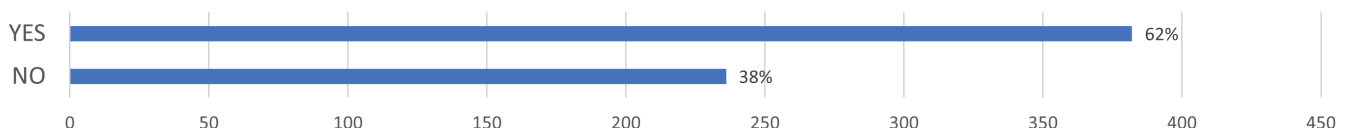
The *Needs Assessment Dashboard* displays the data received in a more accessible, user-friendly, and graphical way. It can be used to quickly identify community concerns and needs.

https://bit.ly/Ventura_Dashboard

DISCLAIMER:

The map dashboard should only be used as a general informational planning resource. The WaterTalks team has scheduled at least one update to the dashboard for new surveys submitted since June 15, 2021. New survey data is expected to be incorporated in summer 2022.

WHEN ASKED WHETHER THERE WERE CONCERNS ABOUT DRINKING WATER QUALITY, RESPONDENTS ANSWERED:



2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED)



INSTITUTIONS

Institutions indicated that their primary strengths include:

- Shared interconnections and the ability to collaborate with multiple agencies and nonprofits, which helps to:
 - Identify resource needs so they can be quickly addressed
 - Share information with the community to inform decision making
- Implementation of best management practices
- Green space between cities, where many disadvantaged communities tend to recreate
- Variety of resources, collaborators, and strategies for addressing homelessness
- Community's ability to collaborate through public-private partnerships to improve utilities and internet services

Institutions shared various needs associated with improving the physical and emergency infrastructure for providing water resources. Aging infrastructure, changing regulatory requirements, and increasing development pressures often drive up utility rates. This is particularly difficult for smaller communities and water providers that do not have a tax base to address increasing costs. Limited water resources also impact a community's ability to promote development to increase the tax base. Input from institutions illustrated that:

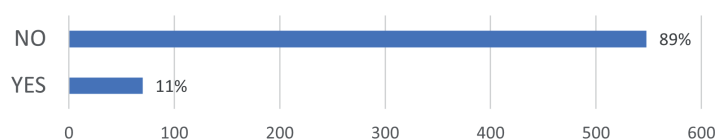
- Funding to aid the homeless population is limited and not sustainable.
- Institutions need more effective methods of engaging with the community. Language barriers get in the way and working populations often do not have time to attend education and outreach events.
- The lack of affordable and stable internet slows the lines of communication and subsequent participation in decision making processes related to water.
- Mutual water providers do not feel that the IRWM Program is interested in working with them, and outreach has been limited.

TRIBAL AND INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

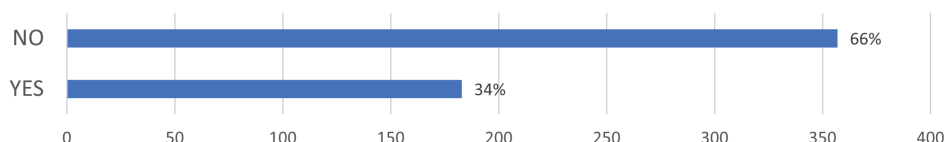
A majority of water institutions indicated they do not interact with tribal or indigenous communities. However, when there are issues or concerns about preserving cultural resources and ceremonial grounds, the Chumash Tribe is often involved in assisting institutions with meeting CEQA requirements. When areas are impacted by fires, water institutions often reach out to the Chumash Tribe, the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project, and Mixteco communities to ensure impacted areas do not contain cultural resources before restoration efforts begin. The Wishtoyo Foundation was identified as an organization involved in regional wastewater issues.

IS THE COMMUNITY ENGAGING IN WATER PLANNING?

Respondents in DAC communities were asked whether they participated in water-related planning in the community:



Respondents in DAC communities were also asked whether they had ideas on how water problems could be addressed:



3 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The third phase of WaterTalks included a series of webinars to teach community members how to develop and submit projects for funding consideration. WaterTalks also built an application to assist in evaluating projects for funding.



PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

On February 1, 2022, an online training webinar, *Funding for Water Related Projects in Ventura County*, was held to teach members of the public and community representatives or leaders how to develop their ideas into projects that can be submitted for funding consideration. The first module of the training covered:

- Generating and Describing Project Ideas
- Organizing Community Support
- Identifying and Approaching Agencies
- Identifying Technical Needs and Resources
- Identifying Funding Sources
- Navigating Funding Requirements

PROJECT DESCRIPTION FORM AND TRAINING WEBINAR

The second module in the training webinar provided step-by-step instructions on how to complete the *Project Description Form*. The main project description template collects project information in various categories, including project overview information, location information, and budget/cost information.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Projects will undergo a data-driven evaluation process via the *TAPPED application. TAPPED allows IRWM representatives to interact with multiple data points to compare and prioritize potential technical assistance projects. This includes community and institutional needs assessment data.

*TAPPED APPLICATION

TAPPED stands for the Technical Assistance Proposed Projects Evaluation Dashboard. This online tool shows information in a more understandable way so that it is easier to see how projects submitted for funding could meet community and institutional needs.

HAVE A PROJECT IDEA THAT YOU'D LIKE TO GET FUNDED?

View the *Funding for Water Related Projects in Ventura County* webinar:

https://bit.ly/WT_WebinarRecording

Download the webinar presentation:

https://bit.ly/WT_Webinar_Module1

Download the Project Description Form Guide:

https://bit.ly/WT_Webinar_Module2

Submit your *Project Description Form*:

https://bit.ly/DACIP_Proj_Description_Form

MAJOR FUNDING SOURCES FOR WATER-RELATED PROJECTS:

IRWM DAC Involvement Program:

<https://water.ca.gov/Work-With-Us/Grants-And-Loans/IRWM-Grant-Programs/Proposition-1/DAC-Involvement-Program>

Urban and Multi-Benefit Drought Relief Funding:

<https://water.ca.gov/Water-Basics/Drought/Urban-Multi-Benefit-Drought>

IRWM Round 2 Funding:

<https://water.ca.gov/Work-With-Us/Grants-And-Loans/IRWM-Grant-Programs/Proposition-1/Implementation-Grants>

Small Community Drought Relief Funding:

<https://water.ca.gov/Water-Basics/Drought/Small-Community-Drought-Relief>