Proposition 1 Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program

Grantee: Los Angeles County Flood Control District

Los Angeles Funding Area

Greater Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Integrated Regional Water Management

Upper Santa Clara River Integrated Regional Water Management

Grant Agreement: 460001219

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Credits and Acknowledgements

Funding and Oversight

The California Department of Water Resources, whose support and funding through "The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act" – Proposition 1, have been instrumental in meeting the State's long-term water needs. Additionally, contribution recognition goes to West Basin Municipal Water District, the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and County of Ventura for their fiscal management efforts, which has played a key role in ensuring the responsible and transparent use of resources allocated to the Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP) program which in the Los Angeles Ventura Funding Area is referred to as the WaterTalks program.

Task Force

The Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program Task Force is comprised of a collective of members representing three distinct IRWM regions, provided critical oversight to carry out program objectives. From the creation of the Members of the Task Force included:

- Greater Los Angeles County
    - Co-chair: Grace Kast (Gateway Water Management Authority)
    - Member: Ramy Gindi (Los Angeles County Public Works)
- Upper Santa Clara Regional Water Management Group:
    - Co-chair: Heather Merenda (City of Santa Clarita)
    - Member: Rick Vasilopulous (Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency)
- Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County
    - Co-chair: Lynn Rodriguez – (Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County)
    - Members: Lara Shellenbarger (County of Ventura)

Grantee

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District representing the Greater Los Angeles County IRWM Region served as grantee for the Funding Area and provided grant administration of WaterTalks. Staff of Los Angeles County Public Works, on behalf of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District prepared this Final Report in coordination with the Task Force and lead consultants. On behalf of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and Greater Los Angeles County IRWM Region, an appreciation and deep gratitude goes out to all involved in this process. The WaterTalks Program would not have been successful if not for the dedication and efforts from individuals, organizations, and teams.

Implementation Team

The consultant teams involved in the DACIP were led by the collaborative partnership of TreePeople and California State University San Bernardino. Both entities played an extremely pivotal role in task related items that included design and implementation within the DACIP. Additionally, on behalf of the DACIP Task Force serving the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area, an extended appreciation goes out to all other partners that provided valuable input and feedback as part of this final report and overall implementation of the WaterTalks Program.

Greater Los Angeles County Strengths and Needs Assessment Report

For the Strengths and Needs Assessment Report within the Greater Los Angeles County IRWM Region, a special thank you and acknowledgement goes to each person, community, institution, and entity involved in the process and outcome by providing valuable and essential feedback. The team could not have succeeded without their time and commitment.

Land Acknowledgement

The authors of the Los Angeles-Ventura Funding Area DACIP Final Report 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/ Ventureno 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

Introduction

The Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP) is a public program designed to generate and increase community involvement in planning a sustainable water future for California. Funding for the DACIP program is channeled from the California Department of Water Resources and supported by Proposition 1, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act approved by voters in 2014. Proposition 1 funded a wide range of sustainable water-related projects, including drinking water protection, public water system improvements, water recycling, wastewater treatment, drought relief, emergency water supply management, and watershed protection.

In the Los Angeles Ventura Funding Area, the DACIP was renamed to “WaterTalks” to avoid the stigmatized label of "Disadvantaged Communities." The program focused on exploring the strengths and opportunities of 128 communities in Los Angeles and Ventura counties that faced ongoing economic and environmental distress. Its primary goal was to gather input from these communities to prioritize and recommend water-related projects based on the issues of greatest concern.

Another goal of WaterTalks was to ensure that regional water resource management considered the health, safety, welfare, and resiliency of lower-income and otherwise underserved community members. To achieve this, the program provided a series of community forum meetings where local residents could raise questions and concerns about their water-related issues, offer crucial input regarding their community’s water needs, and learn about the State’s most current water-related topics. These topics included drinking water quality and availability, water conservation, flood management, drainage, vector control, access to parks and recreation, climate change impacts, costs of water and the overall health of watersheds.

The WaterTalks team collaborated with numerous community-based organizations to host local community meetings and events. Participation in a WaterTalks Community input meeting allowed for community needs, concerns, questions, and insights be taken into consideration as part of the region's current and future water projects, fostering a more inclusive and responsive approach regarding use and management of water supplies.

This Final Report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities, findings, and recommendations from the DACTI program focused on disadvantaged communities (DACs), economically distressed areas (EDAs), and underrepresented communities across three primary regions: Greater Los Angeles County (GLAC), Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC), and Upper Santa Clara River (USCR). This program was designed to address the unique water management needs, engage local communities, and develop projects to improve water resources and infrastructure.

Collaborators Summary of Regional Challenges

For the GLAC Region, the program aimed to address the water management needs of a vast area, including 87 cities and 200 water providers serving 9.8 million residents, with 42% residing in disadvantaged communities. Major issues that were identified included drinking water quality concerns, drought, stormwater management, and groundwater contamination. Key projects involved Technical Assistance (TA) support which helped address challenges effectively in small cities and agencies such as the City of Southgate, City of San Fernando, and City of Maywood.

In the WCVC Region covering communities within Ventura County's, the program focused on 9 underserved communities across the region. Outreach events highlighted significant concerns such as drought, wildfires, wind events, and water quality. Community engagement activities including the needs assessment revealed challenges such as transient

encampments impacting waterways, the impact of localized flooding on communities lacking adequate street drainage, the balance between housing development and available water resources, aging infrastructure in the small water systems serving low income communities, declining groundwater levels, and concerns over drinking water quality and water rates. These insights guided the development of targeted projects to address the specific needs of the community.

The USCR Region, characterized by a mix of urban and rural areas with spread-out disadvantaged communities, often served by volunteer-driven groups, faced issues such as water quality, affordability, aging infrastructure, and regulatory compliance costs. The region grappled with groundwater management challenges amid rapid development and environmental stressors, necessitating focused interventions to support sustainable water management practices.

GLAC IRWM Region

With 87 cities and 200 water providers, the scale of effort in serving the massive GLAC IRWM area with WaterTalks resources proved both daunting and inspiring. Elements and discoveries include the following:

IRWM Structure: Among many overlapping jurisdictional boundaries, these DAC communities are contained in four of the five GLAC IRWM sub-regions: South Bay, Upper Los Angeles River, Lower San Gabriel-Lower Los Angeles River and Upper San Gabriel/Rio Hondo. This structure was one element used in trying to achieve a reasonable distribution of resources, combined with ongoing community engagement that prioritized use of Technical Assistance and Project Development resources. These communities are served by water agencies of very different sizes with varying levels of capacity; there are multiple examples of small cities and agencies needing and benefiting from the Technical Assistance support including Southgate (Proposition 1, Round 2 funded project), City of San Fernando, Rubio Cañon Land and Water

Association (both Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Program funded projects) and City of Maywood (Technical Assistance). Work with these entities needs to go much further; helping with an individual project is very helpful in improving water management, but it doesn't address system capacity issues, including lack of skill and resources to involve the community in water planning and project development.

Drinking Water Quality: At the outset of the WaterTalks program, there was already an awareness that drinking water quality would be a major concern to GLAC communities. This was confirmed through the Strengths and Needs Assessment where concerns about drinking water quality and trust issues was the top water-related concern and expressed by 52% of 3,400 respondents. Subsequent development of community-based tap water quality testing programs will add an important component to the ongoing conversation about drinking water quality in the Region. This will be made possible by multiple, on-the-ground CBOs that have gained a deeper understanding of local drinking water issues, basics of water supply, and focus to be more effective advocates by providing much stronger resources for community needs. There is a notable supply of CBOs working with local disadvantaged communities on social, economic, health and environmental justice.

Community Engagement: Thanks to WaterTalks, there's a better understanding of where CBOs are actually working, and where communities may still need outreach and support. More about CBO involvement is discussed later in this report and in the document 2a Technical Memo - Engagement Methodology (s*ee Appendix A for full document*).

Tribal Communities: Awareness of tribal communities among non-tribal communities also grew during WaterTalks. Local tribes recognized by the State of California include the Tongva, Tataviam, Chumash and Serrano people. However, because none of these are recognized by the US Federal Government, there are very limited resources to support tribes, and tribal infrastructure is therefore limited including virtually no control over significant land

masses. This is one fundamental challenge for tribes to participate in and benefit from a program like DACIP.

Other Water Management issues learned in the GLAC Region include:

- Four areas are designated as "at-risk" or “potentially at-risk” in the State Water Resources Control Board 2021 Statewide Needs Assessment.
- All areas are impacted by Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits, for discharges of urban stormwater into streams, rivers, and lakes.
- All communities are impacted by drought and the impacts of climate change.
- The water supply for at least seven communities is impacted by seawater intrusion.
- Multiple communities have had to shut down wells due to groundwater contaminants.

WCVC IRWM Region

Located along the southern California coast and extending inland, Ventura County includes landscapes that transition from coastal beaches to mountain ranges encompassing diverse urban, rural, agricultural, and forested landscapes. Like many regions across California, this landscape experiences periodic, often severe droughts, fires, extreme and prolonged wind events (i.e. Santa Ana Winds), coupled with brief but intense rain events (i.e. atmospheric rivers) that create public and environmental hazards including fires, flooding water impairments, debris flows, and landslides.

Although landscapes are often identified across political and environmental boundaries, the inclusion of Tribal knowledge throughout this project provided important Tribal perspectives about the land and its natural conditions and elements. An understanding of the relationship of Tribal members, and their ancestors, to the land is often neglected in modern day approaches to protection and management of resources through typical governmental program and policy approaches. By collaborating with local Tribal members and the Sacred Places Institute, it was acknowledged that the entirety of Ventura County sits on the shared ancestral homelands of the

Chumash, Tataviam and Tongva peoples. The boundaries without due consideration of the historical distribution of resources managed over centuries by the first people to inhabit the area.

The 2019 IRWM Plan reflects the unique needs of a diverse region in Ventura County, which encompasses three major watersheds, ten cities, portions of the Los Padres National Forest, a thriving agricultural economy, and is home to approximately 844,000 people (as of 2020). The WCVC IRWM Region includes ten cities, including the two densely urbanized and suburbanized cities of Oxnard and San Buenaventura, unincorporated areas of Ventura County, the watersheds of the Calleguas Creek, Santa Clara River, and Ventura River, as well as vast rural and agricultural areas. Nearly 100,000 residents live within disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities, many of whom are served by small mutual water companies. The underrepresented communities in Ventura County include the DWR DAC areas of Casitas Springs, portions of Oxnard and Ventura, El Rio, Nyeland Acres, Saticoy, Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru.

The WCVC region contains approximately 40 clusters of DAC communities (DWR 2020 DAC Model) with 17 water related agencies serving communities within the WCVC IRWM initially identified through the WaterTalks consultant activities. Many of the DAC communities are located along the coast and within or surrounding the City of Ventura *(see Appendix B – Needs Assessment Report, Chapter 2*). Water concerns from communities in and institutions serving DACs and SDACs were as follows:

- **Greenspaces** as viable ways to link the need for recreational spaces, especially in DACs, with their goals of meeting non-point pollution Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) requirements in waterways through the implementation of stormwater BMPs.
- **Homelessness:** Water providers and community organizations working with homeless or un-sheltered populations would like to increase efforts to deter encampments in

waterways which would also assist with improving surface water resources in the region. One such example is the collaboration between the Watershed Coalition of Ventura County with a focus on improving watershed health through agency and non-profit collaborations and the Ventura County Continuum of Care, which works directly to assist homeless related issues. Expanding this type of collaborative framework would further support agencies with meeting TMDL requirements, while also providing reliable and adequate services to unsheltered and homeless community members.

- **Housing**: Water institutions expressed an imbalance with the need for new housing and higher paying jobs to increase the tax base to pay for existing and emerging infrastructure and regulatory compliance needs, however, like community members, they also noted the limited water resources available to meet development needs.
- **Drinking Water:** Over half (52.7%) of the respondents in high stress DACs noted issues with drinking water quality. Of the various water quality issues, a majority of the respondents (50.9%) noted taste as the area in greatest need of assistance.
- **Water Contamination:** A large number of respondents (28.4%) were concerned with possible contamination in their water, including from trash and industrial sources. The high costs of water services were also of great concern to nearly half (42.8%) of community members residing in high stress DACs.
- **Other Water Related Concerns:** The water related issues noted, but less frequent, include adequate water for fire and agricultural uses and emerging issues related to access to clean water in the face of prolonged drought and fire conditions as well as pressures from new development. Potential solutions suggested by those residing in high stress DACs include increasing stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) to recharge groundwater and improve surface water quality, water conservation incentive program, providing in-home water infiltration systems and testing kits as well as increasing environmental education programs.

USCR IRWM Region

The Upper Santa Clara River IRWM Region is a mix of urban and rural areas, with disadvantaged and underrepresented communities being very spread out. The character of community-based organizations follows appropriately. Here, Town Councils and local volunteer-driven groups provide community representatives. Of these, local groups focused on environmental issues at the broad needs of the region (wildfire, drought, landfills, water supply) rather than focusing on issues in a specific community, by and large. During the WaterTalks program, a coalition of environmental organizations formed on their own (with notable support from WaterTalks consultant TreePeople) and became another resource for community representatives. Activities here included an education series and work with community and tribal representatives on project development. Water concerns from communities in and institutions serving DACs and SDACs included the following:

- **Water Quality & Affordability:** In rural areas, residents expressed concerns with legacy pollutants, including nitrate, in the region impacting groundwater/drinking water resources. They suggested that updated studies and monitoring is needed to determine both the quantity and quality of regional water resources to inform water resources management planning and opportunities.
- **Aging Infrastructure & Changing Regulatory Landscape:** In urban reaches, agencies noted that regulations related to drinking water quality are constantly changing leading to increased costs to meet regulatory compliance measures.
- **Desire to curtail development:** Reduce a further strain on water resources. In rural areas, they also expressed that they do not want public services, due to cost, but that they recognize that failing septic systems contribute to water quality issues.

This USCR IRWM Region encompasses the City of Santa Clarita and unincorporated County of Los Angeles (COLA) land in addition to Angeles National Forest and state park land,

with a rapidly growing urban population in unincorporated COLA of 60,000 and 213,000 living within the City. There are an estimated 6,700 people in unincorporated COLA and over 18,000 people within city limits known today to meet the DAC criteria. The disadvantaged communities in the USCR region include the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) DAC areas of Newhall, Valle del Oro/Upstream Newhall Creek, Canyon Country, Bouquet Canyon/Seco Canyon Neighborhood, Lake Hughes/Munz/Elizabeth, Val Verde, Castaic, Acton, and Agua Dulce.

The CA DWR DAC and EDC (2020) mapping tool illustrates that the USCR encompasses 13 distinct DAC block groups primarily concentrated to the south, east and north of the Santa Clarita city center. There were 7 water agencies identified that service this region representing both regional, local and private water providers.

Los Angeles – Ventura Funding Area

By contrast to the GLAC Region where imported water is the norm, the USCR area has significant groundwater resources and, in some areas, gains up to 50% of supply in this way. This becomes a challenge in the face of rapid development in an otherwise undeveloped region of the County, and communities regularly share concerns about whether there will be enough water, especially in the face of drought and climate change. This is in contrast to the GLAC Region which is overdeveloped and grappling with how to address excessive urban stormwater runoff and pollution, regular nuisance flooding, risks of greater flooding and how to get water back in the ground for supply use, rather than flushing it to the ocean. This contrast is played out in multiple ways:

- Urban vs. rural cultural differences and infrastructure needs
- Population density vs. isolated communities and the impact that has on being heard when it comes to policy and funding decisions

- Responsibility for water management, with dozens of municipalities of varying sizes and capacity levels working together when possible and also competing with one another for resources, and unincorporated areas both urban and rural that fall to LA County for support and services.

In the USCR, there are fewer DAC/Underrepresented areas, making up a small part of the population, and managed from a water standpoint by a very small number of water providers. This allowed for greater attention to be paid by the WaterTalks program, where in the GLAC Region the WaterTalks resources were available to address only a small fraction of need due to area and citizen size.

General summary of DACs, EDAs, and underrepresented communities involved in IRWM efforts through this Program

GLAC IRWM Region

In the GLAC Region, 104 communities were identified for service through the WaterTalks Program. To address this scale, 19 CBOs, called the Leadership Group, worked together to carry out multiple aspects of the WaterTalks Program. Each organization was selected because they had experience with distinct communities that were the focus of WaterTalks, and trusted relationships with local residents. The savvy of these CBOs in understanding underlying barriers was eye-opening and at times profound, especially from Tribal organizations (See “Findings/Barriers" section, below). At the same time, their involvement or even knowledge of IRWM was essentially non-existent prior to the WaterTalks program. From the kickoff meeting in August of 2019, through their final meeting in December of 2023, the Leadership Group CBOs underwent training, field experience, decision making and networking to build their organizational capacity related to IRWM and water infrastructure in Los Angeles From June 2022 – December 2023, the CBOs participated in one or more projects as

they were developed, understanding the components, steps, methods, funding, challenges, and resolutions involved in developing water projects and programs. The Leadership Group of CBOs was also deeply involved in project prioritization. The Leadership Group CBOs included three tribal organizations: Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, Tataviam Land Conservancy and Tongva taraxat paxaavxa conservancy. These organizations participated in Leadership Group activities, but also provided deep insight into systemic challenges of tribal engagement in the area - especially the fact that no local tribes are recognized by the federal government, they have had all land in LA County taken from them, and many tribes from across the continent have been displaced here as well. An estimated 200,000 Native American people live in the Greater Los Angeles Area. Sacred Places Institute was tasked with creating an educational workshop on Tribal Allyship, and was instrumental in creating one of the project deliverables: Nurturing Connections - a framework for engaging with Tribes and tribal organizations (*see Appendix C for full document*).

WCVC IRWM Region

Tribal Outreach & Engagement: As part of ongoing efforts to foster collaboration and support between tribal communities and partners interested in water resource management and protection, two Tribal Allyship Workshops were conducted in 2023. The first session was held on March 29, 2023, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, and the second on May 3, 2023, during the same time. These workshops, organized by WCVC, focused on promoting allyship and understanding with Tribes and Tribal members. Additionally, a report summarizing tribal outreach efforts is available on the WaterTalks website, providing further insights into the engagement process and outcomes such as a guide to CEQA and Tribal Consultation for land use and other projects. See *Appendix D- Tribal Needs Assessment Report* for more information.

Community Based Organizations Training: To ensure comprehensive understanding and effective engagement, a series of training sessions were organized for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) including CAUSE, the Sierra Club and Friends of the Santa Clara River. These sessions included an overview of the Disadvantaged Communities Involvement Program (DACIP), highlighting engagement strategies, the use of community toolkits, guides, and mapping tools. The training sessions were structured to last three and a half hours, with a 30-minute break included.

For the smooth execution of these sessions, several materials were provided:

- **Sign-in sheets**: Provided by PlaceWorks
- **Name tags**: Provided by PlaceWorks
- **Agendas**: Provided by California State University (CSU)
- **Participant Packets**: Provided by CSU
- **Sample PowerPoint Presentations and Website**: Presented on-screen as part of training.

These training sessions were aimed at equipping CBO leaders with the tools and knowledge necessary to engage with their communities effectively and to support the objectives of the WaterTalks program. Further details, including the training session outline and materials, can be accessed through *Appendices E and F*.

Engagement Strategies: Upon completion of the analysis, nine Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in Ventura County were identified as priority areas for engagement and resource allocation. These areas included:

- Casitas Springs
- Portions of the cities of Oxnard and Ventura
- El Rio

- Nyeland Acres
- Saticoy
- Santa Paula
- Fillmore
- Piru

These communities were selected based on their specific needs and vulnerabilities, positioning them as key areas for targeted outreach and support.

The WaterTalks campaign strategically sought to engage communities and people through a variety of outreach strategies. The outreach engagement plan for the Needs Assessment Task began in November 2020 and ended on April 30, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the outreach strategy was revised to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines. In March of 2020, the Community Outreach Task strategy transitioned from in-person engagement to virtual meetings and online engagement. The WaterTalks Survey was key to the COVID-19 outreach strategy. All engagement materials encouraged participants to give input by taking the WaterTalks Survey. Participants had the opportunity to win a $100 gift card to incentivize community members to take the WaterTalks Survey. The WaterTalks Survey was originally scheduled to close in March 2021, but was later extended to April 30th, 2021.

Outreach strategies to circulate the WaterTalks Survey and education information to communities included the following:

- Virtual Events
- Mailing of printed WaterTalks newspaper and WaterTalks Surveys mailed to residences in communities
- Distribution of WaterTalks bookmarks to local libraries. Social media posts

- Paid online and newsletter advertisements
- Email blasts (E-blasts) to community partners, institution, and agency outreach
- Phone banking to residents
- Institutional and school outreach

Outreach efforts were coordinated and facilitated by PlaceWorks staff with support from outreach project partners and Task Force members. Ventura County **outreach project partners** included Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC), Ventura Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), and Friends of the Santa Clara River (FSCR).

Table 1.1: Collaborator Respondent Types for the Ventura Region

Community Member Types	Institutional Types
Homeowner An individual who lives in the Ventura region and owns a house, apartment or similar dwelling. n=362 respondents	**Mutual Water Providers (Volunteer staff)** Smaller water mutual agency represented by community volunteers who typically have prior knowledge or have been trained to support and manage various water operations, maintenance and regulatory activities. n=1 respondent
Renter An individual or family who does not own the property they reside in (i.e. house, apartment, mobile home). Although they utilize and interact with water resources in the region, they may be limited in their ability to manage water use in their residence. n=241 respondents	**Mutual Water Providers (Paid staff)** Smaller to larger water mutual agency represented by paid full time staff with expertise in water issues including various water operations, maintenance and regulatory activities. n= 2 respondents

Community Advocate An individual volunteering or a paid staff member of an organization working in the Ventura region. Organization representation may vary in issues resulting in varying interaction with water issues. n=10 respondents	**City Water Departments (Government)** Respondent type represents coastal and inland water departments that work on a variety of water issues including meeting regulations, infrastructure, stormwater, quality and quantity, identification of funding sources and public education and outreach. n= 3 respondents
Business Owner An individual who owns a business in the Ventura region. Their relationship to water use and related issues may vary based on business type. n=5 respondents	**Watershed Agency (Government; Unincorporated Areas)** Respondent types included staff representing a government agency who assist with stormwater and flood management, protection of property and other watershed related activities in unincorporated areas of the Ventura region. n = 1 respondent
Work/Employed in the Area Community participants who work for an organization in the Ventura region, but who do not reside in the area as a resident. n=2 respondents	**Watershed Agency (Government; Incorporated Areas)** Respondent types included staff representing a government agency who assist with stormwater and flood management, protection of property and other watershed related activities in incorporated areas of the Ventura region. n= 3 respondents
Unsheltered/Homeless n=1 respondent	**Community Organizations (Representing Unsheltered and Homeless Population)** Respondent types include those working for organizations dedicated to promoting a safe, desirable and thriving community by ending homelessness in Ventura County. n = 1 respondent

Engagement & Outreach Events:

A series of workshops and events were conducted to engage various communities in Ventura County, focusing on water resource management, climate resilience, and tribal allyship. Key events included:

- Postponed: A planned workshop, Green Infrastructure Water Tours: Cienega Springs Ecological Reserve Wetland and Habitat Restoration in Fillmore, CA, originally scheduled for January 1, 2024, was postponed.
- Tribal Allyship Workshops: Two sessions organized by the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) were held on March 29, 2023, and May 3, 2023, to build tribal relationships and support water-related allyship.
- Water and Climate Resilience Workshops: Workshops focused on water and climate resilience were held in Ventura on February 8, 2023, and in Santa Paula on October 13, 2022, to address local water challenges and solutions.
- WaterTalks Webinars: Two webinars, held on February 1, 2022, and March 2, 2021, discussed funding opportunities for water-related projects.
- Community WaterTalks: A series of WaterTalks Outreach events took place across various communities to engage the public in discussions about water resource challenges and solutions:
    - El Rio/Nyeland Acres: October 22, 2020
    - Fillmore: October 21, 2020
    - Casitas Springs: August 25, 2020
    - Piru: March 10, 2020
    - Wishtoyo: February 22, 2020
    - Saticoy: February 13, 2020
    - West Ventura: January 25, 2020
    - Oxnard: November 21, 2019

- Santa Paula: November 8, 2019

These workshops and events played a critical role in enhancing community awareness and participation in water resource management and climate resilience initiatives across Ventura County.

As a result of comprehensive Outreach and Needs Assessment efforts, several projects were selected to receive Technical Assistance funding. These funded projects aimed to address critical community needs related to water resources, education, and infrastructure. The projects included:

- Garden Acres Multilingual Education Program (Oxnard)
- Garden Acres Mutual Water Company Backup Well (Oxnard)
- Dual Language Workshops (Santa Paula/Fillmore)
- Fire Flow Infrastructure Improvement (Casitas)
- Groundwater Recharge Project (El Rio)
- Groundwater Recharge Project (Saticoy)
- GEOTRIBE – CSUSB STEM Summer Youth Program
- Meiner's Oaks Water District Income Study

These initiatives reflected the priorities identified during the outreach process with the goal of supporting sustainable water management, community education, and infrastructure improvements in the region.

USCR IRWM Region

Tribal Engagement & Outreach:

In 2022, a series of Tribal Allyship Training sessions were held to foster stronger relationships and understanding between tribal communities and water resource management

interested partners within the Upper Santa Clara River (USCR) region. These sessions were conducted on three consecutive Wednesdays from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM:

- October 12, 2022
- October 19, 2022
- October 26, 2022

These training sessions aimed to build capacity and awareness around tribal engagement, emphasizing the importance of allyship and collaborative efforts in water resource management. Further details on the tribal engagement process can be found in the USCR Tribal Needs Assessment report (*see Appendix G for full document*).

CBOs Training: CBOs were also involved in specialized training sessions designed to provide them with a comprehensive overview of the Disadvantaged Communities Involvement Program (DACIP). These sessions, structured to last three and a half hours with a 30-minute break, covered key topics such as engagement strategies and the use of community toolkits, guides, and mapping tools. Materials provided for the training included:

- **Sign-in sheets**: Provided by PlaceWorks
- **Name tags**: Provided by PlaceWorks
- **Agendas**: Provided by California State University (CSU)
- **Participant Packets**: Provided by CSU
- **Sample PowerPoint presentations and websites**: Presented during the sessions.

As part of the Outreach and Needs Assessment efforts, nine Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in the USCR region were identified as priority areas for targeted outreach. These communities included:

- Newhall
- Valle del Oro/Upstream Newhall Creek
- Canyon Country
- Bouquet Canyon/Seco Canyon Neighborhood

- Lake Hughes/Munz/Elizabeth
- Val Verde
- Castaic
- Acton
- Agua Dulce

These areas were selected based on a thorough assessment of community needs, including internet access, average age, and primary languages spoken within these communities. This information was instrumental in determining the most effective outreach strategies and ensuring that the community surveys reached the appropriate populations within the USCR DAC boundaries. This targeted approach allowed for a more tailored and responsive outreach effort, addressing specific regional needs and maximizing community participation in water resource management initiatives.

The following information was gathered to identify different forms of outreach and identify the best method of delivering the community survey to community members:

- Zip Codes within the USCR DAC boundaries
- regions without access to internet
- average age of community members in DACs
- primary languages in the community

The WaterTalks campaign, heavily dependent on the College of the Canyons, strategically sought to engage communities and people through a variety of outreach strategies. Start of the outreach engagement plan for Needs Assessment Task began in November 2020 and ended on April 30, 2021. Due to the COVID 19 global pandemic, the outreach strategy was revised to follow COVID 19 safety guidelines. In March of 2020, the Community Outreach Task strategy transitioned from in-person engagement to virtual meetings and online engagement. The Water Talks Survey was key to the COVID-19 outreach strategy. All engagement materials encouraged participants to give input by taking the WaterTalks survey. Participants had the

opportunity to win a $100 gift card to incentivize community members to take the WaterTalks Survey. The WaterTalks Survey was originally scheduled to close in March 2021 but was later extended to April 30th, 2021. **Outreach strategies** to circulate the WaterTalks survey and education information to communities included the following:

- Virtual Events
- Mailing of printed WaterTalks newspaper and WaterTalks Surveys mailed to residences in communities
- Distribution of WaterTalks bookmarks to local libraries. Social media posts
- Paid online and newsletter advertisements
- Email blasts (E-blasts) to community partners, institution, and agency outreach
- Phone banking to residents
- Institutional and school outreach

Outreach efforts were coordinated and facilitated by PlaceWorks staff with support from project partners including DACIP Task Force members. Upper Santa Clara Region (USCR) outreach project partner included staff and students from College of the Canyons (CoC). The College of the Canyons students and staff distributed thousands of surveys through the Newhall Library system. Bookmarks and newspapers were distributed to all check out books throughout COVID. The surveys and flyers were also distributed during the City of Santa Clarita Neighborhood Clean Up event on September 26, 2020. Flyers were placed in coffee shops and other open businesses in each of the communities identified.

A series of community-focused workshops, training sessions, and tours were held to engage residents and interested partners on a wide range of topics, including water resource management, climate resilience, and tribal allyship. Some of the key events in 2023 included:

- September 19, 2023 – SB 552 Overview for Small Systems Webinar

- June 22, 2023 – Climate Change: Impacts and Opportunities for Open Space Watershed Health
- June 20, 2023 – Private Septic System Maintenance Training Webinar
- June 19, 2023 – Private Well Maintenance Training Webinar
- June 8, 2023 – Green Streets Knowledge Exchange
- May 27, 2023 – Climate Change & Open Space Watershed Health Tour
- May 25, 2023 – Drinking Water Quality Workshop
- May 13, 2023 – SCVWA Rio Vista Plant Tour
- May 6, 2023 – Private Wells and Septic System Training
- May 1, 2023 – Acton Flooding Multi-Benefit Solutions Community Meeting
- April 20, 2023 – Santa Clara River Arundo Tour
- March 15, 2023 – Green Infrastructure Water Tour: Santa Clara River Restoration Sites

In addition to these more recent events, earlier outreach activities included a series of WaterTalks webinars and community meetings from 2020 through 2022, focusing on local water-related projects and community needs. Some of these included:

- December 3, 2020 – Acton WaterTalks
- November 19, 2020 – Santa Clarita WaterTalks
- November 7, 2020 – Canyon Country WaterTalks
- March 10, 2020 – Agua Dulce WaterTalks

The College of the Canyons' students and staff contributed significantly to these outreach efforts, ensuring that community members had access to vital information regarding water resource management. Their work, including distributing surveys and flyers across key public spaces, helped gather valuable community input. These events and surveys allowed the USCR region to better understand local needs and strengthen community engagement in water resource management initiatives.

Determining the first list of institutions to interview was done through an analysis of existing Median Household Income (MHI) data within Water Service Providers (WSPs) serving the chosen DACs in USCR as well as recommendations from the USCR IRWM representatives. WRPI first sent a list of WSPs recommended for interviews based on percentage of DAC and SDAC population within the WSP's service area to the Project Managers. This was determined using the existing data from the Data Hub. Meetings with the USCR IRWM representatives led to the recommended list of institutions to outreach to shown in the table below. Once several outreach attempts were done for 1st priority institutions, additional institutions were added. The tables below summarize the institutions chosen for the institutional needs assessment in USCR.

The USCR DAC Landscape -

Highlights from CA DWR DAC and EDC (2020) mapping tool illustrate that the USCR encompasses 13 distinct DAC block groups primarily concentrated to the south, east and north of the Santa Clarita city center. The Upper Santa Clara Region (USCR) contains diverse landscapes encompassing variable environmental (e.g. climate, terrain) and socio-economic (e.g. demographics, household income) characteristics (**Figure 3.1)**. For example, the City of Santa Clarita located in the central portion of the study site, is a rapidly growing urban and suburban landscape just north of the City of Los Angeles within the County of Los Angeles. The built environment is typified by post-World War II sprawling compact to low density suburban developments, interstates, and related impervious surfaces. In contrast, the surrounding areas are characterized by smaller more rural communities including the towns of Val Verde, Castaic, Agua Dulce, and Acton, that are inclusive of or surrounded by agricultural settings, warehouses, and larger residential lot sizes. These rural locations also contain highly mountainous terrain resulting in various natural hazards including extreme temperatures, drought, and wildfires during the dry seasons and debris flows and landslides during subsequent rain events.

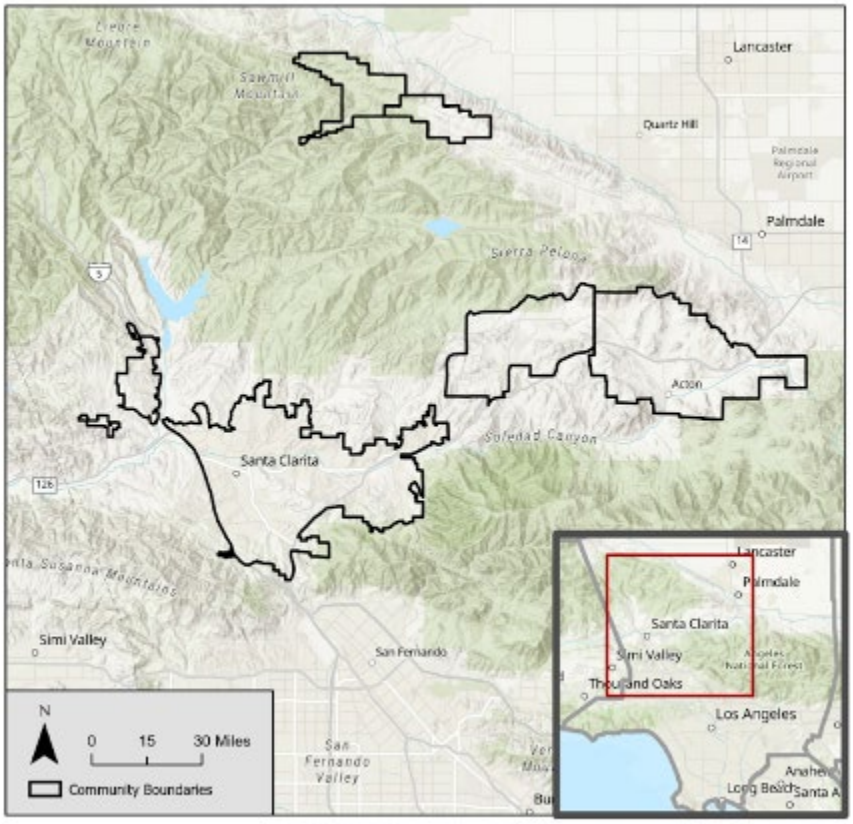


Figure 3.1 USCR area terrain map highlighting the priority areas where institutions and communities were surveyed.

Table 1.2 below describes the broad types of community and institutional survey participants. Community participants across the USCR region were primarily represented by homeowners, while those representing institutions were primarily from government agencies representing diverse water management activities across urban and rural landscapes. The majority of participating institutions have objectives directly related to providing drinking water resources, treatment of wastewater, flood and hazard control, stormwater management and ensuring surface and groundwater resources are protected for various human and environmental uses.

Table 1.2 Collaborator Respondent Types for the USCR Region

Community Member Types	Institutional Types
Homeowner An individual who lives in the USCR region and owns a house, apartment or similar dwelling. n= 253 respondents	**Water Agency** **(Paid staff)** Respondent type represents a state government *special act agency* with paid full time staff bridging diverse expertise in water issues including various water operations, maintenance, outreach, and regulatory activities. n= 1 respondent
Renter An individual or family who does not own the property they reside in (i.e. house, apartment, mobile home). Although they utilize and interact with water resources in the region, they may be limited in their ability to manage water use in their residence. n=43 respondents	**County Water District** **(Government)** Respondent type represents county water divisions that work on a variety of water issues including meeting regulations, infrastructure, stormwater, quality and quantity, identification of funding sources and public education and outreach. n= 1 respondent* *representing two rural communities within study area
Community Advocate An individual volunteering or a paid staff member of an organization working in the USCR region. Organization representation may vary in issues resulting in varying interaction with water issues. n=7 respondents	**Community Organization** **(Non-Profit)** Large scale facility that provides community services to individuals with disabilities. Activities include on site living, large scale events and use of services throughout Santa Clarita by residents. n= 1 respondent
Work/Employed in the Area Community participants who work for an organization in the USCR region, but who do not reside in the area as a resident. n=4 respondents	

Funded Projects

WaterTalks Funded DACIP Projects in USCR:

Below is a list of the projects identified through the WaterTalks program which received Technical Assistance and Project Development funding. Specific project information and materials are available and can be downloaded from the WaterTalks website..

- Rural Water Supply Reliability Program (Agua Dulce)
- Acton Flooding Multi-Benefit Solution (Acton)
- Tataviam Land Conservancy (Tribal)
- Septic Evaluation and Repair Support Program (Agua Dulce)
- Regional Tap Water Quality Testing Program (Multiple areas)
- Water System Partnerships (Multiple Areas)

Projects Awarded Additional Implementation Funding:

- Arundo Mapping and Priority Removal (Valencia/Santa Clarita)
- Rural Water Supply Reliability (Agua Dulce)
- Via Princessa Park (Canyon Country)

Map(s) identifying all DACs, EDAs, and underrepresented communities with IRWM regions learned from the activities performed in this program.

GLAC IRWM Region (and other) Areas:

A variety of maps were developed to shape the program in the GLAC Region and can be found as part of *Appendix H*. These include Findings / Barriers section. Also, for details on the

selection process and capacity building activities, *see Appendix A deliverable document 2a Technical Memo: Engagement Methodology*.

See the Involvement Activity / Identification of Projects section below.

- DACIP GLAC Communities: this map was adapted from the DWR-sponsored Disadvantaged Community Outreach Evaluation Study presented as part of the original proposal to DWR from the Funding Area. This newer version of the map, completed in July 2019, shows DAC areas in gold (based on 2016 MHI data at the tract level); these areas are then expanded in many cases (blue areas) to show how communities define their local boundaries - such as by freeways or waterways rather than census tracts.
- Tribal Cultural Boundaries and IRWM overlap: TreePeople developed the Tribal Cultural Boundaries Map as a support tool for carrying out the WaterTalks Program, to be a visual guide of how the original caretakers of the land viewed the pre-colonized land of what is now Los Angeles County and nearby areas. TreePeople shares this map with the understanding that it is intended for educational and display purposes only. The geographical information displayed is not for use in determining locations of cultures, boundaries or people for recognition, consultation or any other legal or policy purpose. Creation of the core map used source data from the California Native American Heritage Commission Digital Atlas of California Native Americans, as it is our understanding that local tribes had input in the creation of the commission's data. We recognize that data from the digital atlas may be updated periodically and recommend turning to that source, which can be found at https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/.
- Distribution of previous water grants: this provides an overview of major funding sources from the State of CA (Propositions 1, 50 and 84) that were awarded to disadvantaged communities prior to the DACTI Program. The map reveals gaps in

funds acquired for these communities in South Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, the San Gabriel Valley and portions of the San Fernando Valley.

- Distribution of previous water grant amounts: similar to the above map, this shows funding amounts awarded to disadvantaged communities prior to the DACTI Program. Once we look at the dollar investments, the gaps seem even more pronounced.
- WaterTalks Project Distribution: Covering both the GLAC and USCR areas, this map has been important because 1) there were gaps identified from previous funding efforts and 2) the program in this Funding Area was built around the unique structure of IRWM Regions and Subregions. Working toward a reasonable distribution of resources among the different regions and subregions was very important to building trust and good working relationships between the regions in relation to the WaterTalks program.

WCVC IRWM Region Maps

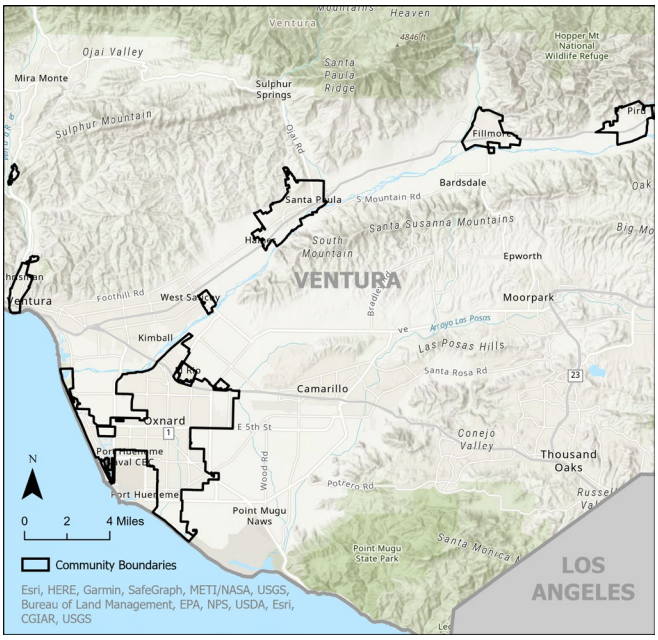
The development and application of multiple geography and spatial analysis tools enabled project leaders and participants to locate specific landscape characteristics with DAC and agency survey feedback. To identify where the project team should focus outreach efforts to promote survey participation, the Disadvantaged Community (DAC) Stress Model was developed to understand the extent to which DACs vary across their economic (i.e.US Census Median Household Income), social vulnerability (i.e. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) and human and environmental health characteristics (i.e. Enviroscreen 3.0) (Figure 3-1 WCVC IRWM Boundaries).

By assigning an overall index representing all three indicators (i.e. Indices), the DAC Stress Model allowed project consultants to distinguish between and map different DAC levels

(i.e. 5, high impacts; 1 low impacts) based on unique community characteristics and needs. Additionally, water agency services boundaries were incorporated into mapping tools to understand what agencies service an identified DAC.

Once completed, DACs in Ventura County identified as priority areas included the following nine areas:

- Casitas Springs
- portions of the cities of Oxnard and Ventura,
- El Rio
- Nyeland Acres
- Saticoy
- Santa Paula
- Fillmore
- Piru



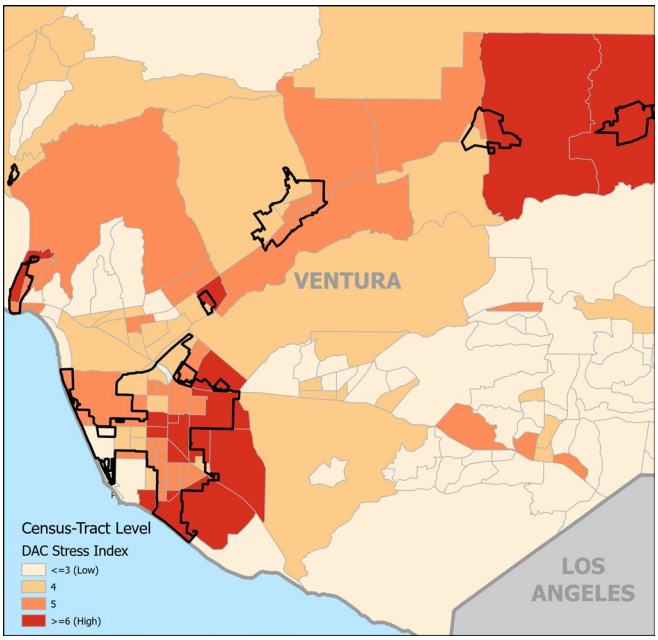


Figure 3-2. Ventura County terrain map highlighting the priority areas.

Figure 3-3 Ventura region community boundaries and DAC stress model classifications

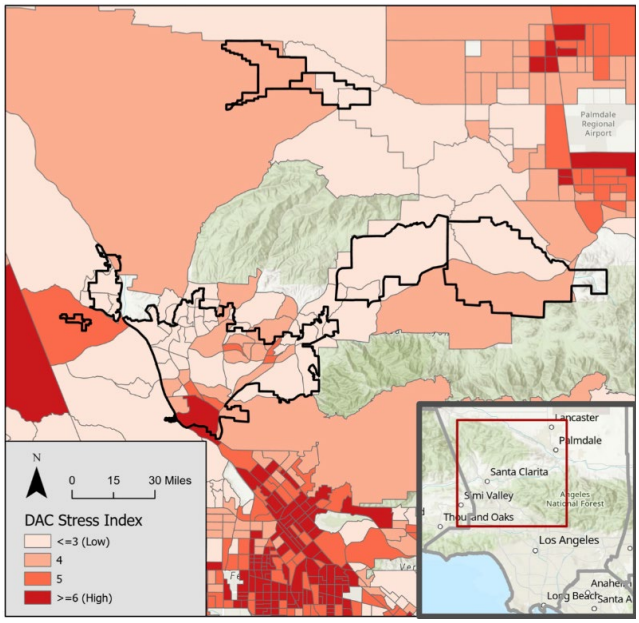
where communities and institutions were surveyed.

Key findings illustrate that communities in close proximity of diverse DAC stress levels occurred within the City of Oxnard highlighting that a given water agency may be servicing DACs with diverse vulnerabilities and related needs. For example, western Oxnard was identified as a DAC (level 3) community with low levels of stress related to household incomes, environmental health conditions and social vulnerability factors such as natural hazards and public health emergencies. In contrast, central Oxnard (DAC stress levels 4-6) communities experience higher social vulnerability and environmental stresses that impact human health. The power of the DAC Stress Model to provide a snapshot of community vulnerabilities helps to establish a spatial understanding for communities and agencies to identify short and long term strategies to reduce vulnerabilities. This approach also highlighted commonalities across diverse DACs highlighting opportunities for centralizing programs and projects that serve several community needs simultaneously.

USCR IRWM Region Maps

The Upper Santa Clara Region (USCR) IRWM Region contains diverse landscapes encompassing variable environmental (e.g. climate, terrain) and socio-economic (e.g. demographics, household income) characteristics. See boundary Figure 3.4 to the right. For example, the City of Santa Clarita located in the central portion of the study site, is a rapidly growing urban and suburban landscape just north of the City of Los Angeles within the County of Los Angeles.

Central to the WaterTalks program is identifying the current needs and or emerging issues that impact communities and water resources in the USCR region with a specific focus on DACs. Applying the **DAC Stress Model** to the USCR region, it was observed that community and institutional boundaries often bridge multiple socio-economic and environmental landscapes. See DAC Stress Index Figure 3.5 below. For example, the City of Santa Clarita encompasses DAC stress levels ranging from 3 to 6 with a majority of the western, central, and eastern regions representing low DAC stress levels (i.e. DACs 3,4). These characteristics suggest that a majority of residents residing in these areas have higher median household incomes, and lower levels of exposure to environmental health hazards and social vulnerabilities when compared to communities with higher DAC stress levels within USCR.

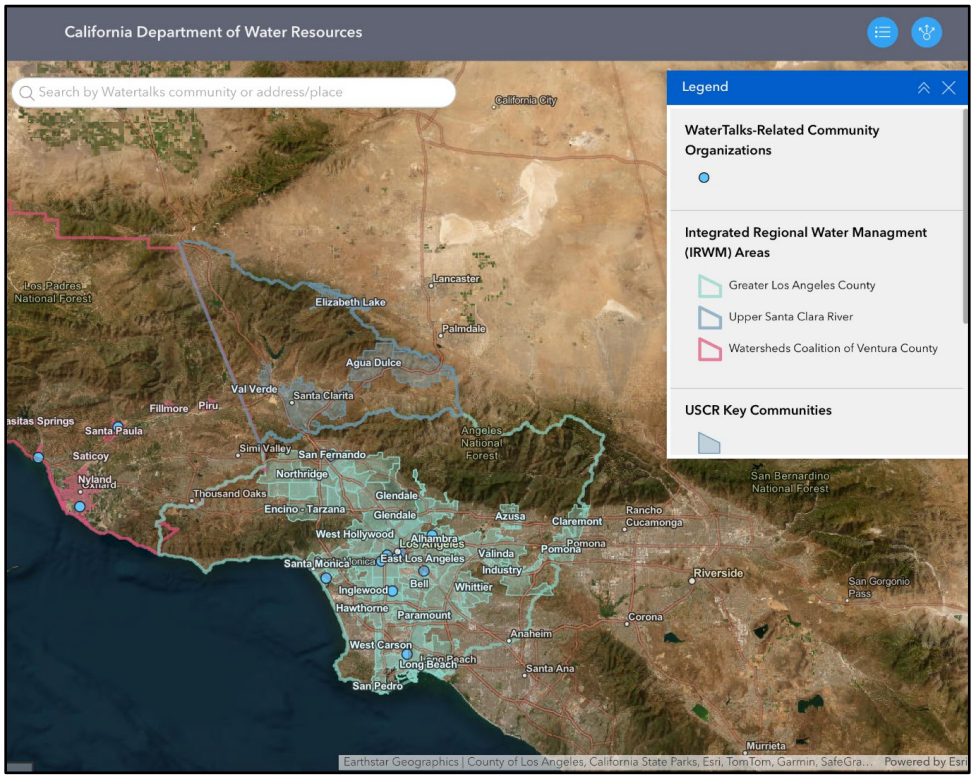


In communities characterized by DAC stress level 4, there is a slightly higher exposure to social vulnerabilities such as increases in environmental hazards and less public health emergency resources. This is likely associated with the rural and sprawling suburban development coupled with steep mountain and canyon landscapes within these communities. Smaller spatial pockets of DAC level 5 occur within the USCR indicating an increase in environmental health hazards in the western and northern reaches with an increase in social vulnerability in the southern reaches. The only DAC level 6 to occur borders the DAC level 4 and 5 communities in the southern USCR signifying higher social vulnerability when compared to DAC level 5 communities.

Institutions in the USCR primarily represent larger water providers who also work with smaller communities when needs arise. Smaller communities in the eastern portions of the watershed are increasingly reliant on hauled water due to lack of proximity to operations wells. Water resource contamination from historical and current pollution inputs often impacts the ability to provide clean water resources. Increasing operation and maintenance costs associated with changing regulations, aging infrastructure, and impacts from climatic changes (i.e., drought, fire, flooding) are also an increasing concern and a barrier to providing affordable water. Institutions serve a variety of DAC Stress types, however, a majority of institutions surveyed represent low DAC Stress areas (i.e., DACs 3,4) with a smaller portion of institutional water provider boundaries serving high stress DACS (i.e., DACs 5,6). A majority of USCR community members participating in the survey were classified as homeowners (84%) as compared to those across all IRWMs (43%) (Figure 3.3). This pattern was consistent for participants in low and high stress DACs across USCR (84% and 100% were homeowners, respectively.

Los Angeles – Ventura Funding Area Overview Map

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) allocated $98 million to the Los Angeles-Ventura (LA-V) Funding Area as part of the $510 million in funding authorized through the Proposition 1 IRWM grant. Overview of the LA-Ventura Funding Area “includes three independent Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning regions: Greater Los Angeles County (GLAC), Upper Santa Clara River (USCR), Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC)”. The purpose of DWR’s DACIP funding is to ensure “the involvement of disadvantaged communities (DACs), economically distressed areas (EDA), and underrepresented communities within regions.

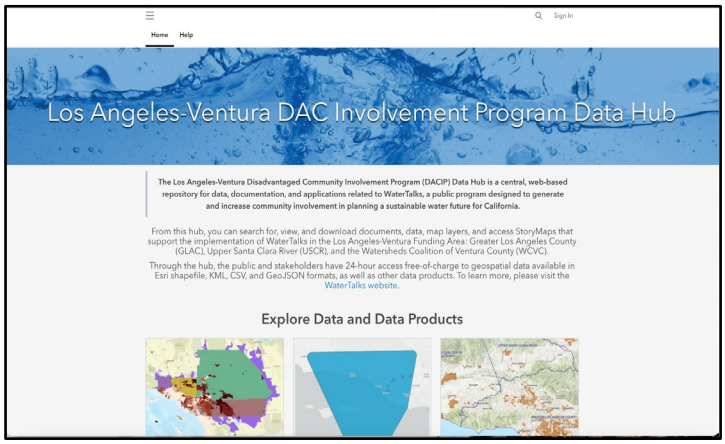


LACFCD proposed a budget of $9.8 million for the LA-V DACIP activities based on a three-part strategy to address the water management needs in the DACs identified across the LA-Ventura Funding Area. The strategies included local outreach, partnering, and local capacity building through technical assistance for project development. [The interactive Mapping tool developed for the LA-Ventura Funding area can be accessed here.]

The Funding Area's DACIP Task Force incorporated the strategies in the proposed Tasks below.

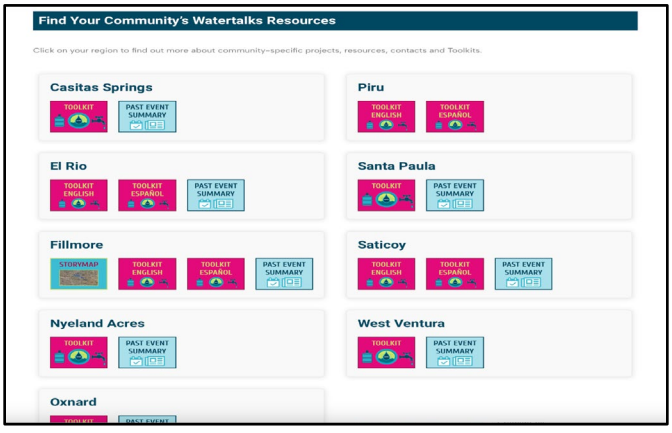
- Task 1: Pre-Program & Administration
- Task 2: Community Outreach
- Task 3: Needs Assessment
- Task 4: Project Development

Check it Out: Data Visualization: Community Decision Support Tools



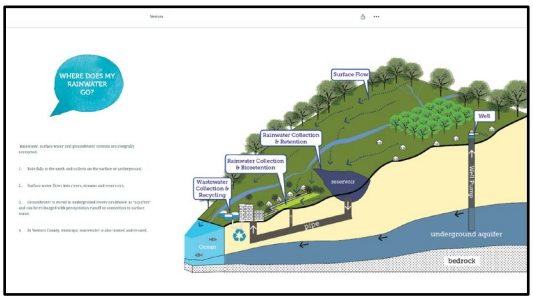
The DACIP Data Hub mapping application and user guide provided an online directory of all the data in the database designed for a layperson and data experts to visualize and download all data. A tutorial for the DACIP Data Hub was developed by the Center for Geospatial Science & Technology at California State University, Northridge (CGST), who developed and maintains the data hub. The DACIP Data Hub User Guide can be accessed by clicking on “Help” in the navigation bar at the top of the main page or by using the direct link to the guide. *The user guide is also attached as Appendix I of this report.*

The Technical Assistance Proposed Projects Evaluation Dashboard (TAPPED) is an interactive online application for evaluating technical assistance projects using a data-driven approach. TAPPED allows for project data exploration, project ranking, and project evaluation by combining project description data, evaluation criteria, and reference data



The WaterTalks “Find Your Community's WaterTalks Resources” toolkits offer educational materials, mapping graphics, and community specific factsheets that engage users in understanding where their water comes from, and other community characteristics information

aimed at building more “water knowledge”, transparency and opportunities for community-agency collaborations and engagement.



Involvement Activity Summary

Description of involvement activities

GLAC IRWM Region

Major components in the GLAC Region’s approach to Involvement Activities included the following:

- Consistency of relationships through creation of a Leadership Group of Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Assessment and planning prior to launch

A variety of involvement activities, drawing on the unique character of each CBO and the communities they serve. Leadership Group: As we shared earlier, to address the complexity of engagement for 104 communities, the Leadership Group of CBOs was recruited to carry out engagement through the WaterTalks Program. From an RFQ process an initial group of 11 CBOs was selected, approved by the Task Force in February 2019. As was reported at that time, these 11 CBOs represent 75-80% of the 107 communities identified for the GLAC IRWM

Region. Coverage per group ranged from 2 to 25 target areas. Areas not covered by other LG members became the responsibility of TreePeople and its team of Community Organizers. Research was done by TreePeople as to Community Partners and other resources to turn to in these “gap areas” – including City of LA Neighborhood Councils, churches, CBOs and field staff for agencies and elected officials. Assessment and Planning: A matrix was created to show which WaterTalks communities were served by which organizations. Where there was overlap, TreePeople negotiated with the organizations so as only to assign one area to a group. Structurally, it was important to maintain engagement throughout the program, primarily for trust building and avoid the “one-and-done” form of community outreach. This was especially useful for Leadership Group members that had regular audiences to talk with (i.e. a monthly member meeting). What was challenging was the time distance between different stages of the program so that audiences that were not regular were unlikely to be the same when a second or third outreach meeting occurred a year later than the last. Engagement was designed in 3 stages:

- Before the Needs Assessment to introduce WaterTalks and IRWM (wave 1)
- After the Needs Assessment to share and ground truth the results (wave 2)
- During project development to get community specific feedback (wave 3)

Education Materials: Cal State San Bernardino had been selected to provide education materials for the entire Funding Area, and to tailor these tools as specifically as possible to distinct communities – including information on water providers, pollution data, resources, as well as presentation materials. However for the GLAC Region, funding did not allow for the creation of toolkits for all 104 communities. TreePeople and CWH worked with CSU’s toolkit provider (PlaceWorks) to consolidate communities to 50 total. Involvement Activities: were carried out with this structure, and included multiple modalities of engagement and education - action-based events, in person or online workshops, and tabling at events.

Action Based Events: Probably the richest form of engagement is the action-based event, where an activity helps bring people together and, in many cases, relates to the education message. It's also been a real lesson on the creative ways that Social Justice communities in Los Angeles organize themselves, and how we can meet the community where they are - a key takeaway of the WaterTalks program. Examples include:

- TreePeople Tree Planting: several young adults gathered in Huntington Park, received an overview of IRWM during a walking tour of the neighborhood where the flow of stormwater was pointed out from roofs to storm drains, and the role of green infrastructure. They then spent time planting 200 trees on adjacent parkways. Interviews during this time showed a real appreciation for the context between the tree planting and its impact on water.
- Active SGV Bicycle Tour: a group in the San Gabriel Valley started out with an IRWM overview, and then rode on bicycles, stopping to view different waterways in the area, and challenge and opportunity spots related to water infrastructure projects.
- Communities for a Better Environment Group: CBE has a group of mothers who meet regularly in the Wilmington area to learn about local issues. CBE wanted to use the WaterTalks program to increase this group's knowledge of local water issues and how decisions get made.
- The Coalition of Mexican Federations (COFEM) Soccer Talks: COFEM, partners with a youth soccer league and uses soccer events as a chance to meet with parents and coaches to talk about local issues. They shared the WaterTalks IRWM presentation with this group.
- Social Justice Learning Institute Zumba Classes: SJLI holds regular Zumba classes (community health programs) and then the participants stay afterwards to talk about local issues. Again, WaterTalks was a topic at least one of their meetings.

There was a total of 196 engagement events in the GLAC Region:

- 71 events provided initial education
- 33 events conducted to ground-truth Needs Assessment
- 68 events held to follow up after the Needs Assessment
- 24 events held during Project Development

Education: Education was critical at multiple levels. In WaterTalks, disadvantaged communities were also represented by water agencies and staff of elected officials who serve these areas. Special education programs were provided for these audiences through the series: WaterTalks for Agencies & Electeds. This was a no-cost workshop series for public agency staff and elected officials, regional CBO, and other civic leaders, to strengthen integrated watershed management across LA County and equip local leaders with the tools and resources needed to address water related water related challenges. This workshop series was offered virtually in four IRWM subregions in Greater LA County, as well as the Upper Santa Clara River IRWM region. Five community site visits took place in person. This effort proved successful with 422 people participating in these programs. Recorded sessions are also available through the WaterTalks website.

Workshop topics included:

- Integrated Watershed Management
- Community Engaged Planning
- Water Training: Allyship with Tribal Communities
- Site Visit: Community Water Tours

Successes and Challenges:

Trusted Messenger Model: The primary success was working with the Leadership Group of CBOs, in what we often call a trusted messenger model. We recruited a team of community-based organizations focused on Social or Environmental Justice who have

constituents with whom they meet regularly, so we could draw on these audiences for engagement locally. The key here in building trust is the idea of the trusted messenger – both TreePeople and these organizations, depending on the community. That helps gain access to communities in a smoother fashion. At the same time, we were investing in these CBOs with in-depth training on IRWM, water infrastructure projects, and how decisions are made – so they can have a better handle on what's happening in their neighborhoods. It's also, slowly, building relationships between the organizations as a coalition, and between them and local agencies.

Scale of Effort: The primary challenges were attempting the scale of involvement in Los Angeles, and not being certain if the involvement was effective at the individual level. However, the biggest challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic, which curtailed the first wave of outreach activity early in 2020 (a dozen events were canceled) and the launch of the Needs Assessment data gathering. The CBOs had to shift attention from WaterTalks to the pandemic, and how to serve their constituents. A request was made to the DACIP Task Force and DWR to give more time, and the project was slowed by at least 6 months. CBOs then got back to outreach, but now it was virtual rather than in-person, and in some cases meant finding funds to buy computers for constituents and teaching them how to use Zoom. Gathering surveys for the Needs Assessment shifted from in-person tabling and workshops to social media blasts, and surveying.

WCVC IRWM Region

Community Engagement Strategies: Leveraging Partnerships & Knowledge

Community outreach and engagement activities included embracing the reality that project consultants were often non-residents or "outsiders" of the communities surveyed. Understanding the value of those within the community presenting and encouraging survey participation, project consultants contracted with diverse non-governmental organizations who were trained to conduct outreach based on developed Community Toolkits. At WaterTalks

events, they presented these Community Toolkits, distributed the survey and supported post survey events. Other forms of community outreach by the project team included WaterTalks marketing events, water service provider outreach letters, website activities that included program event information, post survey highlights, maps and other educational materials.

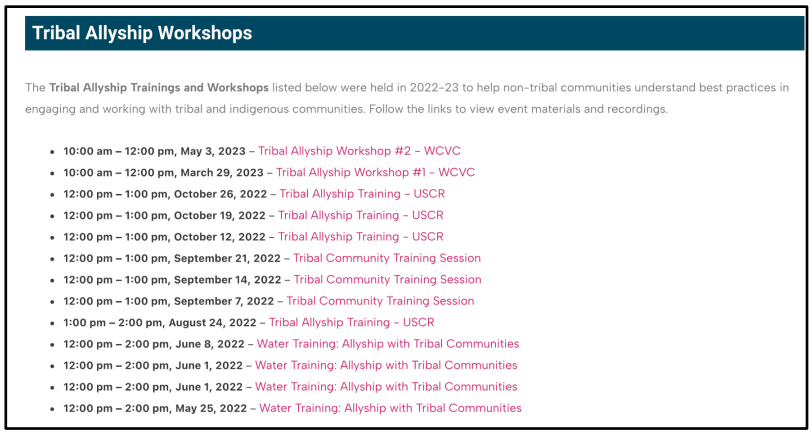
Due to the COVID 19 global pandemic, the outreach strategy was revised to follow COVID 19 safety guidelines. In March of 2020, the Community Outreach Task strategy transitioned from in-person engagement to virtual meetings and online engagement. The Water Talks Survey was key to the COVID-19 outreach strategy. All engagement materials encouraged participants to give input by taking the WaterTalks Survey. Participants had the opportunity to win a $100 gift card to incentivize community members to take the WaterTalks Survey. The WaterTalks Survey was originally scheduled to close in March 2021 but was later extended to April 30th, 2021. It was noted that barriers to engagement included the lack of time and resources (i.e. internet) to participate in online events.

As a result, survey outreach strategies to circulate the WaterTalks Survey and education information to communities included the following:

- Virtual Events
- Mailing of printed WaterTalks newspaper and WaterTalks Surveys mailed to residences in communities
- Distribution of WaterTalks bookmarks to local libraries. Social media posts
- Paid online and newsletter advertisements
- Email blasts (E-blasts) to community partners, institution, and agency outreach
- Phone banking to residents
- Institutional and school outreach

Tribal Engagement Strategies

One primary goal of the DACIP was to ensure the inclusion of Tribal and Indigenous community water perspectives, knowledge, and needs. When approaching Tribal leadership about participation in the WaterTalks program, it was expressed that they are often excluded from water decisions, however, their extensive knowledge about the water landscape would better position communities and agencies to be a more proactive approach to sustaining, conserving, and managing water resources.



Tribal Allyship Workshops

The **Tribal Allyship Trainings and Workshops** listed below were held in 2022-23 to help non-tribal communities understand best practices in engaging and working with tribal and indigenous communities. Follow the links to view event materials and recordings.

- **10:00 am – 12:00 pm, May 3, 2023** – Tribal Allyship Workshop #2 – WCVC
- **10:00 am – 12:00 pm, March 29, 2023** – Tribal Allyship Workshop #1 – WCVC
- **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, October 26, 2022** – Tribal Allyship Training – USCR
- **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, October 19, 2022** – Tribal Allyship Training – USCR
- **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, October 12, 2022** – Tribal Allyship Training – USCR
- **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, September 21, 2022** – Tribal Community Training Session
- **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, September 14, 2022** – Tribal Community Training Session
- **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, September 7, 2022** – Tribal Community Training Session
- **1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, August 24, 2022** – Tribal Allyship Training – USCR
- **12:00 pm – 2:00 pm, June 8, 2022** – Water Training: Allyship with Tribal Communities
- **12:00 pm – 2:00 pm, June 1, 2022** – Water Training: Allyship with Tribal Communities
- **12:00 pm – 2:00 pm, June 1, 2022** – Water Training: Allyship with Tribal Communities
- **12:00 pm – 2:00 pm, May 25, 2022** – Water Training: Allyship with Tribal Communities

In developing a framework that ensured Tribal perspectives were prioritized and shared with the greater community landscapes, WaterTalks adopted a Tribal Allyship approach that included opportunities to learn about Tribal knowledge and perspectives through public engagement education events community listening sessions and community-based workshops providing a multitude of opportunities that enhanced the learning process while also elevating community awareness of the value of including Tribal perspectives across diverse community needs, decisions, and activities.

Each workshop included diverse participants, representing the success of this far-reaching outreach strategy. Participants often included state, regional and local water agency staff, elected officials, policy makers, non-profit organizations, educators, business leaders and residents. Providing this over zoom enables flexibility for participants who are often unable to attend in-person events. This platform facilitated robust discussions illustrating the diverse interest and types of community members eager to learn from and engage with Tribal communities so that their perspectives can be included across diverse decision platforms and

community activities. Sustaining these strategies provides more opportunities to share community-based knowledge and collaborations. Workshop recordings and other Tribal Allyship educational resources, can be accessed on the WaterTalks website (www.watertalksca.org).

Agency Engagement Strategies

Agency outreach was a more direct process because agencies are more visible and easier to identify related to their service areas. To facilitate agency participation, WaterTalks reached out to water agencies and relevant institutions for program support. Institutions targeted in Ventura County included the City of Ventura Water Department, City of Oxnard Water Department, City of Fillmore Water Department, Nyeland Acres Mutual Water Company, County Watershed Protection District and the Continuum of Care Homeless Company.

USCR IRWM Region

The USCR IRWM region represents both rural and urban landscapes, with urbanization increasing across this region in the form of commercial, public and private development and the expansions of road and infrastructure networks. **Outreach strategies** to circulate the WaterTalks survey and education information to communities included the following:

- Virtual Events
- Mailing of printed WaterTalks newspaper and WaterTalks Surveys mailed to residences in communities
- Distribution of WaterTalks bookmarks to local libraries. Social media posts
- Paid online and newsletter advertisements
- Email blasts (E-blasts) to community partners, institution, and agency outreach
- Phone banking to residents
- Institutional and school outreach

Collaborator Respondent Types for the USCR Region

Community Member Types	Institutional Types
Homeowner An individual who lives in the USCR region and owns a house, apartment or similar dwelling. n= 253 respondents	**Water Agency** **(Paid staff)** Respondent type represents a state government *special act agency* with paid full time staff bridging diverse expertise in water issues including various water operations, maintenance, outreach, and regulatory activities. n= 1 respondent
Renter An individual or family who does not own the property they reside in (i.e. house, apartment, mobile home). Although they utilize and interact with water resources in the region, they may be limited in their ability to manage water use in their residence. n=43 respondents	**County Water District** **(Government)** Respondent type represents county water divisions that work on a variety of water issues including meeting regulations, infrastructure, stormwater, quality and quantity, identification of funding sources and public education and outreach. n= 1 respondent* *representing two rural communities within study area
Community Advocate An individual volunteering or a paid staff member of an organization working in the USCR region. Organization representation may vary in issues resulting in varying interaction with water issues. n=7 respondents	**Community Organization** **(Non-Profit)** Large scale facility that provides community services to individuals with disabilities. Activities include on site living, large scale events and use of services throughout Santa Clarita by residents. n= 1 respondent
Work/Employed in the Area Community participants who work for an organization in the USCR region, but who do not reside in the area as a resident. n=4 respondents	

CSU led outreach efforts to institutions through emails and phone correspondence to inform institutions about the WaterTalks program, the LA-V Funding Area DACIP, their local IRWM group, and requesting their participation in the institutional needs assessment. USCR IRWM representatives led further outreach and coordination with institutional contacts to solicit participation in the institutional needs assessment. Due to COVID-19 regulations from the CSU the CSU consultant team was unable to conduct in person interviews. Interviews were done through Zoom. The institutional needs assessment was available as a digital form using Excel to be filled out by institutions if a Zoom call was not possible or not preferred. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and each was recorded with the permission of the interviewee. The following table below summarizes outreach efforts in USCR:

Outreach to Institutions in USCR

Institution	First Outreach	Second Outreach	Response
LARC foundation	WPRI received request for interview by Regional Project Manager and was connected to LARC foundation by phone	Follow up email was sent to schedule interview date and time	Interview 11/30/20
Los Angeles Co. Waterworks Districts (LACWD) - District 37 - Acton	WRPI received request for interview by LA WW District representative at the Acton WaterTalks.	Follow up email was sent to schedule interview date and time	Interview 3/4/21
Los Angeles Co. Waterworks Districts (LACWD) - District 36-Val Verde	WRPI received request for interview by LA WW District representative at the Acton WaterTalks.	Follow up email was sent to schedule interview date and time	Interview 3/4/21
Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency	Regional Project Manager directed WRPI to best contact.	Follow up email was sent to schedule interview date and time	Interview 3/11/21
California Water Service CO-Lake Hughes	1st phone call 1/20/21, second call	Institution replied requesting interview questions and	No Further Response

	and introductory email 3/3/21	possible interest in participating but there was no further response	
Lake Elizabeth Mutual Water Company	1st phone call 1/20/21, introductory email sent 2/22/21, and on 3/3/21	Institution requested introductory email, but there was no further response	No Further Response
North Trails Mutual Water Company	1st phone call 1/20/21, left voicemail 3/12/21	introductory email sent 2/22/21	No Response
SPV Water Company	1st phone call 1/20/21, second call 3/11/21	intro email sent 2/22/21	No Response
The Painted Turtle Camp	WRPI left voicemails to COO's office and spoke with different staff 2/16/21, and sent introductory email 3/31/21	institution responded to WRPI that they were unsure about participating and no further response	No Further Response
Casa Dulce Estates	1st phone call 1/20/21	introductory email sent 2/22/21	No Response
Oak Grove Family Park	1st phone call 1/20/21	WRPI sent introductory email to contact 3/16/21	No Response
The Oaks	WRPI left voicemail 1/20/21	WRP called 3-7/21	No Response
Hughes-Elizabeth Lake Unified School District	intro email sent 4/12/2021	follow up email sent 4/23/21	No Response
Newhall School district	intro email sent 4/12/2021	follow up email sent 4/23/21	Not Interested
Real Life Church	voicemail left 4/12/21 could not find an email address online	left voicemail 4/26/21, received call back	Not Interested

Los Angeles – Ventura Funding Area: Collective Success and Challenges

GLAC IRWM Region

For the GLAC Region, the program formed a Leadership Group of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to engage 104 communities. The engagement strategies included action-based events, workshops, and tabling at local events. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a shift from in-person collaboration to virtual engagement, with CBOs adapting to new outreach methods to maintain community involvement.

WCVC IRWM Region

In the WCVC Region, strategic outreach was conducted through partnerships with local NGOs, emphasizing the value of community-based knowledge and expertise. Outreach strategies included virtual events, phone banking, and social media campaigns, which were particularly crucial during the pandemic. Tribal engagement was also a key focus, with workshops designed to elevate indigenous perspectives in water management.

USCR IRWM Region

Within the USCR Region, virtual engagement strategies were employed due to COVID-19, ensuring significant outreach to community members and institutions. The program utilized virtual events, mailings, and social media outreach to achieve broad participation, enabling effective communication and involvement despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Successes

- **Community partnerships** to develop outreach strategies and events were a success because it broke down barriers for the consultant teams to identify and engage community participants. Building trust within a given community takes time that this

program did not afford, so the community organization partnerships were essential to fulfilling the inclusion of community-based knowledge and expertise.

- **Depth of participant feedback** - across both community and agency surveys, the consultant teams were able to identify multiple levels of needs and opportunities that would better sustain water resource management needs across the USCR. This allowed for projects to be identified and implemented, supporting a more directive and sufficient solution-based outcome to the WaterTalks program objectives.
- The **application of geospatial tools** to understand the geography of participant responses as well as their concerns related to water resource management.

Challenges

- **COVID** - COVID limited in-person events so a lot of the community surveys (i.e. online) and agency interviews (i.e. zoom) were virtual. It also created barriers related to the availability of participants.
    - In-person events offer opportunities to engage with participants on a more personal level and for consultants to learn more about community dynamics that are often void with online platforms.
- **Availability of Technology** - In rural areas, the internet can be unstable or costly, so it creates barriers to participation in education events, workshops and completing surveys.
- **Using "Common Language":** Bridging technological knowledge that needs to be conveyed to diverse community members is typically challenging. Providing different platforms to convey information to community members is needed to reduce barriers to engagement and knowledge as well as building trust between community members and the agencies who serve them.

Project Development: Identification of Projects Developed from DAC involvement activities.

GLAC IRWM Region

Project Development in the GLAC Region incorporated a new model, one that attempted to place community needs and interests as close to the point of project inception as possible. The process uses the following steps:

Step 1~Project Sketches: The Strengths and Needs Assessment data gathering was completed and analyzed in summer of 2021 for the GLAC and USCR Regions. In fall of 2021, technical teams from TreePeople, Council for Watershed Health, Stantec and Sacred Places Institute gathered online to brainstorm basic project ideas that addressed needs identified in the Assessment. Following that, TreePeople, Council for Watershed Health and Stantec developed “project sketches,” or high-level project ideas, that were collected into workbooks for sharing with the Leadership Group of CBOs for GLAC Region projects.

Step 2~Community Feedback & Prioritization: In two workshops held February 10 and 11, 2022, the Leadership Group of CBOs met online to provide guidance and direction to determine which sketches best address what the CBOs heard community members share. Through online anonymous polling, they ranked and prioritized which would be further developed into detailed project concepts.

Step 3~Project Concepts: The technical team shaped the prioritized projects further, and on July 28, 2022, met again online with the Leadership Group of CBOs, presented more detailed approaches to the projects and conducted further polling to prioritize 4 projects from each subregion to receive more robust development in 2022-23. Separate from this, Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and the WaterTalks project team met online on April 4, 2022 to develop project sketches directed

and prioritized by tribal partners and experts. These were then developed and shared with the Leadership Group of CBOs in July for review and feedback.

The following is a list of GLAC Projects that received Technical Assistance and Project Development:

- Green Complete Streets Knowledge Exchange
- South Gate Water Main Replacement Project
- 52nd Street School
- Industrial Greening Potential Landowner Outreach
- Hygiene & Water Stations Handbook
- Tribal Framework Project (Re-riting Water History, Engaging Tribal Expertise)
- Sacred Waters Community Education Program
- Stream Healing: Revitalizing our Rivers + Spaces for Cultural Practices
- Sleepy Lagoon at Maywood Riverfront Park
- Regional Tap Water Quality Testing Program
- Lynwood Agency-Community Facilitation

WCVC IRWM Region

This section includes brief descriptions of each project funded under WaterTalks Task 4.2.4 providing technical assistance in different forms to benefit the Ventura County under-served or disadvantaged communities (DACs), economically distressed (EDAs), and other underrepresented communities.

Request for Proposals

In January 2022, a notification was sent out to WCVC stakeholders informing them of the Request for Proposals for DACIP Projects posted on the WaterTalks website. This solicitation invited Ventura County stakeholders to submit project proposals that would benefit

under-served or disadvantaged communities (DACs), economically distressed (EDAs), and other underrepresented communities in Ventura County. Disadvantaged Communities definition and DWR DAC and EDA mapping tools were presented in the eligibility criteria for the Request for Proposals (RFP). A list of eligible project activity types were also presented in the RFP. *See Appendix J.*

Complete proposals were submitted through the Project Description Form. *See Appendix K.* This form was created in the previous WaterTalks phase with DAC Consultants and led by CSUN's CGST team. Although this RFP was designed for funding projects in Task 4.2 under the WaterTalks program, stakeholders were also able to use the Project Description Form to apply for other funding opportunities including IRWM Round 2, Urban Multibenefit Drought Relief, and Safe Clean Water grant funding.

Project Development

As part of the Community Based Curriculum modules previously discussed, the Project Development and Project Description Form module was presented to WCVC stakeholders February 1, 2022. This workshop helped stakeholders develop possible projects to submit, and guided them through the project description form submission requirements. The WCVC DAC Consultant team was available to assist stakeholders through the project submission process. Placeworks, CRWA and CSU-WATER staff attended TA project development meetings with representatives from DACs and other agencies to help with submitting proposals and developing project concepts. Projects concepts or proposals not ready to submit for funding through this RFP were recorded for future funding consideration for inclusion in the WCVC IRWM Plan.

Project Evaluation and Selection

As of July 12th, 2023, seven proposals were received for WaterTalks Task 4 funding for the WCVC region. All seven projects were funded for the total of the $489,204 requested. These

projects are described in Chapter 4 of this report. Once projects were submitted, they were reviewed by WCVC IRWM representatives and then the WCVC WaterTalks Committee for consideration for grant funding. WCVC WaterTalks Committee met March 2nd and March 30th to review and select projects. Projects underwent a data-driven evaluation process via the TAPPED application.

Project Development for Future Consideration

After projects were selected and funded for Phase 4 of the WaterTalks program, Placeworks worked with CAUSE, a community-based organization in Ventura County, on community outreach events focused on climate resiliency in order to identify specific community needs and develop potential project ideas for future funding. Placeworks created materials and summaries in English and Spanish for two Climate Resiliency workshops held in Santa Paula and Ventura in October 2022 and February 2023 respectively. These events resulted in project ideas and locations to guide additional outreach and project refinement. A list of potential projects for WCVC DAC communities was developed from survey feedback and communication with residents and community leaders to identify locations within the communities that face issues that can be addressed by funding projects to address these issues.

To explore the event summaries, *see Appendix L and M.*

Ventura Ave Water and Climate Resilience Workshop

Santa Paula Water and Climate Resilience Workshop

The following table lists the Task 4 funded projects including project title, type, and amount of funding awarded.

Table 1.3. WaterTalks Task 4 Funded Projects Summary (WCVC Region)

Project Type	Project Name	Amount
Educational/ Community Outreach	Garden Acres - Multi Lingual Education Program	$37,500
	Friends of the SC River - Dual Language Workshops	$25,000
	GEOTRIBE - CSUSB STEM Summer Youth Program	$110,000
Technical Assistance	Casitas Mutual Water Co - Fire Flow Infrastructure Improve	$24,500
	VCPW - El Rio Groundwater Recharge	$134,027
	VCPW - Saticoy Groundwater Recharge	$134,027
Needs Assessment	Meiners Oaks Water District - Income Survey	$24,150
	Total	$489,204

USCR IRWM Region

Project Selection for the USCR IRWM Region was, similar to the GLAC Region, developed through sketches. However, there was not an established “Leadership Group " of CBOs to turn to and there was sufficient funding for USCR to develop all sketches, so prioritization was not needed. Sketches were discussed with key community leaders associated with each potential project for feedback and feasibility. After these discussions, a review of all USCR projects was held online on August 29, 2022, with USCR IRWM representatives to the Funding Area DACIP Task Force, for final review and concurrence before development occurred. The following is a list of USCR Projects that received Technical Assistance and Project Development:

- Acton Flooding Multi-Benefit Solutions
- Septic Evaluation and Repair Support
- Tataviam Land Conservancy Project
- Water System Partnerships
- Tap Water Quality Testing Program
- Arundo Priority Mapping & Removal
- Rural Water Supply Reliability Program

Urban and Multi-Benefit Drought Relief (UMDR):

Additional projects throughout the Funding Area received support through the Urban Multi-benefit and Drought Relief Program opportunity that arose in early 2022. For a report on project selection for UMDR, *See Appendix N UMDR 2022 Project Selection - Summary Memo among Section 4c Deliverables to DWR*, or the WaterTalks website.

Los Angeles – Ventura Funding Area

For the GLAC Region, projects were developed through collaboration with CBOs, focusing on community-specific needs identified in the Strengths and Needs Assessment. Notable projects included the Green Complete Streets Knowledge Exchange and the South Gate Water Main Replacement Project, which aimed to address critical water management issues. In the WCVC Region, technical assistance was provided to various community projects, such as groundwater recharge initiatives and educational programs. Collaboration with local stakeholders was essential in identifying and developing project proposals that addressed the specific needs of disadvantaged communities. Within the USCR Region, project selection involved feedback from key community leaders and IRWM representatives. Funded projects included the Acton Flooding Multi-Benefit Solutions and the Tataviam Land Conservancy Project, which were developed to address the unique challenges of the region.

Findings and Barriers

Common themes across the regions included the need for improved drinking water quality, better communication, and enhanced engagement with local communities. Barriers identified were regulatory complexities, funding challenges, and the need for greater capacity building among local agencies and community organizations. Tribal communities emphasized the importance of cultural and spiritual connections to water, highlighting the necessity for inclusive water management practices that respect and incorporate indigenous perspectives.

Needs Assessment: Narrative Summary of Community Characteristics Identified and Specific Community

GLAC IRWM Region

At the community level, 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 recommen-dation 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. As to water agencies and institutions, there were several overarching themes reflected in the collected testimonies of those interviewed. These interviews revealed that large regional institutions with capacity provide formal and informal mutual aid to institutions with less or no capacity, however, this process is haphazard and uneven and there are social, political, or institutional barriers preventing the matching of capacity and need.

Multiple school districts were involved in the Assessment, and 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 prepared-ness.

For additional Needs Assessment data and findings, please *see Appendix R GLAC Needs Assessment Report*. An interactive, public-facing dashboard was also created for each region using the GIS maps, which houses the Community Needs Assessment information. The data for the Greater Los Angeles County region can be accessed through the link below:

- GLAC Communities Dashboard

WCVC IRWM Region

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 WCVC 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.

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 WCVC region. Nine communities were identified for targeted outreach as priority DACs in the WCVC region. PlaceWorks partnered with WCVC, 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 WCVC. The combined outreach methods resulted in over 600 community survey responses.

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.

See Appendix O for the Ventura County Needs Assessment Executive Summary. The data for Ventura County can be accessed through the link below:
Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Community Dashboard.

USCR IRWM Region

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 WCVC 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.

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.

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 pollutions

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.

See Appendix P for USCR Needs Assessment Executive Summary. Full report can be accessed through Appendix S. The data for the USCR region can be accessed through the link below:

Upper Santa Clara River Community Dashboard

Los Angeles- Ventura Funding Area

Areas outside of Greater LA County include semi-rural communities. This leads to multiple differences: For example, urban areas are more affected by MS4 permit regulations and this drives regional funding decisions that can leave rural areas' water-issue needs behind, as a lower priority. Climate change is also affecting water issues differently in urban vs rural areas within the Funding Area. Urban areas are dealing with heat island and other public health effects, but water supply creates an even greater need for IRWM participation, to work collectively on maintaining and managing water supplies. Rural areas, by contrast, are the frontline for wildfires. This impacts water supply needs for communities and individuals, with a strong reliance on groundwater. For example, the USCR communities of Acton and Agua Dulce with a majority of residents on private wells must maintain a backup supply of 3000 gallons per property for wildfires. For many, groundwater levels during drought cannot support year-round use of wells, requiring hauled water for individual homes and even small water systems.

The Los Angeles Ventura Funding Areawide Community level data response map can be accessed using the link below:

DACIP Needs Assessment Community Data

Narrative Summary Tribal perspectives

GLAC IRWM Region

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 was not being met, or they did not know if these were being met for the community. It was also expressed that the

community needs 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 ignorance. There are multiple recommendations that emerged from the Tribal Perspectives portion of the Needs Assessment:

- Reiterate the deep need for healing of relationships with Tribal and Indigenous Peoples. This includes regaining access to land and water, restoring Native and Indigenous Peoples 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 land and water spaces for tribal community members - 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 commu-nities.
- Define resources to increase and maintain Native communities' knowl-edge of laws and policies related to indigenous rights and access to ceremonial land and water.

WCVC IRWM Region

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.

For additional information, see Appendix B.

USCR IRWM Region

The following tentative points or take-aways were found for the USCR Region: Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians 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 Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians to continue dialogue and collaboration was also strongly encouraged. *For additional information, see Appendix G.*

Needs Assessment Template Table Filled in (At Community Level)

The Los Angeles Ventura Funding Area consultants developed the Needs Assessment surveys and Institutions interview questionnaires using DWR's Needs Assessment Template. Community level data for each region can be accessed through the links to the interactive Needs Assessment Dashboards below:

GLAC Community Dashboard

WCVC Community Dashboard

USCR Community Dashboard

Barriers- Identification of ongoing barriers for DAC involvement in IRWM efforts

GLAC IRWM Region

Findings from the Needs Assessment surveys and interviews identified barriers that continue to prevent community involvement in water planning and management. While COVID created a more accessible forum (online - Zoom, WebEx) for CBOs to participate, there is still the difficulty of tracking when meetings occur, accessing translation when needed, and finding

time and funding to allow regular attendance. There may be much deeper issues at work, as revealed by working closely with staff from the Leadership Group of CBOs. Their savvy in understanding underlying barriers was eye-opening and profound, especially in working with Tribes and Tribal organizations. Following are basic practices to use in community engagement, that by our observation are not part of most institutional practices:

- If we value the input from communities, we need to pay for it. This is probably at the top of the list in terms of policy changes that need to be made
- Connect many times. The community needs to know we're making a commitment
- We meet the Social Justice community where they are – we don't ask them to come to us, because they wont
- Allow flexibility in outreach approaches. With WaterTalks CBOs, if they needed to change a message on a flier or rework slides in a presentation for their group, we said yes. We trust them to know the audience
- Cultural sensitivity – this is more than translating into multiple languages, but also looking to our CBOs for other signals of what's needed to address cultural differences. This is VERY true with tribal communities, where there is a huge chasm between western thought and indigenous practices
- Learn about and let go of language that is not welcome in the Social Justice community. Examples include: "disadvantaged, target and stakeholder". If we start changing harmful language, it's a great first step in healing
- Be comfortable with the uncomfortable; productive conversations with disadvantaged communities may likely include acknowledgement of historic and ongoing harms

WCVC IRWM Region

Barriers to Engagement: Agency & Community

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was a barrier to the program implementation as originally proposed, the shift to online platforms did provide some advantages and barriers. Advantages included the flexibility of participants to join meetings and outreach events which may have previously been difficult related to travel and time. Conversely, in many rural areas and DACs the internet was often limited by the availability of service and cost. As previously noted, the value of the community organization/NGO partnerships was helpful to encourage participation across DACs in both urban and rural settings. Regardless of the platform, participants did note that in general they are often busy with work and personal obligations so engagement in general was difficult. Agencies also noted that due to small staff with high workload obligations that they are often unable to participate although they have the desire to do so.

Engagement between community members and agencies as well as between agencies, including IWRMs, was also of interest to the WaterTalks program. Understanding these relationships and potential barriers to engagement offered opportunities to identify how engagement gaps can be addressed. In the Ventura region, less than half of the community respondents representing the Ventura region were aware of their provider water agency (42%). Additionally, very few of the respondents in the community were aware of the IRWM program (10%) or any water-related educational programs (11%). Within high stress DAC areas, these percentages increased to 79 percent of respondents expressing no knowledge about regional IRWM, 58 percent not knowing what water agency provides their drinking water and 82 percent of respondents expressing no knowledge about water related educational opportunities occurring in their community (see **Figure 3.10 below**).

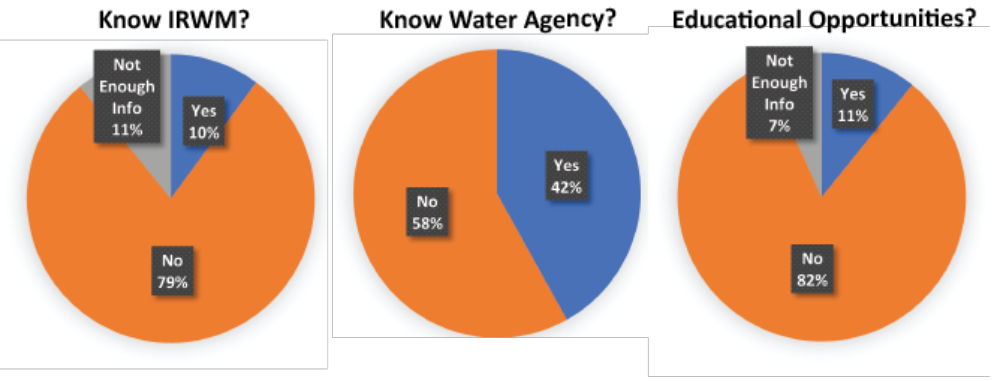


Figure 3.10 Responses to the series of community collaboration questions for community member participants in high stress DAC communities in the Ventura region.

Water institutions vary greatly in their involvement in regional efforts including IRWM and SGMA groups. Many institutions noted that they are involved in multiple SGMA and IRWM groups across the upper and lower watershed, suggesting that their involvement has assisted them with procuring funding to meet emerging regulations (i.e. NPDES, MS4 permits). Others note that collaborations with local organizations such as nearby water districts, fire department, nonprofits and county departments was more productive in procuring funding (i.e. Proposition 84) than participating in larger organizations such as IRWM groups (see Table 3.3 below). Some of these collaborations are presented at IRWM meetings, however, individual representation of smaller systems is very limited. Smaller districts also felt that they are not adequately represented in regional organizations with most representation focused on urban and agricultural communities. Several smaller agencies noted that they are not informed about IRWM meetings and feel that they are not supported because IRWM focuses on assisting larger systems. Other barriers to participation include limited staff and volunteer run organizations that limit the time and resources to attend meetings. Competing interests, limited supplies and affordability also create barriers to effective cooperation and collaboration. There can also be jurisdictional challenges when different cities and counties are on different pages about water resources management and planning.

Table 3.3 Identified Institutional Collaborations

Existing Collaborations
● Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency ● Santa Clara River Valley –Oxnard GSA, ● Upper Ventura River Groundwater Agency, ● Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) ● Ventura River Watershed Council ● Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program ● Santa Clara Watershed committee ● State Water Interconnection Project ● Association of Water Agencies of Ventura County ● Purveyors group from Calleguas Water District

Water providers and community members representing high stress DACs connected in their perspectives about the barriers to community engagement. Lack of time and resources from both stakeholder groups were identified as the greatest barriers to engagement. Stakeholders disconnected greatly from their knowledge about IRWM and other water organizations or collaborations. All water providers shared that they know about IRWM, but engagement was largely associated with their ability to obtain fundings through participation. A majority of water provider community collaborations happen at a local scale between diverse groups representing fire, water, and social services agencies and nonprofits. Community stakeholders expressed little knowledge about IRWM, local water agencies and related educational opportunities, illustrating an opportunity for IRWMs to increase outreach and awareness of the resources they can provide to support community water needs.

Tribal Communities Barrier to Engagement

Barriers to engaging tribal communities include a lack of support, lack of time and resources, lack of communication within tribal groups as well as between community members and the government, a disinterest in the subject overall, a lack of water appreciation and

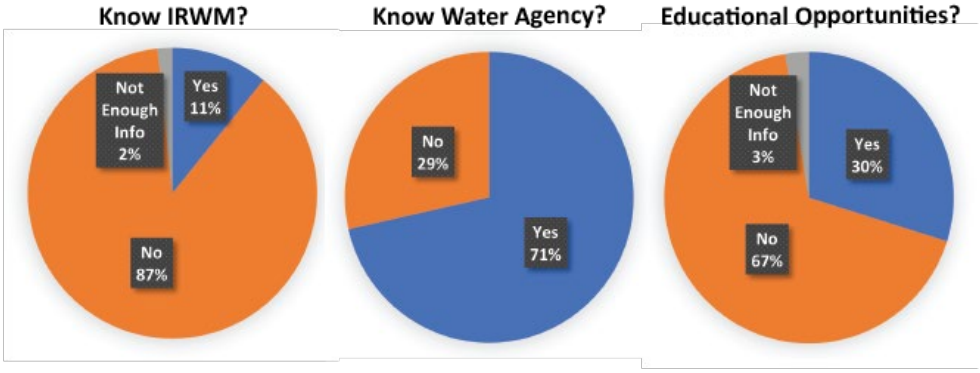
difficulties in getting people educated about and involved in these types of planning efforts. Respondents shared that lack of communication between tribal groups, lack of communication between community members and the government, disinterest in the subject, and an overall lack of support are all barriers that limit engagement within the community.

When asked about what the community knew about Ventura IRWM and what relationships were upheld, 95% of the Native community admitted to having no knowledge of the Ventura IRWM nor having engagement in the IRWM planning process. Because of this, many are unaware of the resources like grants and other forms of financial support that are offered to the community. When it comes to participation in public meetings many of the community members lack access to transportation, electronic devices, or both. Some said that virtual platforms have been a better option to attend meetings and request they be held in the evenings when most people are out of work or school.

USCR IRWM Region

A majority of local USCR respondents were aware of their water agency provider (71%), which is in contrast to only 11% of respondents who are aware of IRWMs Additionally, nearly a third of respondents were aware of water-related educational programs in the region (30%). In high stress DACs, most respondents (75%) have never heard of the IRWM and few were aware of their water provider or the programs they offer (20%). In smaller, rural communities largely reliant on well water, resident engagement was characterized by frequent community council or neighborhood group meetings to discuss water needs and local projects related to water resources. These smaller communities note that they feel they are not a priority for regional water efforts, and they are often unaware of projects or left out of decision making and planning processes that directly impact their communities.

Regional and county water institutions noted that smaller communities may not be visible or known to IRWMs or they may feel that they are too small to participate. Consistent communication among community members has enabled them to identify problems and work to find resources to assist them when needed. Water providers indicated that they are often notified by smaller communities when an issue arises (i.e. dry well, need to import water).



Responses to the series of community collaboration questions for community member participants in USCR.

County and regional water institutions noted that they are involved with and often play a leadership role in the Antelope and USCR IRWMs. These relationships have enabled participating institutions to secure funding for infrastructure and planning efforts. It was suggested that participation in IRWMs is higher when funding is available but tends to be reduced when funding is limited.

Los Angeles – Ventura Funding Area

The GLAC IRWM Region, WCVC IRWM Region, and USCR IRWM Region faced similar challenges in involving Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in their IRWM efforts, while also highlighting unique barriers and approaches based on their specific community needs.

Shared Challenges: Awareness and Engagement

A significant barrier across all three regions was the lack of awareness about IRWM programs. Surveys in the WCVC and USCR regions showed that most respondents, particularly

in high-stress DACs, were unaware of IRWM programs and resources. Time and resource constraints further hindered engagement, with both community members and smaller agencies struggling to participate. Virtual platforms introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic helped some but exposed gaps in internet access and digital literacy, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

Cultural and Structural Barriers

The GLAC and WCVC regions highlighted deeper cultural and structural barriers. The GLAC region emphasized the need for culturally sensitive practices, including addressing harmful language, acknowledging historic harms, and meeting communities “where they are.” Similarly, the WCVC region noted poor communication between tribal groups and government agencies, further limiting engagement. Both regions stressed the importance of building trust through sustained, culturally appropriate outreach.

Barriers in Rural and Smaller Communities

Smaller and rural communities in the WCVC and USCR regions faced unique challenges, including feeling excluded from regional planning processes. In the USCR region, rural residents relied on local meetings for problem-solving but perceived themselves as too small to be a priority. The WCVC region also highlighted jurisdictional challenges between cities and counties, further complicating collaboration.

Role of Funding and Collaboration

Funding played a critical role in engagement across all regions. Participation increased when funding was available, with agencies often collaborating with local organizations to secure resources. The GLAC region advocated for compensating community input to show value for their contributions, while the WCVC region noted that partnerships with local nonprofits and agencies were more effective than participation in larger IRWM groups.

Tribal Community Engagement

Barriers for tribal communities included lack of awareness, limited resources, and poor communication. The GLAC region emphasized the need for culturally sensitive approaches to bridge the gap between western and indigenous perspectives. Similarly, the WCVC region noted that tribal communities were often unaware of available IRWM resources, further limiting participation.

Recommendations

GLAC IRWM Region

IRWM Structure and Culture: The GLAC Region's IRWM structure is yet another layer of regional water management complexity that makes participation from disadvantaged communities more important and difficult. Fundamentally, entities that provide IRWM and other water network management, including agencies, consultants, and non-profits, will benefit themselves and all they serve by learning, learning, and learning about equity and justice and changing the way we think. If an entity provides water management activities of any kind, it is highly likely that they are contributing to system oppression and racism without anyone internally realizing it. This can be especially true in working with tribal communities who have been hidden from view through repeated attempts at erasure. Their culture and approaches to the water and land are often diametrically opposed to settler society viewpoints and can require an extensive shift in thinking on the part of IRWM and other water leaders. A place to start is working with professional 3rd parties to assess internal culture, mindsets and practices for historic harms that are being furthered and how to address making changes. It is always the responsibility of the oppressor (higher capacity and empowered institutions) to make changes toward equity and justice, and not wait for the oppressed (disadvantaged communities) to step forward to attempt to do so. A simple example is providing regularly scheduled meetings, which are known well in advance. Too often meetings are canceled at the last minute (usually due to a

lack of agenda action items or schedule conflicts) and there's not a clear way of communicating this out. This proved challenging even for CBOs involved in the WaterTalks program, working as advocates for their local community. For this kind of problem is likely due to capacity issues at the management level - but that doesn't matter. Water management entities will always have more capacity than under-served community representatives and need to take full responsibility and accountability.

Motivation: A key consideration to involvement in IRWM is motivation. While agency participation in IRWM can be important to help address collective water management, this is less important at the community or even CBO level. Interest from the community and CBOs comes where there are projects and funding issues at stake. Providing small grants to CBOs to help establish and maintain communication links around issues of interest could be helpful. Another form of motivation is paying participants to be regular members or attendees at IRWM meetings. IRWM meetings are primarily populated by people paid to be there. Not true for CBOs and community members. They have to decide between IRWM, and programs funded by grants and contracts, or decide if IRWM participation is important enough to seek funding from private sources to cover the time. Currently there is a lack of community and tribal seats on commissions and boards related to water utilities and districts that lead to accountability, oversight, and ultimately public trust. Indigenous nations should be recognized and be invited to take on paid appointments on the commissions that services those territories the tribal nations stewarded pre-colonization. Tribal entities have had their infrastructure dismantled over the past 250 years - they need support and capacity building wherever possible if we are to benefit from their experience and wisdom.

WCVC IRWM Region

Value of Community Engagement & Education: The process of WaterTalks presents a valuable opportunity to establish a "bottom up" grassroots information structures that are key

to helping agencies know and prioritize community water needs. Providing frequent and inviting platforms to hear from those who live and work in the water landscape is essential to identifying and addressing needs and solutions more intentionally, especially when financial resources are uncertain. Participant feedback in the WCVC suggests that many community members and agency staff were unaware of the various water agencies that service their community, especially at a regional level, including IRWMs. Smaller agencies also expressed that they did not feel that their objectives aligned with larger and regional agencies or that they were not able to participate in regional based planning, funding, and programs. This disconnect in awareness provides a myriad of opportunities to build trust, knowledge and inclusiveness between agencies and the community members they serve.

One example of diverse engagement opportunities supported by the WaterTalks program was the application of blended engagement methods including the development and distribution of multilingual literature, utilizing online and social media platforms, hosting outreach events and listening sessions and partnering with community organizations. Other benefits of engagement strategies include clarifying misconceptions between community members and agencies and building trusting relationships between these groups. This further positions water agencies opportunities to learn from and to value how their constituents view their project, goals and objectives. Collectively, this provided numerous opportunities for participation reducing barriers to engagement while also supporting a diverse pool of participants across the region. Casting a wide net of engagement opportunities also increases knowledge about community-level needs and opportunities to partner across programs, projects, and expertise. The WaterTalk website provides numerous examples of engagement strategies that could be sustained and expanded across the WCVC region. Additional information on engagement between DACs and IRWMs can be found within the CalRural report which is available on the WaterTalks website. *See Appendix Q* for the full report.

Building & Sustaining a Resilient Watershed Community: Across the WCVC, there is a need to be more intentional with opportunities to educate the public about water and environmental resource agency services, plans, and programs. The knowledge gaps found in this effort identified that at the community level, survey participants were unsure of who provided their water as well as larger agency to agency relationships (i.e. wholesale providers vs. retailers vs. regional agencies). At the agency level, many felt that they were not able to participate (i.e. inapplicable to agency objectives) in regional efforts, like IRWM planning and grants, and or they did not have adequate staff to participate in such opportunities. Establishing frequent and diverse opportunities to engage between communities and agencies as well as agency to agency may include professional development workshops, planning symposiums, and social media platforms whereby ideas, resources and expertise can be shared on a more frequent basis. This may also help to inform planning efforts so that they are better understood, supported and collaborative to meet local and regional water resource management objectives. This also speaks to the need to ensure efforts embedded within WaterTalks live beyond the grant.

The need to coordinate is paramount to addressing shifting and unpredictable water resources management needs. Without such coordination, efforts will remain disjointed and resource intensive leaving communities and agencies “guessing” and struggling to address water needs through adaptive strategies. To centralize this coordination, IRWMs are already positioned to serve as a “watershed knowledge hub” for a given region and to connect regions across the state to support more resilient watershed policies and regulatory measures. Their involvement and knowledge of state to local water resources management affords them the opportunity to coordinate collective knowledge and resource opportunities across the entire WCVC region. As a result, this holistic partnership approach may foster and direct partnerships, expertise and resources into the WCVC watershed landscape to meet evolving challenges. Additionally, positioning the IRWMs as a hub may alleviate the burden of agencies who often

struggle to seek resources due to low capacity or lack of expertise in how to navigate political and financial channels.

Other points of consideration are how IRWMs can facilitate opportunities across monitoring, sustaining community-agency communication feedback loops and workforce development. This may include partnerships with community colleges and universities, like the role the CSUs played in WaterTalks, to support diverse watershed management needs. For example, CSUs could assist with environmental and hydrological studies that inform communities and agencies about water resource conditions related to climatic changes, development and shifting climatic trends. Simultaneously, they can include students in the research and learning environments so that they are better equipped to join the water workforce, a growing concern from water agencies across the state. For this program, CSUs also played a role in developing and implementing survey tools, deploying surveys and developing dashboards and mapping applications that were essential to understanding how difference DAC and agency needs varied across a given community. This also facilitated knowledge about project needs and how they align with or address other needs in the WCVC region.

Although ideal and comprehensive, this strategy must include financial resources to position IRWMs for success as a “knowledge and resource” hub within the WCVC and across other IWRM regions. At the very least, this requires a coordinated effort to educate and engage decision makers about the value and opportunities IRWMs may provide to ensure watershed resiliency for current and future generations of citizens and the unique ecosystems of this region.

Maintaining & Sustaining Digital Assets: The digital assets developed through the WaterTalks Program are valuable resources that should be preserved and regularly updated. These assets include a range of user-friendly online datasets, interactive maps, project identification criteria, selection methods, and community education toolkits. Often, assets like

these become static once programs end or funding is exhausted. However, the survey and mapping tools created during the WaterTalks program offer a standardized method for community engagement, data collection, and data visualization. These tools can be easily refreshed and adapted, not only for the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) but for other regions across California as well. Maintaining and evolving these digital platforms allows for the inclusion of new focus areas as community and agency knowledge grows. A centralized data hub would serve as a repository of this evolving information, helping to track changes in community and agency needs over time. Additionally, regularly updating and collecting data through these platforms make it possible to allocate limited financial resources more efficiently. Funds can be directed toward areas facing the highest risks and vulnerabilities, especially as communities navigate the challenges of climate uncertainty.

USCR IRWM Region

Diversifying Financial Resources to Develop & Sustain Monitoring: Positioning the USCR region to obtain both earmarked and grant-based funding for surface and groundwater monitoring is essential to understanding and shaping water landscape knowledge. Previous hydrological studies in this region are often outdated (i.e. 20 years+) and/or monitoring is infrequent creating large knowledge gaps between communities and ageneids as well as between agencies. By developing and sharing monitoring data, more realistic and adaptive water management strategies can be implemented. This is needed to be more intentional with connecting the local and regional water landscapes and reducing inefficiencies with disjointed management strategies at the regional level. This also provides a platform to partner with community colleges and universities who can assist with monitoring both as a workforce development strategy as well to alleviate water agency personnel workloads.

Prioritizing Community Engagement & Education: Within the USCR IRWM region, Community Engagement and Education are important factors that must continue to be

prioritized. The grassroots efforts and strategic processes of WaterTalks opened an information exchange among local residents and agencies to prioritize community water needs. For Community Engagement, inclusivity and building trust among local residents and agencies were focal points in how input and feedback was collected to understand the full scope of water needs. Education about water and its important use within the community was expressed in multiple outreach efforts to inform and empower local residents. Platforms for educational awareness included social media campaigns, online listening sessions, and Community Based Organization in-person events.

Support Urban to Rural Expertise Platforms: In the more urbanized reaches of the USCR, water agencies are typically able to meet changing regulatory measures and requirements across both surface and groundwater management. This may create opportunities for this knowledge to be applied to rural areas, especially if they are seeking development trends that mimic urbanization. In these cases, an established urban area has experiences and expertise that may support more innovative water resources management approaches in suburban and urbanizing reaches of the region.

IRWMs: A Local to Regional Knowledge Hub: IWRMs, if adequately funded, may serve as a hub of knowledge, expertise and resources for agencies and the communities they serve. Hydrology does not follow political boundaries so it is imperative to keep a pulse on what factors might influence water resource quantity and quantity as well as how it is being managed. IWRMs are well positioned to play a role that identifies and communicates needs and opportunities across the USCR water landscape so that more collaborative and hydrologically comprehensive strategies can be implemented. This also reduces knowledge, engagement, and community trust barriers.

LA Ventura Funding Area Recommendations

The WaterTalks program leaves an important gift behind for IRWM Regions area-wide, and that is a path toward collaboration and consensus building, especially in budgeting and seeking IRWM and other funds. In the past the IRWM Program in the LA Funding Area left decisions about the distribution of grant funds to DWR and other funders. These decisions often led to either very uncomfortable situations in the regions, where projects were asked to equally cut a percentage of budget, or some projects were asked to step back from the funding effort entirely. When left by the Regions or the Funding Area for DWR to handle the distribution, their decisions often were assessed as misaligned with regional priorities. The proportion of grant funds distributed between the three regions in the LA Funding area was competitive, and with DWR being responsible for final decisions, added stress and strain to the integrated planning program.

WaterTalks revealed that collaboration between program managers and project proponents, where they together developed a solution when need outstrips capacity, is a path open to the IRWM Program in the LA Funding Area. This began with the DACIP Areawide Task Force allocating funds between the regions in a “rough draft” approach, and then refining the amounts based on consultant bids and internal negotiations. It then was applied to UMDR project identification where project proponents gathered and prioritized project funding to meet the $5M availability cap. It was later applied for Proposition 1 Round 2 implementation grants. When it comes to project and program development, WaterTalks suggests paradigm changes we’d love to see:

- Move away from the idea of “design first, then get community feedback” and move toward an approach that defines project goals, location and a project lead – and at that point talk to the community about what’s going on, and let that influence the core design ideas. In WaterTalks, we ask the community what they like about their area, and what they need. We don’t expect that to necessarily be about water

infrastructure. It's then the job of engineers and designers to listen, and see where the "water needs" fit in.

- Move away from the attitude that "we (project designers) know what the community needs" and move toward the idea that engineers and designers know the sciences behind infrastructure and the community knows local strengths and needs. If we look at it that way, then we can see everyone is bringing something valuable to the table that is needed for collective success.
- Ask "why do we want to engage communities in project development" and move away from the idea that it's to meet regulations or grant application requirements. Instead, WaterTalks proposes that it's really to make the work of project development easier. Good relationships with CBOs and their audiences can smooth the process in getting projects approved and funded. When it's time to go back to the community for the next project, there's already a head start because of trust that's been built.

The principle of the IRWM Program is that decisions should be made as close to the spot where those decisions will have an impact, coordinated, and supported by a regional understanding of process, priority, and need. Relying on relationships, the rich and contextual WaterTalks Strengths and Needs Assessment, existing understandings of prioritization, and then collaborative decision-making, resulted in a bright spot example for the statewide Integrated Regional Water Management Program, and the statewide Disadvantaged Community and Tribal Involvement Program.

Looking into the Future

The WaterTalks program has made significant strides in addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities across the GLAC, WCVC, and USCR regions. Through extensive

community engagement, collaboration with local organizations, and the development of targeted projects, the program has laid the groundwork for sustainable water management practices. Continued efforts are necessary to overcome barriers and ensure the long-term success of these initiatives.

Innovative strategies developed and implemented through the WaterTalks program include the development of multiple user-friendly online datasets, interactive maps, project identification criteria and selection methods, and community education toolkits that enable different end users to understand the value and application (i.e. funded projects) of knowledge obtained during the WaterTalks. The diverse cultural and social landscapes captured by a community-centric approach to resolving complex water resources issues creates more interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to adaptive management that collectively aim to meet what is needed within a community at a given time.

Maintaining the digital assets created in WaterTalks allows the tools and the knowledge they provide to evolve over time as community and agency needs shift. It also identifies expertise and resources to facilitate more resilient community networks that may extend far beyond water resources to includes addressing wildfires, climate change, education, food security and workforce development to name a few applications. The ability for tools to evolve with needs ensures that community-to-agency engagement is consistent, transparent and that they continue to thrive across a given community landscape. This will also help local, regional and state agencies to better identify, curate and implement best practices that are unique to watershed-level needs verses the one-size-fits all water management approaches adopted in the past. The ability to capture information quickly and across multiple needs (i.e. education, regulatory, policy, funding) is one of the cornerstones and legacy digital assets created during the WaterTalks program.

GLAC IRWM Region's Future Plans

Project Proponents: An important step in project development has been the identification of project proponents - since many of the projects were completely original to WaterTalks, rather than having been proposed by a specific entity. All projects have a proponent to help move them forward, so we can avoid the concept of anything "sitting on the shelf". For many of the projects, grant requests for implementation or further development were part of the Technical Assistance process. Those requests are now pending and will hopefully create funding for further work, or at least provide grant templates and language for proponents to continue to fund raise.

Ongoing Communication Tools: Needs Assessment data and dashboards, and all tools and projects developed are available through the WaterTalks website (Watertalksca.org). Since 2022, tools and milestones have been shared with GLAC IRWM subregional Steering Committees, the GLAC IRWM Disadvantaged Community Committee, and the 12 Watershed Coordinators of the LA County Safe Clean Water Program. These Watershed Coordinators help develop projects that improve stormwater quality, water supply and community betterment projects for California Measure W funding through the County program. The Watershed Coordinators have repeatedly turned to materials for help in their work, and it's fairly clear that WaterTalks will continue to be a resource for them, and at some point, inspire the next iteration of Needs Assessment and tool building around multiple water issues in Greater LA County.

WCVC IRWM Region's Future Plans

As the water landscape constantly changes, the WCVC may consider how community feedback platforms like WaterTalks need to be sustained to ensure that agency efforts target community and environmental needs. This better positions communities to seek resources that target existing needs while also being proactive about the realities and uncertainty of emerging water resource management challenges. Although recommendations are provided based on

this study, it is understood that these may evolve, illuminating the value of sustaining the WaterTalks platform.

Value of Community Engagement & Education: The process of WaterTalks presents a valuable opportunity to establish a "bottom up" grassroots information structures that are key to helping agencies know and prioritize community water needs. Providing frequent and inviting platforms to hear from those who live and work in the water landscape is essential to identifying and addressing needs and solutions more intentionally, especially when financial resources are uncertain. Participant feedback in the WCVC suggests that many community members and agency staff were unaware of the various water agencies that service their community, especially at a regional level, including IRWMs. Smaller agencies also expressed that they did not feel that their objectives aligned with larger and regional agencies or that they were not able to participate in regional based planning, funding, and programs. This disconnect in awareness provides a myriad of opportunities to build trust, knowledge and inclusiveness between agencies and the community members they serve.

One example of diverse engagement opportunities supported by the WaterTalks program was the application of blended engagement methods including the development and distribution of multilingual literature, utilizing online and social media platforms, hosting outreach events and listening sessions and partnering with community organizations. Other benefits of engagement strategies include clarifying misconceptions between community members and agencies and building trusting relationships between these groups. This further positions the water agencies opportunities to learn from and to value how their constituents view their project, goals and objectives. Collectively, this provided numerous opportunities for participation reducing barriers to engagement while also supporting a diverse pool of participants across the region. Casting a wide net of engagement opportunities also increases knowledge about community-level needs and opportunities to partner across programs, projects and expertise.

The WaterTalk website provides numerous examples of engagement strategies that could be sustained and expanded across the WCVC region.

Building & Sustaining a Resilient Watershed Community: Across the WCVC, there is a need to be more intentional with opportunities to educate the public about water and environmental resource agency services, plans, and programs. The knowledge gaps found in this effort identified that at the community level, survey participants were unsure of who provided their water as well as larger agency to agency relationships (i.e. wholesale providers vs. retailers vs. regional agencies). At the agency level, many felt that they were not able to participate (i.e. inapplicable to agency objectives) in regional efforts, like IRWM planning and grants, and or they did not have adequate staff to participate in such opportunities. Establishing frequent and diverse opportunities to engage between communities and agencies as well as agency to agency may include professional development workshops, planning symposiums, and social media platforms whereby ideas, resources and expertise can be shared on a more frequent basis. This may also help to inform planning efforts so that they are better understood, supported and collaborative to meet local and regional water resource management objectives. This also speaks to the need to ensure efforts embedded within WaterTalks live beyond the grant.

The need to coordinate is paramount to addressing shifting and unpredictable water resources management needs. Without such coordination, efforts will remain disjointed and resource intensive leaving communities and agencies “guessing” and struggling to address water needs through adaptive strategies. To centralize this coordination, IRWMs are already positioned to serve as a “watershed knowledge hub” for a given region and to connect regions across the state to support more resilient watershed policies and regulatory measures. Their involvement and knowledge of state to local water resources management affords them the opportunity to coordinate collective knowledge and resource opportunities across the entire WCVC region. As a result, this holistic partnership approach may foster and direct partnerships,

expertise and resources into the WCVC watershed landscape to meet evolving challenges. Additionally, positioning the IRWMs as a hub may alleviate the burden of agencies who often struggle to seek resources due to low capacity or lack of expertise in how to navigate political and financial channels.

Other points of consideration are how IRWMs can facilitate opportunities across monitoring, sustaining community-agency communication feedback loops and workforce development. This may include partnerships with community colleges and universities, like the role the CSUs played in WaterTalks, to support diverse watershed management needs. For example, CSUs could assist with environmental and hydrological studies that inform communities and agencies about water resource conditions related to climatic changes, development and shifting climatic trends. Simultaneously, they can include students in the research and learning environments so that they are better equipped to join the water workforce, a growing concern from water agencies across the state. For this program, CSUs also played a role in developing and implementing survey tools, deploying surveys and developing dashboards and mapping applications that were essential to understanding how difference DAC and agency needs varied across a given community. This also facilitated knowledge about project needs and how they align with or address other needs in the WCVC region.

Although ideal and comprehensive, this strategy must include financial resources to position IRWMs for success as a “knowledge and resource” hub within the WCVC and across other IWRM regions. At the very least, this requires a coordinated effort to educate and engage decision makers about the value and opportunities IRWMs may provide to ensure watershed resiliency for current and future generations of citizens and the unique ecosystems of this region.

USCR IRWM Region's Future Plans

The USCR IRWM Region outlines several plans to enhance its role as a resource and collaboration hub while addressing regional challenges. A key focus is repositioning IRWMs to act as watershed coordinators, applying an interdisciplinary approach to adapt to water uncertainties. By fostering stronger interregional conversations, the goal is to leverage the strengths of certain regions to support others, with initiatives like WaterTalks and IRWMs facilitating knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

Diversifying funding sources is another critical priority. The region highlights the need for state-level funding to address aging infrastructure and meet shifting regulatory requirements, which often increase costs for both agencies and consumers. Ensuring financial sustainability is essential for long-term regional resilience.

The region also emphasizes the importance of academic research and workforce development to meet both agency and community needs. Developing a workforce with the necessary technological and managerial expertise is key to implementing comprehensive water management efforts. Partnering with universities is identified as a strategy to build trust, enhance water knowledge, and strengthen collaborative capabilities across the region.

Frequent and consistent community engagement is viewed as vital for sustaining the flow of knowledge. For example, USCR community members are generally aware of their water agencies, whereas respondents in the WCVC region are less informed. By sharing strategies and lessons learned, such as USCR's approaches to increasing community awareness, other regions can potentially replicate similar successes. This strategy can also be adapted to foster connections among rural and urban communities within and across regions.

Lastly, the region stresses the importance of maintaining awareness of policy changes at the state level. Shifting water and environmental regulations often place financial burdens on water agencies, diverting resources from other critical projects. To address this, the region underscores the need for active engagement with local, regional, and state decision-makers to better prepare for and adapt to regulatory changes.

Los Angeles Ventura Funding Area Future Plans

As a collective for the Los Angeles Ventura Funding Area, all three IRWM regions (GLAC, WCVC, and USCR) look forward to furthering the advancement of inclusivity and collaborations within communities using principals and tools established under the WaterTalks program. To build towards a sustainable water future for California, it is important to educate and engage all communities throughout the planning and implementation process especially those facing ongoing economic and environmental distress. This continued engagement will foster increased community involvement leading to empowerment and fulfillment of water projects that mitigate vulnerability and increase climate resilience. The Los Angeles Ventura Funding Area will continue to strive for equity and inclusion within communities to improve water supply and sustainability management throughout the region while leveraging funding opportunities in the process.

Resource Weblinks:

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

DWR 2020 DAC Model

References

WCVC 2019 IRWM Plan

DWR 2020 DAC Model

CA DWR- DACs and EDAs mapping tool

WCVC Tribal Needs Assessment Report

USCR – WaterTalksCA.org

US Census Median Household Income Description

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Enviroscreen 3.0

LA-Ventura StoryMap Community Search Tool - Refresh (arcgis.com)

DACIP Data Hub

DACIP Data Hub User Guide | LA-Ventura DAC Involvement Program Data Hub

TAPPED Application

“Find Your Community's WaterTalks Resources”

Tribal Allyship Resources WaterTalks Webpage

Project Description Form for WCVC Project Development Project Proposals

Ventura Ave Water and Climate Resilience Workshop

Santa Paula Water and Climate Resilience Workshop

Greater Los Angeles County Communities Dashboard

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Communities Dashboard

Upper Santa Clara River Communities Dashboard

DACIP Funding Area Needs Assessment Community Data

DWR IRWM planning and grants webpage

Needs Assessment Institutions Hub

Appendices

Appendix A- GLAC Technical Memo – Task 2 Engagement Methodology

Appendix B- WCVC Needs Assessment Report

Appendix C- Nurturing Connections - A Framework for Engaging with Tribes and Tribal Organizations

Appendix D- WCVC Tribal Needs Assessment Report

Appendix E- WCVC and USCR CBO Training Agenda

Appendix F- WaterTalks CBO Training, Toolkit, and Outreach Materials

Appendix G- USCR Tribal Needs Assessment Report

Appendix H- GLAC Maps

Appendix I- DACIP Data Hub User Guide

Appendix J- WCVC Project Development Request for Proposals (need to locate)

Appendix K- WCVC DACIP Project Description Form

Appendix L- Ventura Ave Water and Climate Resilience Workshop Summary

Appendix M- Santa Paula Water and Climate Resilience Workshop Summary

Appendix N- UMDR 2022 Project Selection - Summary Memo

Appendix O- Ventura Needs Assessment Executive Summary

Appendix P- Upper Santa Clara River Needs Assessment Executive Summary

Appendix Q- CalRural Report on engagement between DACs and IRWMs

Appendix R- GLAC Needs Assessment Report

Appendix S- USCR Needs Assessment Report