

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.

SAWPA’s Role

SAWPA Administers Multi-Agency Task Forces

SAWPA serves as an administrator for several Task Forces within the watershed through meeting facilitation, contract service administration, and Task Force Agreement coordination. Through collaborative processes, SAWPA creates value by building relationships among regulators, SAWPA members, and regulated parties that allow for economies of scale, reduced costs, or increased benefits in addressing water related issues; provides regional capacity and neutral venue for supporting multi-agency forum(s) to address the water resources challenges in the Santa Ana River Watershed; and assists in the establishment and on-going facilitation of stakeholder processes to address watershed-specific issues.

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. SAWPA seeks to create and facilitate partnerships with and between organizations pursuing shared interests and overall watershed sustainability. Our regional leadership provides a model of collaboration and cooperation utilizing integrated solutions. SAWPA’s Mission is to:

- Facilitate communication
- Identify emerging opportunities
- Develop regional plans
- Secure funding
- Implement programs
- Build projects
- Operate and maintain facilities

The **Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team** is one of our success stories – additional information about SAWPA programs can be found at [www.sawpa.gov](http://www.sawpa.gov).

SAWPA Regional Planning Efforts

Middle Santa Ana River Watershed TMDL Task Force  
Emerging Constituents Task Force  
Basin Monitoring Program Task Force  
Regional Water Quality Monitoring Task Force  
One Water One Watershed Program  
Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team  
Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake TMDL Task Force  
Forest First  
WECAN  
Arundo Habitat Management  
Lake Elsinore & San Jacinto Watersheds Authority



SANTA ANA SUCKER CONSERVATION TEAM

A group of public agencies dedicated to the recovery of the Santa Ana sucker in the Santa Ana River Watershed



SAWPA Member Agencies



Learn More and Contact Information

For the latest information on the Santa Ana sucker Conservation Team, please visit:



[www.sawpa.gov/sawpa.org/task-forces/santa-ana-sucker-conservation-team/](http://www.sawpa.gov/sawpa.org/task-forces/santa-ana-sucker-conservation-team/)



Contact Ian Achimore at [iachimore@sawpa.gov](mailto:iachimore@sawpa.gov)



What is the Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team?

The Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team, formed in 1998, is a task force of public agencies led by the Orange County Water District, City of Riverside, and Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA), and includes many other local water agencies, stormwater management agencies, regulatory agencies and non-profits in the watershed. The Team’s goal is to determine the reasons for the decline of the Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*) in the Santa Ana River Watershed and devise strategies for the recovery of the species.

What is the Santa Ana sucker?

The Santa Ana sucker is a small freshwater fish that can be found in the Santa Ana River, Los Angeles River, Santa Clara River, and San Gabriel River basins. Their preferred habitat contains a mixture of sand, cobble and gravel.

Why are they threatened?

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2014 Santa Ana Recovery Plan, “The primary threat to the Santa Ana sucker includes past and ongoing habitat loss through hydrological modifications throughout the range of the species.”

What are the goals of the Team?

Protect and Increase the Population and Range of Santa Ana Sucker

The Santa Ana sucker was listed as a threatened species in 2000 under the federal Endangered Species Act. Even before the species was listed, the Team has worked together to understand the distribution of sucker in the watershed and the reasons for their decline in order to create effective recovery programs. Over the last 20 years, the Team has conducted:

- Habitat protection projects and programs
- Education and outreach
- Surveys to monitor fish status, and assessment of habitat conditions
- Research to increase understanding of fish population and range in the watershed



The Santa Ana sucker is one of only a few native freshwater fish species currently in existence in southern California.

“The [native] fish in the Santa Ana River are probably smaller in size and less healthy than they would otherwise be if they were living in more natural surroundings in the mountains.”  
—Heather Dyer, General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

Successes to Date

Key Outcomes: Teaming Up to Protect the Sucker



GRANT FUNDING

Together, the Team is **eligible to receive grant funding** unavailable to regulated entities. Through 2018, it has received over \$100,000 in State and federal funding.



SUCKER RECOVERY

Team projects implemented in the Watershed **improve suitable habitat and contribute to recovery** of the Santa Ana sucker species.



1  
HABITAT  
RESTORATION  
PROJECT



4  
STUDIES  
FOCUSED  
ON THE  
SANTA ANA  
SUCKER



11  
YEARS OF  
POPULATION  
MONITORING



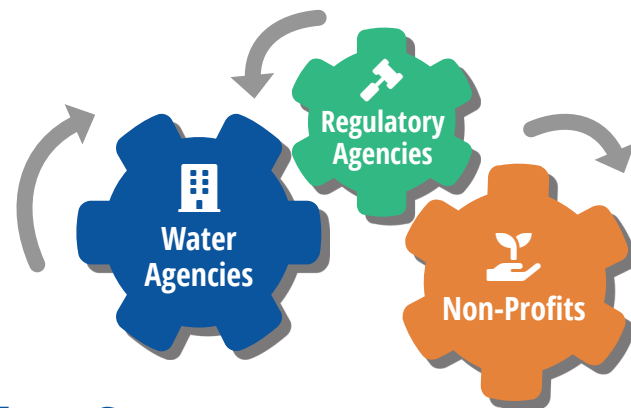
14  
ANNUAL  
HABITAT  
SURVEYS



Off-road vehicle trespassing is still an issue in the Santa Ana River Watershed.

## Task Force Project Partnerships

**6 Sucker Habitat Project Funding Partners Working Together with Local Agencies and Non-Profits** SAWPA, Orange County Water District, City of Riverside combined their funding with grants from Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement key habitat restoration efforts for the sucker.



## Team Successes

### Fish Population Surveys and Related Studies

Beginning in 1999, the Team has pooled resources to fund local studies focused on population levels and habitat quality in the Santa Ana River Watershed. In 2001, the Team investigated migration patterns, exotic fish predation and the significance of the Santa Ana River's tributaries to the species long-term survival. Building on the initial studies, the Team investigated the feasibility of Santa Ana sucker recovery. They outlined a long-term Conservation Program based on the best available scientific information and utilized adaptive management techniques.

### Partnerships with Law Enforcement

The Team has partnered with law enforcement, such as the City of Colton Police Department, to implement additional off highway vehicle patrols to protect prime Santa Ana sucker habitat in the mainstem of the Santa Ana River. Financial assistance by the Team has allowed law enforcement to enforce local codes and ordinances on holiday weekends beginning in 2015. After 1 year of enforcement, there was a 30% decrease in education contacts and 45% decrease in enforcement contacts, demonstrating the effectiveness of the enforcement partnership.

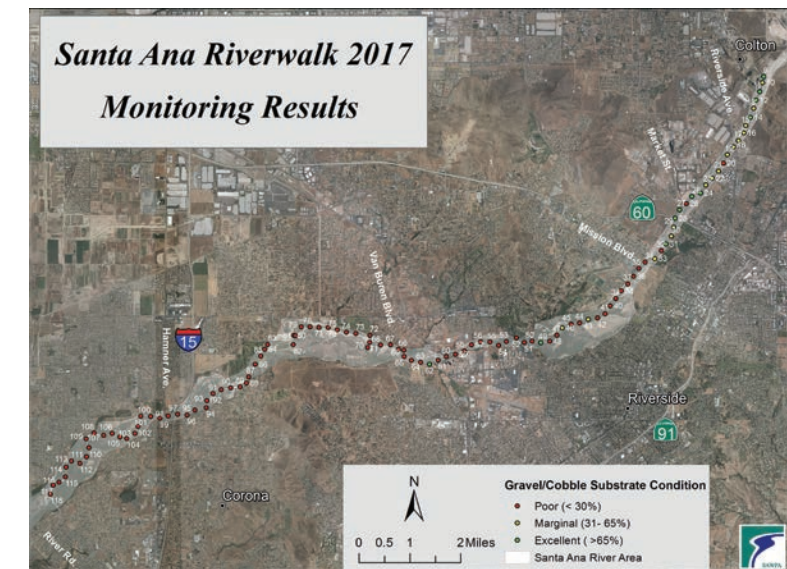
## Santa Ana Riverwalk

The Santa Ana Riverwalk is an annual aquatic habitat survey within the Santa Ana River. Volunteers organize into groups and collectively walk an 18-mile stretch of river to sample 100 GPS identified locations. The purpose of the walk is to assess the quality of the river bottom for fish habitat. At each location, volunteers assess the makeup of the river bottom in addition to measuring the width of the channel, maximum depth, and percent vegetation on the stream banks. This effort has informed water agencies and the public of the River's conditions and helped identify river segments that would benefit from habitat improvement projects.



(Above) The Santa Ana Riverwalk has surveyed 100 points along an 18-mile stretch of river annually since 2006.

(Left) Volunteers measure the width of the River at each location during the last Riverwalk. Over 400 volunteers have participated since 2006.



## Habitat Restoration Project Highlight

### Santa Ana Sucker Habitat Protection and Beneficial Use Enhancement Project

SAWPA and partner Orange County Water District constructed the Santa Ana Sucker Habitat Protection and Beneficial Use Enhancement Project in October 2018. A 15-foot rock groin, a hydraulic structure often used for flood control purposes, was installed near the City of Riverside. In order to create suitable rocky bottom habitat, the Project created localized erosion to expose existing gravel beds and cobbles, the preferred habitat of the Sucker.

This Project provides habitat for aquatic species at a range of water depths to accommodate the frequently changing depth of the Santa Ana River. In addition to creating habitat for a threatened species, this Project provides useful information to agencies like the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District who are leading the construction of aquatic species habitat projects per the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan.



Rendering of the 15-ft partially submerged rock groin with upstream and downstream boulder clusters to create nearly 500 square feet of rocky bottom aquatic species habitat.



The installed Project post construction in October 2018.