
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE SANTA ANA WATERSHED

Briana Villaverde - Final Report

Water Resources Policy Initiatives
Disadvantaged Communities Internship



A Literary and Visual Composition of Community-based Research
in Relation to SAWPA's DCI Prop 1 Funding Project

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We honor and acknowledge the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, Yuhaaviatam, Tongva, Cahuilla, Luiseno, and Acjachemen people who are the guardians and traditional caretakers of the land that the Santa Ana Watershed lays on.

By acknowledging the land we aim to contest the erasure and exclusions of the Indigenous People who have stewarded this land for thousands of years and continue to live here today.

Indigenous people have been forcefully removed from their rightful land all across the nation.



PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Proposition 1: The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 authorized \$7.545 billion in general obligation bonds to fund ecosystems and watershed protection and restoration, water supply infrastructure projects, including surface and groundwater storage, and drinking water protection.

PROP 1 FUNDING



SAWPA Disadvantaged Communities Involvement (DCI) Program: In 2017, SAWPA launched the DCI program funded by Proposition 1. The first step of the program was to conduct a strengths-and-needs assessment of disadvantaged, economically distressed, and underrepresented communities of the watershed. UC Irvine and CSU San Bernardino researchers conducted the assessment using an ethnographically-informed process of interviews and listening sessions intentionally designed to include community members' expertise about their community strengths and needs.



Community Listening Sessions 2017-2019:

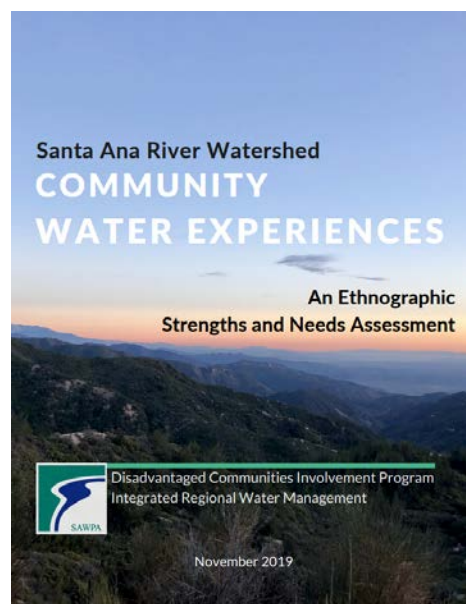
California State University of San Bernardino conducted listening sessions in 2017 - 2018 and University of California, Irvine conducted sessions in 2018 - 2019. Concurrently, other research and non-profit partners held tribal listening sessions, interviews with political representatives, and interviews with water managers.

Santa Ana River Watershed Community Water Experiences - An Ethnographic Strengths and Needs Assessment:

UC Irvine researchers analyzed and synthesized the information gathered in the listening sessions and interviews in the Santa Ana River Watershed Community Water Experiences - An Ethnographic Strengths and Needs Assessment.

This report can be accessed at:

<https://sawpa.org/owow/dci-program/strengths-and-needs/>





NEWKIRK COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH INITIATIVE ROLE

The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) funded the Newkirk Center for Science & Society Community-based Research Initiative (NCbRI) team to conduct community engagement and education projects related to water in disadvantaged communities in the watershed from November 2018-October 2019. We designed and conducted listening sessions to understand and capture strengths and needs within communities.

MY BACKGROUND

At the time of this writing, I am a rising third year undergraduate student at the University of California, Irvine studying Environmental Science and Policy alongside Chicano/Latino Studies. I started working with the Newkirk Center for Science & Society's Community-based Research Initiative's co-directors Dr. Connie McGuire and Dr. Victoria Lowerson Bredow in June of 2019, at the end of my first year.

MY ROLE

During my time as a Community Water Intern, I helped conduct 12 listening sessions as well as 3 community water conversations (CWCs). In these sessions and conversations, I helped with translation of materials from English to Spanish, note taking, outreach, and event set-up. The rest of this report will detail my experience as a Community Water Intern with the Newkirk Center and my key takeaways.



LISTENING SESSIONS

The Department of Water Resources defines 'disadvantaged' communities, as households reporting income less than 80% of the state's median household income. When the DCI program started in 2017, the state's median income was \$71,805 so households reporting less than \$57,444 were considered 'disadvantaged'. In the Santa Ana Watershed, and throughout the United States, environmental exposures impose a disproportionate health burden on low-income populations and communities of color*.

Through the 12 listening sessions across the Santa Ana Watershed, the Newkirk team provided a space where community members could actively talk about their communities and important issues to address. These sessions consisted of open-ended questions and were conversational such that they elicited community members experiences with water, education, accessibility to housing, food, and many other themes. You can find the summarized findings from the listening sessions as well as perspectives of other stakeholders (e.g. elected officials, mutual water agency representatives) in SAWPA's Community Water Ethnography Report.

The Newkirk team worked closely with the members of Dr. Valerie Olsen's (Dept. of Anthropology, UC Irvine) team who analyzed the transcriptions of the conversations that we facilitated in the listening sessions. They used the data and the analysis to produce the Community Water Ethnography Report.

Community Listening Session in Ontario, California (July 2019).



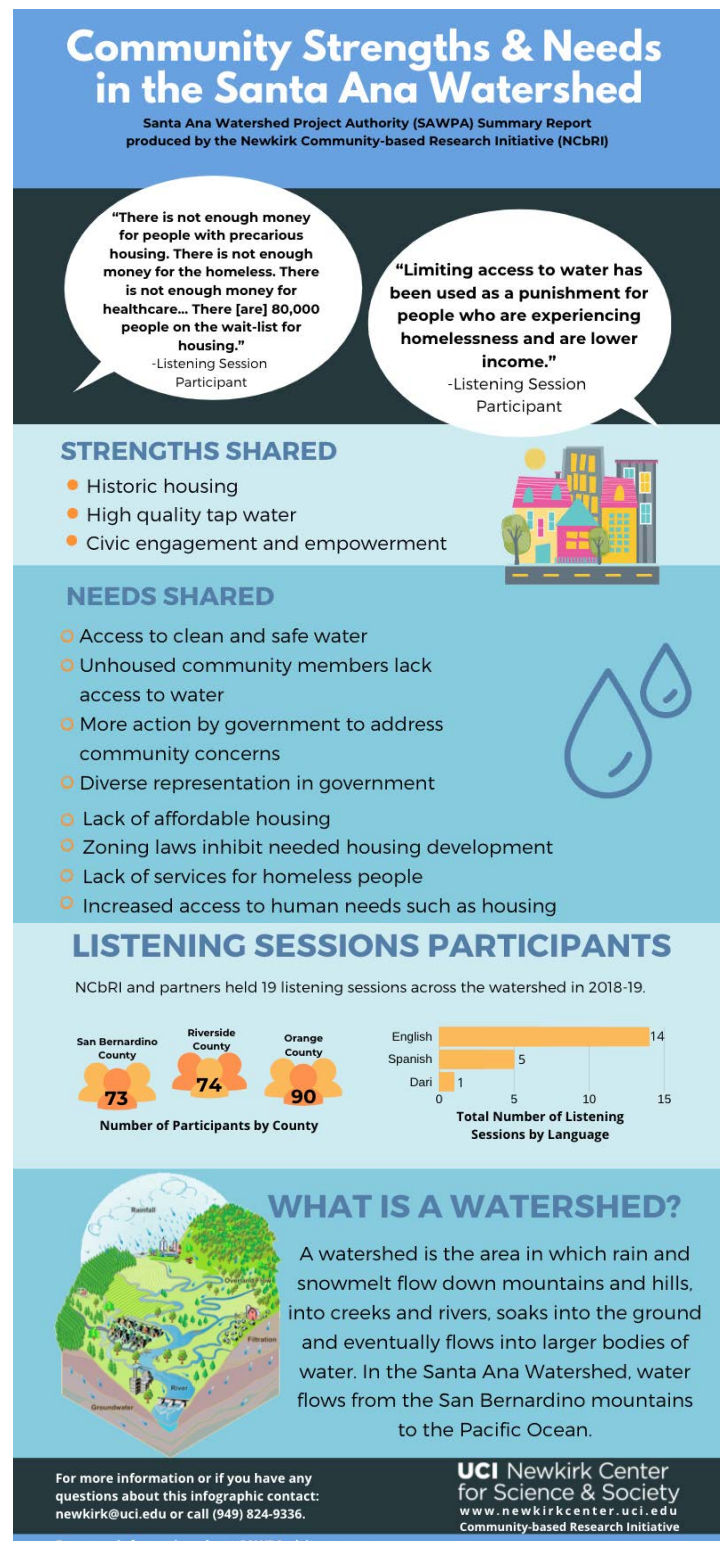
*FREUDENBERG, N., PASTOR, M., & ISRAEL, B. (2011). STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO PARTICIPATE IN MAKING DECISIONS TO REDUCE DISPROPORTIONATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES. AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 101(S1), S123-S130. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300265](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300265)

COMMUNITY WATER CONVERSATIONS

Through Community Water Conversations (CWCs) the Newkirk team circled back and followed-up with community groups to share themes and findings found through the analysis of the Listening Session conversations. We followed up in two ways: 1. We conducted CWCs in the form of in-person community meetings (similar to the listening sessions) and 2. We developed infographics to share with participants.

The Newkirk team held 3 in-person CWCs: one in Orange County, one in San Bernardino County, and one in Riverside County. We invited water managers and officials to answer the specific water-related questions from the public at these 3 CWCs.

The Newkirk team made infographics about the CWCs for participants in 6 communities that were not able to attend the CWCs. Both the infographics and power-points used for the CWCs included personal accounts with water from community members and key themes. An example of an infographic that we created is seen on the right.



TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING

Our team conducted 5 of the 12 Listening sessions in Spanish because mono-lingual Spanish-speakers are disproportionately represented in the disadvantaged communities in the watershed*.

I served as a Spanish translator for all the public-facing material related to the Listening Sessions and Community Water Conversations process. Before I began translating material to Spanish I would wait until it was finalized in English. Finalizing material in English was a very iterative process and it was most efficient to translate after documents were finalized in English.

I am bilingual and biliterate (English and Spanish) however, I often consulted the internet for technical language in Spanish that could have more inclusive alternatives than the ones that were directly translated. For example, I learned a more inclusive way to translate homelessness *sinhogarismo*, as opposed to the direct translation of *Vagabundos* or *Sin Techo* one might find if they were to use google translate.

*based on [CSUSB GIS analysis of the 2017 American Community Survey](#) and [Pew Research Center Demographic and Economic Profiles of Hispanics by State and County, 2014](#)



Community Water Conversation in Orange County, California (October 2019).

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING CONTINUED

Translation is always an approximation.

I learned more human-centered words and phrases in Spanish during this process. Utilizing them became a very crucial step because they are inclusive and highlight the nuances of language alongside social issues.

I learned about the drawbacks of approximations that cannot be avoided in the process of translation. I was immersed into a whole new world of interpretation and approximations by reading technical resources and participating in conversations on non-traditional online public forums such as Twitter. I also read literature assigned in my Chicano/Latino Studies coursework that helped me to understand the concept of approximations and the importance of getting as close as possible to the intended meaning. The conversations I had with peers and faculty members in my Chicano/Latino Studies coursework regarding translation and interpretation revolved around more inclusive and friendly terms -- similar to the example I used on the previous page translating homelessness as *sinhogarismo*, as opposed to the direct translation of *Vagabundos* or *Sin Techo*.

I loved learning about how these words and phrases are constantly evolving and I know that in my career path working with Latino/Chicano communities and environmental issues it will be critical to keep following this ever changing discourse.



Translation is required when working across diverse linguistic groups. Translation, however, is often an afterthought in the process of planning community events, or producing reports for communities. In my internship I learned translation and interpretation take significant time and may come with their own learning curve when getting familiar with commonly used words throughout a specific project. I show this in the visual / graphic on page 10 where you can see the hours I spent on translation and interpretation.

IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT OF INTERNSHIP

I am grateful for the first hand experiences connecting and engaging with communities that I have gotten through this internship.

■ OUTREACH

Reaching out via email or phone and proposing listening sessions to organizations was the first step in developing relationships.

■ RELATIONSHIPS

Building relationships beyond just formalities with communities and community members with whom one is collaborating.

■ COLLABORATION

Community leaders were instrumental in helping coordinate listening sessions as well as community water conversations. The Newkirk team had continuous communication with leaders about to request needed information and to arrange follow-up meetings.

■ COMMUNICATION

We used email as the main form of contact for community groups, internal teams, and contact with SAWPA. I developed and practiced good email etiquette through the internship.

■ INCLUSION

There were an array of topics and experiences that came from many communities that were included in SAWPA's Ethnography Report.

■ SUPPORT

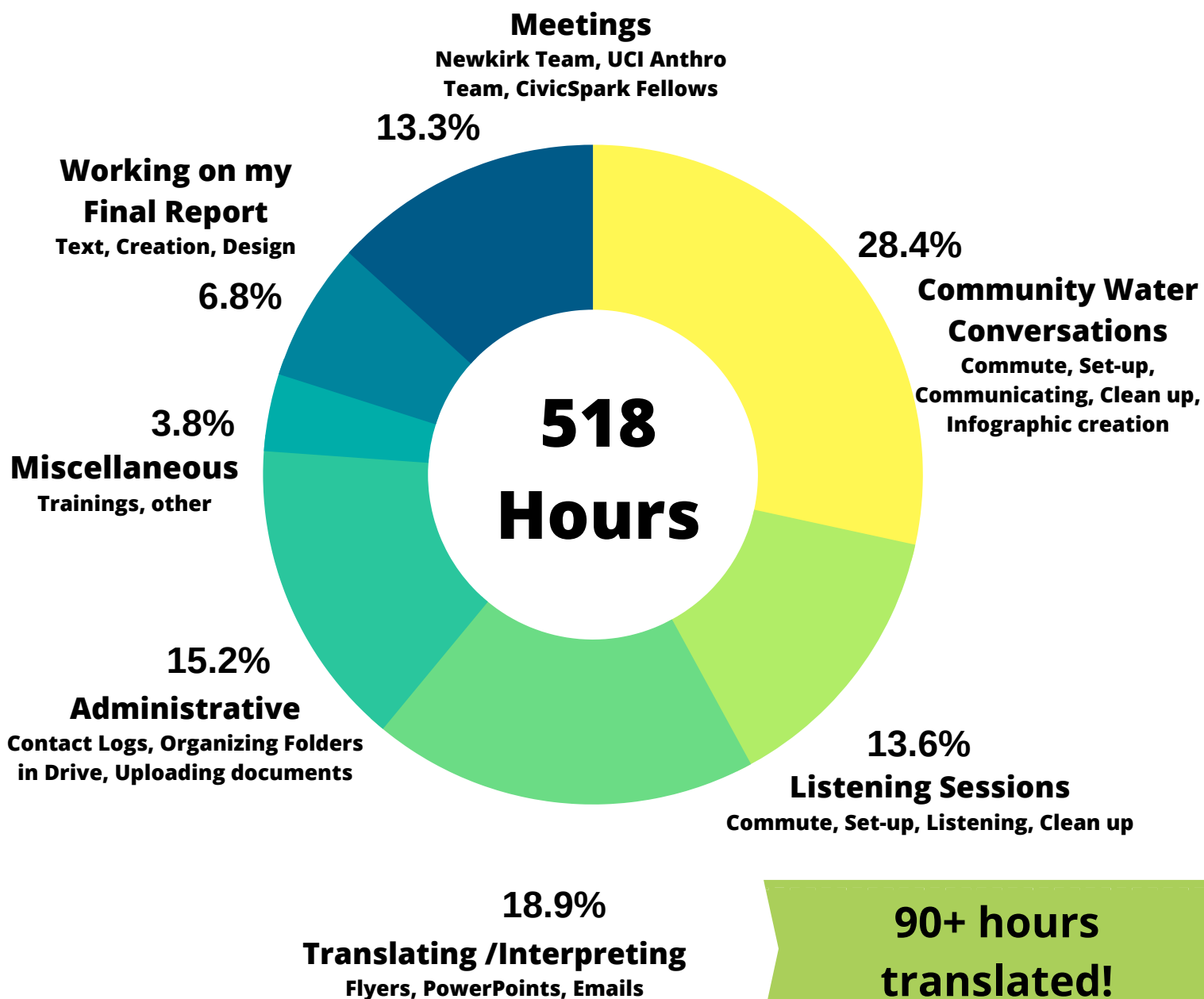
Working with everyone from various stakeholders including project managers from SAWPA, community members in the Santa Ana Watershed, general staff, and team members on the UCI Anthropology Department team helped to ensure success even in the midst of many moving parts.

OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF TIME

In the graphic below is the break-down of my internship hours.

20,000+ words translated!

Approximately 150 hours spent in communities listening and talking



ADVICE FOR FUTURE INTERNS

1. MANAGE YOUR TIME AND PRIORITIZE EFFICIENTLY

During the school year, it may be difficult to find time to attend classes, study, finish homework, and work on your internship. Keeping a planner or utilizing online calendars can make a significant difference and save you time. Be sure to schedule in time for all sorts of activities - whether its academic, free time, or work flow.



2. GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Being an involved team player doesn't only consist of meeting your own deadlines. It's never a bad idea to reach out to other team members and ask if there are additional to-do's or jobs to get done. Even the administrative type data entry tasks are important in the long-run.

3. DON'T BE SCARED TO ASK QUESTIONS!

When given tasks, remember that you can still ask for clarifications on things regardless of how much time has passed - it's always better to ask again than to be set-back because the outcome was supposed to be different.



4. COMMUNICATE YOUR BOUNDARIES

Self-care can take many forms and communicating your boundaries is one of them. Multi-tasking can become overwhelming as more projects get added. Make sure to prioritize your mental, emotional, and physical well-being first. This can take the form of requesting deadline extensions or asking for additional help. Sometimes... you won't be able to make something happen: communicate this to your team!

5. BE COMPASSIONATE

When participating and being part of the process of community engagement and community outreach it is important to go into communities with a compassionate and open mind to ensure everyone's input is included in a respectful way and not left out.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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directors of the Newkirk Community-based Research Initiative

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Karen Valladares and Bailey Lai.

Paulina Mejia, Briana Villaverde, Connie McGuire
Listening Session in Huerta Del Valle (2019)



Paulina Mejia, Connie McGuire, Victoria Lowerson Bredow
Community Water Conversation in Big Bear (2019)



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