

Who is SAWPA?

SAWPA is a Watershed Agency Focused on Regional Water Issues

Formed originally in 1968 as a planning agency, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) was created to help resolve interagency conflicts and address regional water issues in the Santa Ana River watershed. SAWPA tackles issues related to water supply reliability, water quality improvement, recycled water, wastewater treatment, groundwater management, and brine disposal.

What is IRWM?

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program promotes collaborative planning and water resources management throughout the state. The IRWM story began in 2002 when the Regional Water Management Planning Act (SB 1672) was passed by the Legislature. Since then, various bond acts approved by California voters have provided over \$1.5 billion in State funding to support and advance integrated, multi-benefit regional projects.

SAWPA’s Role in IRWM

SAWPA Manages One Water One Watershed (OWOW) Program

SAWPA serves as the program manager, grant applicant, primary grantee, and grant administrator on behalf of local project sponsors participating in the OWOW Program. The OWOW IRWM Plan for the Santa Ana River watershed was written using a “bottom up” approach to ensure that key discussions of major water resource issues, concerns, problems, goals, and objectives, and potential solutions originated and were fully vetted at the stakeholder level.

SAWPA is responsible for submitting required reports and managing invoices and grant disbursements from the state. SAWPA provides final direction, review, and approval for all decisions made for the program through the OWOW Steering Committee and OWOW Pillars. The Pillars, the Steering Committee, and SAWPA work together to develop the OWOW Plans and coordinate IRWM funding efforts.

SAWPA Supports its Member Agencies and Other Organizations with Water Planning

SAWPA is a Joint Powers Authority of five member agencies that supports water resources planning: Eastern Municipal Water District, Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Orange County Water District, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, and Western Municipal Water District.

Future of IRWM

IRWM Needs State Funding in Order to Continue

In many IRWM Regions, the IRWM program serves as the collaborative decision-making body for water management in the Region. The key needs of IRWM regions include greater recognition and support by federal, state and local agencies and Tribes, and better alignment of government policies, regulations and programs. SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment is a critical step in improving collaboration with communities in need and can serve as a template for more effective outreach throughout the State.



The **Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program** is funded by the DWR IRWM Proposition 1 grant and is one of our success stories — additional information about SAWPA programs can be found at www.sawpa.gov.

Learn More and Contact Information

For the latest information on the DCI and IRWM Program, please visit:



www.sawpa.gov/owow/dci-program/



www.water.ca.gov/Programs



Contact Rick Whetsel at rwhetsel@sawpa.gov



DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Aims to determine the strengths and needs of disadvantaged, economically distressed, or underrepresented communities in the watershed through engagement and education, to uncover and share the needs and capacities within the water agencies and communities, and support the technical assistance to address these water needs

What is the DCI Program?

The statewide Disadvantaged Community Involvement (referred to as DACI statewide; DCI is SAWPA-specific) grant program was developed to involve economically burdened communities in Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM). It provides extra support to IRWM funding areas with disproportionately high numbers of individuals who meet the state-defined criteria for a “disadvantaged community, economically distressed area, or underrepresented community” These communities are considered to be underserved and chronically excluded from watershed planning processes.

Why is it Important?

An Innovative, Unique, Comprehensive Approach

The DACI Program is an innovative template for reaching out to underrepresented communities across the state. SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment is a comprehensive look at community needs in order to appropriately direct technical assistance funding. It is a unique approach to engage groups including Native American tribes, non-English-speaking people, people of color, immigrants and undocumented people, and people experiencing homelessness. It takes sustained effort to ensure that communities are equitably involved in planning decisions—there are no shortcuts. These invaluable efforts should be encouraged statewide.

The Vehicle for Community Empowerment Collaboration is the Key

IRWM is built on an inclusive, public process that emphasizes local and regional scale planning. **We can’t do it alone, we must work together.** IRWM planning groups encourage and nurture effective collaboration among disparate groups of diverse stakeholders. Organizations who participate in the IRWM program have been able to improve understanding and appreciation of one another’s needs and concerns and work to find multi-benefit solutions, reducing conflict between players.



IRWM is the new path forward for long-term “disadvantaged community” engagement.

The IRWM program has distributed over \$1.5 billion state-wide since 2002. Funding for the IRWM Program provides benefits such as:

- Watershed collaboration
- Multi-benefit solutions
- Cooperative decision-making
- Reduced conflict among agencies
- Stakeholder engagement
- Increased regional self-reliance

Future funding is required to support and advance integrated, inclusive, multi-benefit regional projects and continue this important work.

Key Outcomes

Successes from SAWPA’s IRWM-funded DCI Program



Grant Funding: SAWPA provided **\$2.9 million of IRWM Funding** for Technical Assistance to support the development of projects and programs that address the needs uncovered in SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment



Community Engagement: Strengths and Needs Assessment that included **53** listening sessions, **364** people speaking about their watershed experiences, and **82** hours of conversation



Resources: **11 Assistance programs** and resources developed to directly address identified needs in SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment

What is SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment?

DACI Needs Assessments have been conducted state-wide through the IRRM Programs. SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment, released in 2019, www.sawpa.gov/owow/dci-program/, conducted one-on-one and group interviews through an ethnographically informed process to learn more about the strengths and needs of the **1.7 million members in disadvantaged communities** across the Santa Ana River Watershed. Findings of the report are being used to direct funding to address identified needs.

What is a Disadvantaged Community?

The Statewide Needs Assessment targets disadvantaged communities, economically distressed areas, and underrepresented communities including Native American Tribes and people experiencing homelessness. The California Department of Water Resources recognizes a community as “disadvantaged” if the annual median household income is less than 80% of the statewide annual median household income (\$71,805 in 2017).



Project partners prefer to refer to communities as **historically underrepresented, overburdened, and structurally disempowered**. Labels such as “disadvantaged” can impede relationship building.

Underrepresented Community Outreach

The Strengths and Needs Assessment held multiple consultations with **Native American Tribes**. This included listening sessions and workshops, in addition, to establishing a Tribal Advisory Committee to address tribal water and environmental needs and enhance communication among SAWPA and sovereign tribal communities in the watershed.

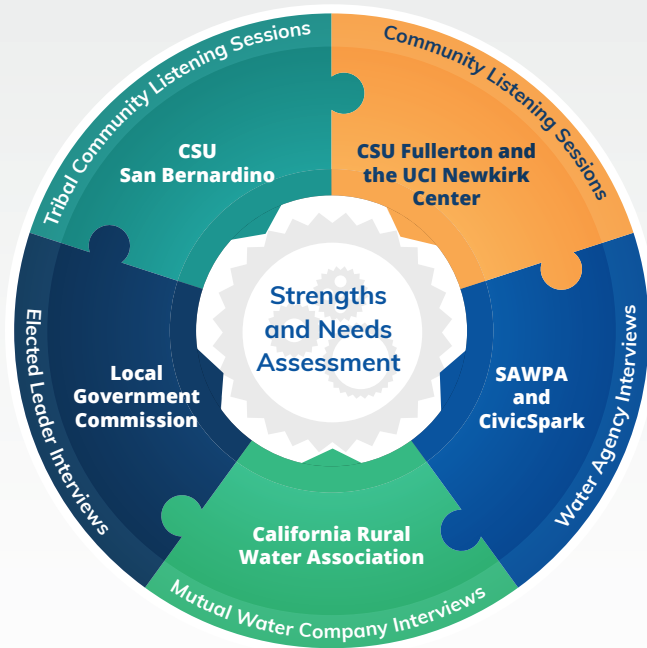


Homelessness Symposium, 2017

Unique in its approach, SAWPA also held two **homelessness** symposiums to reveal synergies and develop new partnerships between those seeking to manage homelessness in the watershed and those engaged with water management.

Who is Involved?

7 Program Partners Working Together



An Ethnographic Approach

SAWPA’s ethnographically-informed process, a technique for open-ended listening sessions, helped create a holistic view of communities within the watershed. SAWPA provided a listening space to learn about communities strengths and needs before asking questions related to water management – a unique approach. An ethnographic approach validates place-based data collection and recognizes community members as experts of their environments.

Results

Identified Needs

Top Identified Needs Themes



Water Management



Water Rates and Cost



Communication



Water Quality

Core Conclusions for the Watershed

1. Language Barriers
2. Communication
3. Tap Water Quality
4. Connection to Technical Assistance Projects

Results played a direct role in resources developed through the DCI program

SAWPA’s Suite of DCI Program Resources:

- ✓ **Technical Assistance Training**
- ✓ **On-Call Translation Services**
- ✓ **Trust the Tap**
- ✓ **Community Water Internship**
- ✓ **Water Agency Community Engagement Training**
- ✓ Tribal Consultation
- ✓ Engagement Best Practices Publications
- ✓ State of the Santa Ana Watershed Conferences
- ✓ Community Water Education Events
- ✓ Local Elected Leader Training
- ✓ GIS Database



Technical Assistance Training



Of the \$6.3 million awarded to the DCI Program, **\$2.9 million** was set aside to support the development of projects and programs that address the needs uncovered in SAWPA’s Strengths and Needs Assessment.

Technical Assistance Projects:

SAWPA’s DCI program provided technical assistance funding to 18 projects that included:

- Planning and design of upgrades to failing infrastructure for a number of small community waster systems
- Planning analysis and design for the conversion of septic systems to public sewer
- Educational outreach to elementary students in disadvantaged communities
- The creation of a watershed tribal advisory committee
- Assessment of the impacts of homelessness on water resources

Learn more at:

www.sawpa.gov/owow/dci-program/technical-assistance/

On Call Translation Services



On-call translation services were made available for public sector and nonprofit partners in the watershed. Services may covered translations of water-related public meetings and documents. Languages in the watershed include, but were not limited to: Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, and American Sign Language.

Trust the Tap Campaign



Trust the Tap is a multi-lingual informational campaign focused on spreading awareness about the values and safety of tap water within communities of the watershed that have historically mistrusted the safety of water from the tap. Water agencies can use the materials in the Trust the Tap toolkit to facilitate respectful, compassionate outreach with their constituents. Materials in the toolkit are available in Spanish, Vietnamese, and English.

The toolkit includes:



- Bill stuffers
- Informational videos
- News releases
- Social media posts
- Posters
- Trifold brochures
- Outreach plan

Community Water Internship



Research Interns / Photo by Erica Fletcher

Undergraduate and graduate student interns were available to assist with community engagement and education projects related to water. These projects serve people in disadvantaged communities, economically distressed areas, and underrepresented communities in the watershed. Nonprofits and government agencies were eligible to apply for two fully funded student interns for 300-360 hours of work per student.

Water Agency Engagement Training

One of the primary goals of this approach to “disadvantaged” community involvement has been to evaluate how the ethnographically informed listening process might be a tool that water agencies can adopt to improve their community engagement efforts. California Rural Water Association and the Local Government Commission hosted water agency and local policy maker workshops to discuss strategies and tools for innovative solutions to their community’s water challenges.



Community Listening Session / Photo by The Newkirk Center for Science & Society