



...A United Voice for the Santa Ana River Watershed

**OWOW STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**November 21, 2024**

<b>Committee Members</b>	
<b><u>Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Representatives</u></b>	
Brenda Dennstedt, Convener, Western Municipal Water District	Present
T. Milford Harrison, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District	Present
<b><u>County Supervisor Representatives</u></b>	
Vicente Sarmiento, Orange County Board of Supervisors	Absent
Karen Spiegel, Riverside County Board of Supervisors	Absent
Jesse Armendarez, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors	Present
<b><u>County Municipal Representatives</u></b>	
Deborah Robertson, Mayor, City of Rialto	Absent
Wes Speake, Councilmember, City of Corona	Present
Nicholas Dunlap, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fullerton	Absent
<b><u>Business Community Representative</u></b>	
James Hessler, Director of West Coast Operations, Altman Plants	Present
<b><u>Environmental Community Representative</u></b>	
Garry W. Brown, President, Orange County Coastkeeper	Present
<b><u>Regional Water Quality Control Board Representative</u></b>	
William Ruh, Regional Water Quality Control Board	Present
<b>Others Present</b>	
<b><u>SAWPA COMMISSIONERS:</u></b>	Bruce Whitaker, Gil Botello, and Jasmin Hall
<b><u>SAWPA STAFF:</u></b>	Ian Achimore, Jeff Mosher, Marie Jauregui, Pete Vitt, Rachel Gray, Rick Whetsel, Sara Villa, Zyanya Ramirez
<b><u>OTHERS PRESENT:</u></b>	Aaron Echols, IERCD; Amber Smalley, Riverside County; Andrew D. Turner, Lagerlof LLP; Christy Suppes, Orange County Public Works; Cyrus Galvan, US Forest Service; Kevin O'Toole, OCWD.

The OWOW Steering Committee meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. by Brenda Dennstedt, Convener, at the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, CA 92503.



**1. CALL TO ORDER | PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. ROLL CALL**

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments; there were no public comments received via email.

**4. ITEMS TO BE ADDED OR DELETED**

**5. CONSENT CALENDAR**

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: MARCH 28, 2024, MAY 23, 2024, and SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

B. PROPOSITION 1 ROUND 2 REPLACEMENT PROJECT (SC#2024.14)

**MOVED**, approve the Consent Calendar.

Result:	<b>Adopted by Roll Call Vote</b>
Motion/Second:	Milford/Ruh
Ayes:	Armendarez, Brown, Dennstedt, Harrison, Hessler, Speake, Ruh
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	Dunlap, Sarmiento, Speake, Spiegel

**6. NEW BUSINESS ITEMS**

**A. AMENDMENT TO THE OWOW STEERING COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT - APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVES (SC#2024.15)**

Jeff Mosher referenced the memo and Amendment to the OWOW Steering Committee Governance Document, contained on pages 25-28 of the agenda packet.

The Santa Ana IRWMP “One Water One Watershed” Governance document dated January 15, 2013 (Governance Document), does not allow for alternate representatives to the OWOW Steering Committee. To ensure consistent representation, facilitate continuity, and enhance decision-making capabilities during times when primary members may be unavailable, it is recommended that the Governance Document be amended to allow for the appointment of alternate Committee members.

According to the Governance Document, the Steering Committee can recommend amendments to the SAWPA Commission. However, any proposed amendments to the Governance Document will require approval by the SAWPA Commission.

The Committee expressed approval and agreed that this is the right direction for future engagement. Committee Member Harrison recommended the appointment of a co-convener. It was clarified that the second SAWPA representative serves as the convener in the absence of the designated convener.

**7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

**Recommendation:** Receive for information.

**A. PROPOSITION 1 ROUND 1 PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: SANTA ANA MOUNTAINS WATERSHED PROTECTION PROJECT (SC#2024.16)**

Rachel Gray presented Cyrus Galvan from the US Forest Service. Mr. Galvan provided a presentation titled Santa Ana Mountains Watershed Protection Project contained in the agenda packet on pages 31-60.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 7.A.



**B. QUARTERLY MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE OWOW STEERING COMMITTEE (SC#2024.17)**

Jeff Mosher referenced the memo number 2024.17, contained on page 73 of the agenda packet.

To enhance efficiency, the OWOW Steering Committee meetings will shift to a quarterly schedule starting in 2025. Meetings will take place on the fourth Thursday of February, May, September, and November at 11:00 AM, unless otherwise noted. They will continue to be held at SAWPA, with virtual participation available for Committee Members.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.B.

**C. SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED CLOUD SEEDING PILOT PROGRAM: YEAR 2 OPERATIONS (SC#2024.18)**

Rachel Gray provided a presentation titled Santa Ana River Watershed Cloud Seeding Pilot Program: Year 2 Operations, contained in the agenda packet on pages 77-92.

SAWPA staff will be postponing Year 2 Operations (November 15, 2024 – April 15, 2025) of the Santa Ana River Watershed Cloud Seeding Pilot Program. This decision is based on the potential for debris flows from burn scars caused by recent wildfires and input received from the three Flood Control Districts.

Mrs. Gray provided background on the four-year pilot program, which began in 2023, and explained that seeding operations are designed to enhance precipitation in higher-elevation target areas. However, based on Seeding Suspension Criteria, which consider burn scar risks, SAWPA consulted with the Flood Control Districts, who recommended suspending operations for the upcoming season.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.C.

**D. ARUNDO DONAX REMOVAL IN THE SANTA ANA RIVER BASIN HEADWATERS PROJECT OVERVIEW (SC#2024.19)**

Ian Achimore provided a presentation titled Arundo donax Removal in the SAR Basin Headwaters Project Overview, contained in the agenda packet on pages 77-92.

Mr. Achimore providing an update on the watershed-wide project focused on the headwaters of the Santa Ana River. He was joined by Aaron Echols, Restoration Ecologist at the Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IECRD), who is partnering on the Arundo donax (Giant Reed) removal project. The presentation covered background information on the invasive species, its impact on the watershed, and ongoing efforts to manage its spread. Arundo donax grows rapidly, consumes large amounts of water, is highly flammable, and alters water flow, contributing to flooding. Its roots spread downstream, making management a challenge, as current efforts are limited to specific areas, leaving gaps where the plant can re-establish. SAWPA has been using deep learning software to map Arundo's presence across the watershed. The project, which started in 2022, focuses on the headwaters where IECRD conducts surveys, removes the species, and monitors progress for three years, followed by reapplication. The project is funded by a 5-year, \$150,000 task order contract with SAWPA.

Aaron Echols, Restoration Ecologist at the Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IECRD), provided an update on the Arundo donax removal project. IECRD, a local public agency, operates in the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed and is managing the project with a dedicated in-house team of nine staff trained in restoration and herbicide



applications. Mr. Echols shared that the scope of the project has expanded from four areas to 15 as more Arundo was identified. The work focuses on removing or treating Arundo in various tributaries of the Santa Ana River. The team uses a combination of herbicide treatments and plant removal, with some cases offering native plants to property owners as part of the restoration effort. He discussed lessons learned, including the increased use of foliar herbicide application for more effective plant control and the challenges of managing the plant's ability to propagate from small fragments. He also noted the importance of right-of-entry letters for gaining access to private properties and the need for strategic outreach efforts to engage landowners.

Committee Member Brown inquired about the potential adverse impacts of the herbicide used to control Arundo donax. Mr. Echols explained that the herbicides are low-risk, caution-level products with minimal impact on animals and insects, with the main concern being the surfactant, which can be toxic to aquatic organisms. As a precaution, applications are avoided near water. He also noted that Mazapyr, one of the herbicides used, can be absorbed by soil and affect nearby plants, so its use is limited to areas with native species. When asked about herbicide use near beehives, Mr. Echols responded that although beehives have not been encountered in the current project, they take care to avoid impacting honeybees. The amount of herbicide used is small compared to agricultural applications, and the likelihood of lethal effects on bees is low.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.D.

**8. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT**

No additional comments.

**9. CONVENER'S COMMENTS/REPORT**

Convener Dennstedt shared plans for a field trip in 2025 to visit projects, review completed work, and assess the funds allocated to achieve the organization's goals and mission. Efforts will be made to coordinate with all stakeholders to ensure a successful event with strong attendance.

**10. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

There were no comments.

**11. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no comments.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting ended at 12:12 p.m.

**APPROVED:** February 27, 2025

Signed by:

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Gil Botello, Convener

Attest:

Signed by:

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Zyanya Ramirez, Executive Assistant II

