

Los Angeles - Ventura Funding Area DACIP Strengths & Needs Assessment Executive Summary



Greater Los Angeles County
Integrated Regional Water Management
Leadership Committee



WATERTALKS



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- College of the Canyons (CoC)
- The Council of Mexican Federations in North America
- Council for Watershed Health
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- Friends of the Santa Clara River (FSCR)
- Koreatown Youth and Community Center
- Mujeres de la Tierra
- PlaceWorks
- Promesa Boyle Heights
- Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples (SPI)
- Sierra Club of Ventura County
- Social Eco Education
- Social Justice Learning Institute
- Stantec
- Trust South LA
- Ultimate Restoration Unlimited
- Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee

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Greater Los Angeles County Strengths and Needs Assessment Report

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Land Acknowledgement

The authors of the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area Needs Assessment Report Executive Summary recognize that we occupy land originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash Peoples. We honor and pay respect to their elders and descendants – past, present, and emerging – as they continue their stewardship of these lands and waters. We acknowledge that settler colonization resulted in land seizure, disease, subjugation, slavery, relocation, broken promises, genocide, and multigenerational trauma. This acknowledgment demonstrates our responsibility and commitment to truth, healing, and reconciliation and to elevating the stories, culture, and community of the original inhabitants of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these ancestral lands. Additionally, we are dedicated to growing and sustaining relationships with Native peoples and local tribal governments, including but not limited to:

Barbareno/ Ventureneno Band of Mission Indians
Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation
Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council
Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
San Fernando Band of Mission Indians
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

Executive Summary

General Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area Overview

The Disadvantaged Community Involvement (DACI) Program, also known as “WaterTalks” within the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area, is a public program designed to generate and increase community involvement in planning a sustainable water future for California. This program was funded by a Proposition 1 DACI grant. Its goal is to explore the strengths and opportunities of 122 communities in Los Angeles and Ventura counties facing ongoing economic and environmental distress, and to gather input to prioritize and recommend water-related projects based on issues of greatest concern.

WaterTalks is being implemented in three Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) regions within the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area:

- Greater Los Angeles County (GLAC)
- Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC)
- Upper Santa Clara River (USCR)

WaterTalks aims to ensure that regional water resource management considers the health, safety, welfare, and resiliency of lower-income community members.

To do so, WaterTalks provided a series of community events to give local residents the opportunity to:

- Raise questions and concerns about their water-related issues.
- Provide crucial input regarding their community’s water needs and possible solutions.
- Learn about the State’s most current water related topics. These include drinking water, water conservation, flood management, drainage, vector control, access to parks and recreation, and the overall health of our watersheds.

Active participation in WaterTalks community events has helped enhance regional planning efforts, fostering greater involvement and partnerships with historically underrepresented communities.

The WaterTalks Program was implemented in three phases during the grant period beginning March 2018. 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. The second phase of WaterTalks entailed the compilation and analysis of data received during outreach and survey collections. The final phase of WaterTalks included identifying projects for implementation using data from the Strengths and Needs Assessment findings. These

projects were further vetted with community surveys and discussions, GLAC IRWM Region Leadership Group of CBOs, DACIP Task Force members, DAC Committee members, and other IRWM stakeholders.

This Funding Area Needs Assessment Executive Summary focuses on the second phase of the WaterTalks program; the Strengths and Needs Assessment.

Greater Los Angeles County Overview

Integrated regional water management (IRWM) in the Greater Los Angeles County region is carried out by some of the largest water agencies in the United States, some of the smallest in California, and many others in between. There are complex regulatory systems that seek to ensure clean water for personal use and in the environment. The GLAC region boasts the watersheds of the LA River, San Gabriel River, and those that drain to the Santa Monica Bay including, prominently, Malibu and Ballona Creek watersheds. These water bodies and lands are significant for California Native American Tribes, including the Tongva, Chumash, and Tataviam peoples; the land and water is their unceded ancestral homeland. The WaterTalks program assessed the needs, as well as the strengths, of 104 self-identified communities and Tribal needs region wide. The Strength and Needs Assessment used a variety of tools to engage with multiple audiences:

- Members of Tribal communities.
- People in communities through partnerships with community-based organizations.
- School district educators and facilities managers.
- Institutions that provide water and social services to communities.

The Strengths and Needs Assessment sought to:

- Inform and engage WaterTalks communities in a conversation about their water management-related needs, preliminary needs assessment results, and a plan for continued community engagement and active involvement in decision making.
- Gain a better understanding of water management-related community needs to help direct resources and funding.
- Build initial capacity within communities to develop project concepts and engage technical support for design and project development.
- Increase participation of members of the public, non-governmental organizations (NGO), community-based organizations (CBO), and public and private institutions in IRWM planning and project development activities.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Overview

The Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) covers the majority of land within the Ventura County boundary and includes three major watersheds that lie in the region: Ventura River, Santa Clara River and Calleguas Creek. The WCVC stakeholder group is comprised of a

consortium of local cities, wholesale and retail water agencies, agricultural interests, special districts, the County of Ventura, and non-governmental agencies interested in promoting and implementing integrated regional water management planning efforts in Ventura County. The WCVV IRWM top priorities include:

- Protect and improve water quality.
- Protect, conserve, and augment local water-supply portfolio.
- Protect people, property, and the environment from adverse flooding impacts.
- Protect and restore habitat and ecosystems in watersheds.
- Provide water-related recreational, public access, stewardship, engagement, and educational opportunities.
- Prepare for and adapt to climate change.

The objective of the community needs assessment was to reach residents of nine local DACs using the partnerships with non-governmental organization (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) established during the community outreach task and knowledge of the communities gathered from that task to gather specific data and feedback about their water related issues.

Needs Assessment data, including input on community strengths, was collected through a variety of methods, including workshops, virtual gatherings, printed newspapers, and surveys mailed to community residents or conducted over the phone; these surveys were distributed and conducted throughout the communities during 2019–2020, which helped identify the needs and priorities within the region. In addition to gathering community members' feedback, local institutions (primarily water purveyors) were surveyed through interviews and online questionnaires. Tribal surveys were also designed to mirror and expand on those developed for the Community Needs Assessment. Several listening sessions were held with Tribal members to allow for more detailed and nuanced feedback.

Upper Santa Clara River Overview

The Upper Santa Clara River (USCR) Watershed, or region, encompasses the upper reaches of the Santa Clara River Watershed; which features the largest natural river remaining in Southern California. The communities within the USCR area include Acton, Agua Dulce, Bouquet Canyon, Canyon Country, Castaic, Lake Hughes, Newhall, Santa Clarita, and Val Verde. As was done in the WCVV region, workshops were also held, and surveys were distributed throughout the communities in the USCR region during 2019–2020 to identify community needs and priorities. Outreach methods within the USCR region also included virtual events, printed newspapers, and surveys mailed to community residents. A series of prior studies and methodologies were utilized as part of completing the Tribal Needs Assessment Report for the USCR region, including a working report of participation with members of the Tataviam tribal nation at various cultural / festival meetings.

Approach and Methodology for Conducting Needs Assessment

The Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area Needs Assessment builds off two efforts: A) the 2013 Disadvantaged Community Outreach Evaluation Study: An Analysis of Technical Assistance and Outreach Methods (Outreach Study) conducted in the Greater Los Angeles IRWM Region with funding from the Department of Water Resources; and B) working with NGOs and academia as consultants, the Los Angeles-Ventura IRWM Funding Area created the WaterTalks Program to engage and inform each community about IRWM through a variety of efforts. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, information gathering methods continued with adjustments in order to comply with health guidelines. Needs Assessment surveys were made available online and in hard copy format. Traditional in-person methods, such as workshops and door-to-door discussions, were modified to meet safety guidelines and address the needs of DAC members and institutions. The DAC consultants collaborated on the development of one community survey form and one institutional survey form for all 3 IRWM planning regions. The regions then had the opportunity to implement the surveys in methods accommodating their respective regions' diverse outreach needs. The community survey was developed to collect feedback from people living in identified DACs in each region and was translated to Spanish, Korean, Cantonese, and Farsi to meet the language needs of all three IRWM regions.

The consultants also developed institutional survey/interview questions which would be used to conduct interviews during virtual meetings. A written version of the survey was also provided to participants who were unable to attend the virtual interviews.

Communities

Greater Los Angeles County Approach and Methods

The DWR-sponsored Outreach Study for the Greater Los Angeles County (GLAC) Region generated community boundaries that express the lived experience of people and resulted in a list of 104 cities or neighborhoods.

For community input, 13 CBOs were brought together, forming a coalition that resulted in the WaterTalks Leadership Group of CBOs, which conducted surveys and virtual listening sessions. These 13 organizations represent 75-80% of the 104 areas identified for the GLAC IRWM Region, are rooted in their respective communities, and have experience conducting surveys, hosting workshops, and collecting data.

Originally, data collection for Tribal and community perspectives was designed to take place during workshops where the Leadership Group of CBOs would host gatherings, "meeting the community where they are." Initial sessions were scheduled for early 2020, then canceled due to the pandemic. COVID-19 exacerbated the already deep inequities and challenges in these communities, and further impeded the team's ability to engage and survey residents on water-related issues. An intended approach using in-person meetings and events changed to

reliance on a digital Community Survey tool. Several months were added to the process, which allowed the Leadership Group of CBOs to complete over 3,500 online surveys that asked open-ended fundamental questions:

- What do you like best about your community?
- What does it need most?
- How is water a part of your community?

Additionally, the Leadership Group of CBOs held approximately 30 virtual community listening sessions; used social media to raise awareness and garner feedback through the promotion of the digital WaterTalks survey; and reached over 200,000 people via phone banking, texting, and newsletter e-blasts. Geographic data from the WaterTalks surveys was combined with demographic and place-based data from local and State sources to identify survey respondents living in 104 disadvantaged communities across the GLAC region. A Geographic Information System (GIS) was used to map the location of each WaterTalks survey respondent, assign that respondent to a community name, and spatially assess strengths and needs data. Insights from this mapping exercise were used to analyze survey responses across multiple scales of characteristics and geographies. This system and process was then expanded to include survey data from all three IRWM Regions.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Approach and Methods

PlaceWorks took the lead on the Needs Assessment tasks directly involving community members, including community survey development, community outreach, distribution of the survey, and working with partner NGOs in the WCVV region. Nine communities were identified for targeted outreach as priority DACs in the WCVV region. PlaceWorks partnered with WCVV, Ventura Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), and Friends of the Santa Clara River (FSCR) to initiate and facilitate the Needs Assessment tasks from November 2020 through April 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategy shifted to virtual focused methods. Outreach strategies included mailing printed materials, distributing bookmarks, social media posts, online advertisements, email blasts, phone banking, and institutional and school outreach. A total of three virtual Outreach events were used as an opportunity to promote participation in the WaterTalks Needs Assessment Surveys. Approximately 29,000 bilingual newspapers and 4,500 outreach bookmarks were printed and distributed throughout the region. Over 200 recipients of received e-blast notifications, and over 1,500 residents were contacted as part of the phone banking efforts in WCVV. The combined outreach methods resulted in over 600 community survey responses.

Upper Santa Clara River Approach and Methods

PlaceWorks also took the lead on the Needs Assessment tasks directly involving community members within USCR IRWM region. Nine communities were identified for targeted outreach as priority DACs in the USCR region. The College of the Canyons, partnering with PlaceWorks,

initiated the outreach plan for the Needs Assessment task between November 2020 and April 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategy shifted to virtual focused methods. Outreach strategies included mailing printed materials, distributing bookmarks, social media posts, online advertisements, email blasts, phone banking, and institutional and school outreach. A total of five virtual events were held in USCR. Approximately 14,000 bilingual newspapers and 2,000 bookmarks were printed and distributed throughout the region. Over 200 recipients received e-blast notifications, and approximately 650 residents were contacted as part of the phone banking efforts in USCR. The combined outreach methods resulted in over 300 community survey responses.

Through the various methods of data collection described above, the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area consultant teams were able to collect over 4,600 survey response to help assess the water related needs of the very diverse and vast communities located within the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area. By integrating diverse outreach methods—ranging from digital surveys and GIS mapping to community partnerships and virtual events—this comprehensive strategy emphasizes the importance of adapting to challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, while maintaining extensive community participation and feedback. The approach and methods utilized for the Needs Assessment underlines the necessity of flexibility and innovation in community engagement and data collection to effectively assess and address water-related needs across varied and vast regions.

An interactive, public-facing dashboard was created for each region using the GIS maps, which houses the Community Needs Assessment information. The data can be accessed through the links below:

[Greater Los Angeles County Community Dashboard](#)

[Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Community Dashboard](#)

[Upper Santa Clara River Community Dashboard](#)

Tribal

[Greater Los Angeles County and Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Approach and Methods](#)

Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples (SPI) designed and implemented the Tribal Needs Assessment within the GLAC and WVCV regions. The design of the Tribal Survey aimed to mirror and build upon the Community Needs Assessment survey, with an emphasis on more precise representation of the distinct requirements of tribal communities. It pinpointed emerging issues for the California Native American Nations linked to the Los Angeles and Ventura County, encompassing the Chumash, Tataviam, and Tongva Nations, along with other Native American and Indigenous populations in the area. The survey addressed various aspects, including the needs and strengths of these communities, obstacles to culturally

appropriate and tribally specific water access, and challenges related to equitable access to water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure benefits. Additionally, the survey sought to identify governance and decision-making processes within tribes, along with engagement strategies and anticipated future challenges and opportunities.

Survey questions were crafted by local tribal water scholars, including members of the SPI staff and advisory board. The survey designers drew insights from tribal water surveys in the Santa Ana Watershed as well as a survey by the California Indian Environmental Alliance for the Bay Area. SPI incorporated elements from the latter survey to enhance their own, recognizing similarities in the experiences of tribal communities with ancestral ties in those regions, particularly considering the non-federal acknowledgment of various tribes.

Upper Santa Clara River Approach and Methods

The comprehensive Tribal Needs Assessment for the USCR region integrated valuable insights from multiple sources referenced above, encompassing data collected during the formulation of the Santa Ana Watershed, Greater Los Angeles County, and Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Tribal Water Needs Assessment reports. Beyond the groundwork laid by these preceding studies, California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) also actively engaged in Tataviam cultural and festival meetings. This participatory approach, involving direct interactions within Tataviam cultural spaces, enriched the depth and cultural context incorporated into the final comprehensive Tribal report.

Institutions and Schools

Greater Los Angeles County

Within the GLAC region, institutional assessments occurred through a series of 25 ethnographically informed interviews to understand the perspectives of institutional staff and leaders in the communities that they are a part of and serve. A representative sample of institutional leaders from different types of water management agencies, institutions that serve many or just a few community members, as well as municipal, private, and mutual water providers were interviewed. Non-water managers that provide community services with links to the multi-benefit concepts embedded in IRWM were also invited, as were several elected leaders within municipalities. The same ethnographic approach was used to interview school districts in the GLAC IRWM Region, completing six virtual listening sessions with facilities personnel, key decision makers, and educators with an understanding of school and local issues.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County and Upper Santa Clara River

Within the WCVC and USCR regions, email messages were 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 participated in a virtual interview.

The survey included questions exploring:

- 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.

A total of 9 institutions participated in the Needs Assessment data collection within WCVC region, and a total of 4 agencies participated within the USCR region.

Findings

Communities

Greater Los Angeles County Findings

Survey respondents live in the following Greater Los Angeles County IRWM Subregions. They help envision the Los Angeles basin as four major sections (Tribal communities encompass all regions):

- Upper Los Angeles River (ULAR)
- Upper San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Rivers (USGRH)
- Lower San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers (LLASGR)
- South Santa Monica Bay (SSMB)

Strengths in WaterTalks areas, expressed through the Assessment, often centered around connections and relationships within the community, access to culture such as food and events, and the resilience of people, collectively. There were several community priorities that emerged from surveys and WaterTalks meetings. Most prominent are those focused on drinking water quality and a recommendation for consistent, regular communication related to drinking water quality. Other findings reinforce surface water quality as a priority and encourage coordination with local schools and development of community-driven programs that build capacity for projects, stewardship, and leadership programs. Findings from the surveys and interviews also identified barriers that continue to prevent community involvement in water planning.

[More information on these findings can be accessed through the full GLAC Strengths and Needs Assessment Report and/or GLAC Interactive Needs Assessment Dashboard.](#)

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Findings

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 WCVC 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.

[More information on these findings can be accessed through the full Ventura County Needs Assessment Report and/or interactive Needs Assessment Dashboard.](#)

Upper Santa Clara River Findings

Respondents noted that community strengths included self-reliance, retaining traditional values, a clean and safe environment, friendly residents and business owners, family activities, the rural nature of the landscape and amenities, good schools, proximity to the beach, and affordable homes. The Needs Assessment Report for the USCR IRWM Region identified these water-related issues:

- Poor drinking water quality
- Lack of water available for fire and agriculture
- Limited access to clean safe water
- Strain on overburdened utility infrastructure due to new development
- Failing septic systems
- High water costs
- Burdensome water quality regulations
- Groundwater depletion and pollution

Broader concerns with crossover to water-related issues included climate change, homelessness, the need to increase green space and parks, and more civic engagement and regulatory oversight of industrial operations, including local landfills.

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 local governments match suggested/potential projects with agencies and community groups in those areas.
- Assist community groups and local governments with generating new project ideas that further help meet community needs.

[More information on these findings can be accessed through the full USCR Needs Assessment Report and/or interactive Needs Assessment Dashboard.](#)

Tribal

Greater Los Angeles County Findings

Overwhelmingly tribal community members prioritized their cultural and spiritual relationship to water as both a significant strength as well as a need in terms of something needing to be protected, expanded, and even re-established. More than half of respondents indicated that access to water for ceremonial purposes or for recreation were not being met, or they did not know if these were being met for the community. It was also expressed that the community is in need of safe spaces to gather, practice their culture, and educate non-native community members of their history and culture to undo the harm being done by modern ignorances.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Findings

Ventura County sits on shared ancestral homelands of Chumash, Tataviam, and Tongva peoples. Respondents identified as Native/Indigenous, with varying tribal affiliations. Many respondents indicated representing their communities in leadership roles, including tribal council members, and language preservationists. They emphasized cultural and spiritual ties to water, with practices like ceremony, conservation, and recognition of water's significance.

Community members prioritized their cultural and spiritual relationship to water as a significant strength and need. Various water-related practices, such as gathering, ceremonies, and conservation, are integral to their connection. Identified strengths included language revitalization, preventing luxury home development, and accessing land and water for cultural use. Water access for drinking is accessible to half of the community, but issues with wastewater infrastructure and stormwater quality are prevalent.

Barriers included lack of support, time/resources, communication gaps, disinterest, and insufficient water appreciation. 95% of the respondents indicated they lack knowledge of Ventura IRWM, hindering engagement. Some of the factors limiting cultural access included privatization of ancestral land, government roles, knowledge gaps, financial constraints, and environmental concerns. Lack of federal recognition was also mentioned as impacting government involvement. 55% of the respondents reported receiving no outreach from representatives.

Upper Santa Clara River Findings

The following tentative points or take-aways were found for the USCR Region:

The Fernandefio Tataviam Band of Mission Indians are after many years still pursuing federal recognition as an expression of their traditional (inherent) sovereignty, critical to future developments. Many of their leaders were present with the Chumash during their revitalization period in the last decades of the 20th century, and maintain those close relationships today. As noted elsewhere, water systems are/must be considered as a whole (ecosystem) from the headwaters to the ocean. Discussions and presentations of projects and efforts stated in earlier meetings and the initial listening sessions are more (or just as) viable today (and must originate from Native communities). Cultural restoration / revitalization can only be undertaken or developmentally guided by tribal members themselves. Development is both economic and educational, primarily for the youth and future generations. Relationships with water and land are both spiritual and culturally defined. Mni Wiconi as expressed at Standing Rock and now throughout many Indigenous communities – “water is life” – has been embraced by Tataviam peoples. Storytelling is an integral part, really a foundation, of their ongoing development/revitalization. The Tataviam (and their advisors) have identified cultural-environmental sites where projects, (like what was proposed for Robidoux and planned to be proposed for Kuruvungna Springs) could be, should be, supported to tie all these points together. Acknowledgement of the Indigenous land and water relationships is most important to identify, and should be integral to co-development efforts with local municipalities and regional agencies. The importance of sharing this report with the Fernandefio Tataviam Band of Mission Indians to continue dialogue and collaboration was also strongly encouraged.

Detailed findings can be accessed through the full Tribal Needs Assessment Reports, which are available on the [WaterTalks website](#).

Institutions and Schools

Greater Los Angeles County Findings

There were several overarching themes reflected in the collected testimonies of those interviewed. These interviews revealed that large regional agencies and other water institutions with capacity provide formal and informal mutual aid to institutions with less or no capacity. However, this process is haphazard and uneven since there are social, political, or institutional barriers preventing the matching of capacity and need. Interviewees generally did not see themselves as a worker in a disadvantaged community or as being part of that community they served. Essentially no interviewee could identify the Tribe or Tribes whose ancestral lands were within their agency's service area.

Many school district interviewees identified maintenance and operations as being underfunded, expressing a myriad of obstacles created by years of budget cuts, with most resources going to immediate needs such as repairs for facilities. Lack of maintenance funding is a barrier to water infrastructure projects including nature-based solutions. Water issues included water quality coming from drinking fountains, flooding that hampers commutes to school and can cause public health risks, and emergency preparedness.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Findings

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 also increase 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.

Many of the 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, 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.

Upper Santa Clara River Findings

Water institutions that were surveyed felt the assets to communities throughout USCR were:

- Community members' high level of engagement in a variety of issues, including ground and potable water quality, water-related natural hazards, and human-induced toxic burdens.
- Several key community groups consistently engaged in community issues often collaborating with various public service and nonprofits to meet emerging water and community service needs.

Institutions shared various needs from the findings within Upper Santa Clara River that associated with aging infrastructure, compliance with shifting and new regulations, and financial barriers associated with changing regulations that drive the need for infrastructure upgrades and additional monitoring.

Both water institutions and community organizations connected through their recognition of:

- Strong town councils and regular public meetings attended by community members who are engaged in emerging issues.
- Changing regulations coupled with natural hazards, and legacy and emerging toxins that create a myriad of water quality concerns.
- Changing regulations that result in financial barriers.

However, water institutions and community organization also shared disconnects among stakeholders included:

- Communities' desire to remain independent of county and water agency governance.

- Water institutions suggesting community engagement is selective only occurring when water issues affect local communities versus water issues across the region.

Most of the surveyed water institutions indicated that they do not engage with Tribal or Indigenous communities; however, one water agency serving high-stress DACs across urban and rural communities noted that they have worked with the Tataviam Band of Mission Indians in relation to meeting the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

Recommendations

Communities

Greater Los Angeles County

Community recommendations focused primarily on drinking water concerns and the need for more green spaces. Topics that stood out within the Strengths and Needs Assessment:

- There is a demand for a drinking water grading system to reduce confusion around multiple water quality reports, and help build trust between communities and water providers.
- Regional drinking water education programs are imperative given the high number of providers and high percentage of people who cannot identify their provider.
- Water providers and/or trusted community partners should provide at-home water testing and filtration systems.
- Continue to build policies and funding that allow local schools to provide green park space and offsite stormwater capture.
- Access resources to increase capacity for community members to take on leadership roles in water planning efforts.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County

The recommendations based on the Community Needs Assessment Findings for the WCVC Region are:

Address Water Quality and Contamination:

- Implement measures to reduce water contamination.
- Improve drinking water quality through enhanced treatment and regular monitoring.

Manage Water Costs and Availability:

- Develop strategies to reduce the high cost of water.
- Ensure sufficient water availability for managing community and environmental needs.

Enhance Water Access and Safety:

- Increase access to safe, clean drinking water throughout the community.

- Upgrade wastewater collection and treatment systems to meet potable and non-potable standards.

Flood Management and Regulatory Compliance:

- Implement effective flood management strategies to protect the community and environment.
- Assist local institutions in complying with new regulatory requirements related to water management.

Community Well-being and Environmental Concerns:

- Increase green spaces and recreational opportunities in the region.
- Provide adequate assistance to unsheltered and homeless community members.
- Support initiatives for affordable housing and higher-paying jobs.
- Ensure adequate transportation routes in high-stress DACs, especially during floods and hazardous conditions.

Community Engagement and Collaboration:

- Utilize a community database for targeted outreach and engagement in water-related projects.
- Facilitate collaboration between the jurisdictional agencies and community groups to match potential projects with local needs.
- Encourage the development of new project ideas by community groups and jurisdictional agencies to address specific community needs.

These recommendations aim to address the critical water-related challenges in the WCVC region while leveraging its community strengths, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and resilient water management system.

Upper Santa Clara River

The recommendations based on the Community Needs Assessment for the USCR Region focused on several key areas:

Water Quality and Availability:

- Improve drinking water quality through better treatment and testing.
- Ensure sufficient water availability for managing community and environmental needs.

Infrastructure and Access:

- Upgrade utility infrastructure to improve water management and sustainability by:
 - Addressing failing septic systems

- Providing effective outreach and financial support for in-home water purification systems.

Cost and Regulation Management:

- Work towards reducing water costs through equitable pricing and water-saving technologies.
- Improve upon water quality regulations to make them more effective and efficient while maintaining safety standards.

Environmental Concerns:

- Improve groundwater conservation through effective management and community restoration projects that increase water recharge supply.
- Implement strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation, focusing on water resource management.

Community Well-being and Engagement:

- Address broader community concerns such as increasing green spaces, supporting homeless populations, and enhancing civic engagement.
- Improve regulatory oversight, particularly of industrial operations impacting the environment.

Collaboration and Project Development:

- Utilize a community database for effective outreach.
- Foster collaboration between local governments, agencies, and community groups.
- Encourage the development of community-centric project ideas.

Tribal

Greater Los Angeles County

Recommendations reiterate the deep need for healing of relationships between non-native communities and Tribal and Indigenous Peoples. This includes Native and Indigenous Peoples regaining access to land and water, and restoring them to a place of leadership in water planning and management.

- Create permanent indigenous seats on regional water leadership committees, and funding to support individuals named to these seats.
- Create or revise current policies to open up land and water spaces for tribal community members. This includes land that cannot currently be easily accessed.
- Create capacity building partnerships with local tribes and indigenous-led organizations to support land and water repatriation and rehabilitation.

- Increase commitment from local agency and government leaders to not only support tribal interests but to learn more about local tribal communities.
- Define resources to increase and maintain Native communities' knowledge of laws and policies related to indigenous rights and access to ceremonial land and water.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County

- Recognize tribal nations as sovereign governments, emphasizing government-to-government consultation.
- Elevate tribal community expertise to the level of water managers, encouraging mutual respect and understanding.
- Develop projects aligning with tribal community needs through engagement and understanding.
- Support cultural access by working on policies for tribal spaces, creating partnerships, and addressing land access challenges.
- Financial resources should support tribal leadership development and community-driven programs.
- Virtual respondents propose supporting cultural access projects, including building environmentally friendly structures, and advocating for policy change.
- Emphasize involvement of tribal and non-tribal community members, along with representatives from tribes ancestrally tied to the area.

Upper Santa Clara River

Based on the findings for the USCR Region, the following recommendations and next steps were offered.

- Address sovereignty and recognition.
- Examine regional/environmental dynamics of water and land.
- Identify state, municipal, and county representatives as key actors.
- Emphasize collaboration with Native traditional lands, respecting Indigenous protocols, culture, and leadership.
- Acknowledge positive work with tribes by the Institute for Watershed Resiliency (IWR), and assess the future role of IWR, considering challenges like those faced by the Rubidoux project.
- Recognize and curtail discriminatory practices in political interests affecting Indigenous initiatives.
- Ensure that research and proposals align with issues discussed during tribal water summits.
- Collaborate with existing Native Nation programs at universities and colleges, adapting them to local Native Nations' needs.

- Advocate for universities to be receptive to Indigenous interpretations regarding regulations like Institutional Review Boards (IRB).
- Promote recognition of oral traditions, cultural practices, and diverse understandings of the environment in academic settings.
- Encourage public and private spaces to respect Indigenous cultural-spiritual practices.

Final Note on Indigenous Futures:

- Express hope for Indigenous Peoples' futures through recognition, respect, and revitalization of diverse perspectives and practices related to the environment, land, and water.
- Emphasize responsibility, repairing historical injustices, contributing to a better world, and envisioning a hopeful future amid climate change and restorative justice.

Institutions and Schools

Greater Los Angeles County

Recommendations for institutions intend to address the drinking water challenges expressed by communities, and harness regional capacity for equitable, positive, local outcomes. The recommendations for schools look at the lack of funding for maintenance and operations, and the need for increased green infrastructure.

- Build understanding at regional and local institutions of community needs and strengthen ties between water providers and the people they serve.
- Support struggling water systems toward greater individual capacity, or consolidation with other systems, to improve affordability and quality of service.
- Assure the State's human right to water through water services for all residents, regardless of housing status.
- Conduct open, transparent countywide tap water quality testing, to identify solutions needed to address multiple, complex issues of drinking water in the region.
- Establish funding for under-resourced school districts to replace and update water infrastructure, including water refill stations and wastewater infrastructure.
- Employ a wide variety of means to increase green infrastructure and nature-based solutions on campuses, and the long-term maintenance of these features, including cost-share partnerships and investments that take into account long-term economic benefits of water projects.
- Include school leaders in regional and local water planning and management structures.
- Increase capacity for schools to connect with and appropriately serve their Tribal and Indigenous students.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County

Based on the WCVC findings, below are the recommendations and next steps to address the identified strengths and needs from the institutional perspective:

Enhance Inter-Agency Collaboration:

- Further develop shared interconnections and collaboration with multiple agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations.
- Establish a central hub or platform for efficient information sharing and resource extraction.

Community Engagement and Decision Making:

- Implement strategies that effectively involve community input in water related decision making processes.
- Expand use of digital platforms and social media to educate and engage broader audiences on water management and sustainability.
- Develop more effective methods of engaging with the community, considering language barriers and the availability of working populations.
- Utilize multilingual communication tools and flexible event scheduling to enhance participation.

Enhancing Green Spaces:

- Focus on maintaining and enhancing green spaces between cities.

Resources for Addressing Homelessness:

- Develop and leverage a variety of resources, collaborators, and strategies to address homelessness.

Infrastructure and Emergency Preparedness:

- Address aging infrastructure and changing regulatory requirements through strategic planning and investment.
- Explore innovative funding mechanisms and grants to support infrastructure upgrades, especially for smaller communities and water providers.

Tribal and Indigenous Community Engagement:

- Enhance interaction with tribal or indigenous communities, not just in times of crisis or for compliance with CEQA requirements but as ongoing partners in water resource management.

Next Steps:

Conduct Workshops and Forums:

- Organize workshops and forums to discuss best practices, share resources, and build stronger networks among agencies, nonprofits, and communities.

Develop a Comprehensive Engagement Plan:

- Create a plan that includes strategies for effective communication, addressing language barriers, and scheduling flexibility to increase community engagement.

Foster Continuous Dialogue with Tribes:

- Establish regular dialogues and collaborative initiatives with tribal and indigenous communities to ensure their continuous involvement and to preserve cultural resources.

Seek Sustainable Funding Sources:

- Explore and apply for grants, public-private partnerships, and other innovative funding sources to address the challenges of aging infrastructure and homelessness.

Regular Review of Regulatory Compliance:

- Continually review and update practices to remain compliant with changing regulatory requirements and to manage development pressures effectively.

These recommendations and steps are aimed at building upon existing strengths while addressing the critical needs to ensure sustainable and inclusive water resource management in the WCV region.

Upper Santa Clara River

Based on the findings in the USCR region, here is a list of recommendations to address the identified needs and challenges from the institutional perspective:

Enhance Community Engagement and Institutional Collaboration:

- Foster higher levels of community engagement regarding water-related issues.
- Encourage active participation in water-related stakeholder meetings to address specific issues like stormwater flooding and illegal developments affecting local water systems.
- Strengthen collaborations between community groups, public services, and non-profits to address emerging water and community service needs.
- Leverage local educational institutions for community education and water agency outreach efforts.

Infrastructure Upgrades and Financial Planning:

- Prioritize the upgrading of aging infrastructure to comply with new and shifting regulations.

- Develop financial strategies to manage the costs associated with these upgrades, ensuring they don't overly burden community members' water rates.

Addressing Local Environmental Issues:

- Eliminate or mitigate water quality issues that impact groundwater supply.
- Implement solutions for areas with old septic systems.

Budget Forecasting and Resource Allocation:

- Improve multi-year budget forecasting to reduce unpredictability and ensure efficient allocation of resources towards critical projects and programs related to water.

Stormwater Management:

- Develop and implement effective stormwater management solutions in areas prone to flooding.

Conclusion

The Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area Needs Assessment highlights the importance of inclusive and integrated water resource management that addresses the diverse needs of disadvantaged communities. A key recommendation is to enhance collaborative efforts across GLAC, WCVC, and USCR regions, focusing on shared challenges such as improving water quality, increasing accessibility to clean water, and addressing the impacts of climate change. This approach should continue including active and authentic community and Tribal participation, ensuring that policies and projects are responsive to the unique strengths and needs of each region, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and equitable water future not only for the Los Angeles Funding Area, but also across all of California.

Resources Appendix

WaterTalks Website

WaterTalksCA.org

Full Needs Assessment Reports

[Greater Los Angeles County Community Strengths and Needs Assessment Report](#)

[Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Needs Assessment Report](#)

[Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Tribal Water Needs Assessment Report](#)

[Upper Santa Clara River Needs Assessment Report](#)

[Upper Santa Clara River Tribal Water Needs Assessment Report](#)

Interactive Needs Assessment Dashboards

[Greater Los Angeles County Community Dashboard](#)

[Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Community Dashboard](#)

[Upper Santa Clara River Community Dashboard](#)

[Technical Assistance Proposed Projects Evaluation Dashboard](#)