



**SAWPA COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 5, 2024**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Bruce Whitaker, Chair, Orange County Water District
Mike Gardner, Vice Chair, Western Municipal Water District
T. Milford Harrison, Secretary-Treasurer, San Bernardino Valley
Municipal Water District
David J. Slawson, Eastern Municipal Water District
Jasmin A. Hall, Inland Empire Utilities Agency

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

None

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT;
NON-VOTING**

Gil Botello, Alternate, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

STAFF PRESENT

Jeff Mosher, Karen Williams, Shavonne Turner, Rachel Gray, Marie
Jauregui, Dean Unger, John Leete, Sara Villa

OTHERS PRESENT

Andrew D. Turner, Lagerlof, LLP; Mallory O’Conor, Western
Municipal Water District; Joshua Aguilar, Western Municipal Water
District; Derek Kawaii, Western Municipal Water District; Sheryl
Parsons, Orange County Water District; John Kennedy, Orange
County Water District; Robert Ennis, Riverside Public Utilities; Gene
Hernandez, Yorba Linda Water District; Richard Meyerhoff, GEI
Consultants; Aaron Echols, Inland Empire Resource Conservation
District

The Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Bruce Whitaker on behalf of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, California.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

An oral roll call was duly noted and recorded by the Clerk of the Board.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

4. ITEMS TO BE ADDED OR DELETED

There were no items to be added or deleted.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: OCTOBER 15, 2024

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

MOVED, to approve the Consent Calendar as posted.

Result:	Adopted by Roll Call Vote
Motion/Second:	Hall/Gardner
Ayes:	Gardner, Hall, Harrison, Slawson, Whitaker
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	None

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. MIDDLE SANTA ANA RIVER TMDL TASK FORCE CONSULTANT SUPPORT (CM#2024.61)

Rachel Gray provided a presentation on the Middle Santa Ana River (MSAR) Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Task Force Consultant Support, contained in the agenda packet on pages 21-34. Ms. Gray discussed the creation of the MSAR TMDL Task Force and its role in meeting the regulatory requirements for the MSAR Watershed's bacterial indicator TMDLs. Key goals include exploring long-term TMDL implementation strategies, developing a cost-sharing framework, and identifying funding sources. Additionally, the Task Force is tasked with implementing, reporting, and updating a watershed-wide bacterial indicator water quality monitoring program, as well as conducting urban source evaluation activities related to bacterial indicators. The benefits of these efforts include continued collaboration with the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board, providing regional facilitation and support services, and assisting with future triennial reviews and updates to the Basin Plan.

Ms. Gray noted that a change order is needed with GEI Consultants to provide further support to the MSAR TMDL Task Force. GEI Consultants scope of work includes preparing the final revised technical report, support substitute environmental document, and support the Regional Board staff with the Basin Plan Amendment process and participate in the MSAR TMDL Task Force meetings. Richard Meyerhoff of GEI Consultants emphasized that the limited revisions to the Basin Plan is to change the compliance date for the wet season condition and extend it to 20 years. To set the task schedule and milestones to achieve to make sure we are in compliance for the next 20 years.

Chair Whitaker highlighted the importance that our member agencies with different situations are very much on the same page to improve the quality of the flows in the river, and tributaries as well, it is for everyone's benefit individually and collectively as well.

MOVED, to authorize the approval of Change Order 3 to Task Order GEI384-02 in the amount not-to-exceed \$86,530 with GEI Consultants, Inc. to support the MSAR TMDL Task Force in the preparation of a Basin Plan Amendment (BPA) to complete limited revisions to the MSAR Bacterial Indicator TMDLs.

Result:	Adopted by Roll Call Vote
Motion/Second:	Gardner/Hall
Ayes:	Gardner, Hall, Harrison, Slawson, Whitaker
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	None

B. ARUNDO DONAX REMOVAL IN THE SANTA ANA RIVER BASIN HEADWATERS PROJECT UPDATE (CM#2024.62)

Ian Achimore provided a presentation on the Arundo Donax Removal in the Santa Ana River Basin Headwaters Project Update, contained in the agenda packet on pages 39-62.

The project focuses on the removal of Arundo donax (Giant Reed), an invasive species in the Inland Empire upper watershed. Arundo grows rapidly, is highly flammable, alters water flow, and consumes significant amounts of water, impacting the Santa Ana River watershed. The project was approved by the Commission two years ago and is halfway through its five-and-a-half-year timeline. Mr. Achimore introduced Aaron Echols, of Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD), which is responsible for fieldwork, including species removal and follow-up monitoring.

Arundo donax spreads primarily through rhizomes (underground stems) along waterways, making it difficult to control, especially in regions where management efforts are fragmented due to varying jurisdictional areas. The IERCD is working with property owners to gain access for removal on both public and private lands. Techniques include cutting the plants and applying herbicide to prevent regrowth. The project uses 2021 high resolution imagery and ESRI deep learning imagery analysis software to map and monitor Arundo presence across the watershed, with initial findings showing significant infestations.

The project's funded using the Arundo Management & Habitat Restoration Project. The fund balance as of July 31, 2024, is \$754,835. Fund gains revenue from credit sales from Santa Ana River Mitigation Bank. The project budget is \$147,777, with approximately 36% of the project implemented so far.

Mr. Echols noted that IERCD staff are all certified by the Department of Pesticide Regulation for herbicide application and provided an overview of the foliar treatment, where herbicide is sprayed on the plant's green leaves without cutting it, which is faster but less effective in larger stands. For more substantial patches, crews use chainsaws or heavy equipment to manually cut down the plants. The biomass is often hauled away, especially when working on private property, to avoid leaving it in the waterway. In more challenging areas with steep terrain, removal is done manually, with herbicide applied directly to the cut stems using a hand sprayer. Herbicide is concentrated, ensuring that it absorbs into the plant and prevents regrowth. Despite intensive efforts, Arundo is resilient, and retreatments are necessary over several years to fully control its spread.

The IERCD is actively working across the entire upper watershed, from Big Bear to Chino Hills, with efforts extending to smaller tributaries and washes. They have already removed stands from multiple areas but monitoring and follow-up treatments will continue for years to come. The lessons learned to date include the success of foliar herbicide application for efficient removal and the refinement of Right of Entry requests to encourage greater participation from landowners. Additionally, the scope of the Arundo problem in the watershed's tributaries is larger than initially anticipated when the project began in 2022.

The next steps include completing as many treatment sites as possible before wet weather sets in, reassessing the project budget after this season to determine how many additional sites can be treated within the 5.5-year task order timeframe, and continuing to secure access agreements with landowners to enable ongoing Arundo removal efforts across the region.

This item is to receive and file; no action was taken on agenda item no. 6.B.

7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

Recommendation: Receive for Information.

A. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

There was no report received from the General Manager.

B. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/REPORT

Chair Whitaker acknowledged the passing of previous Alternate Commissioner, June Hayes, and noted that the meeting would be adjourned in her honor.

C. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Harrison expressed his condolences for the loss of Director June Hayes and the significant loss in their organization. Director Hayes did an excellent job representing the Rialto community and extended the invitation to a memorial service in her honor at SVMWD on Friday, November 8th.

D. COMMISSIONERS' REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no requests for future agenda items from the Commission. Legal Counsel, Andy Turner requested a future closed session agenda item to discuss the general manager's performance review.

8. CLOSED SESSION

There was no Closed Session.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for review, the meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m. in memory of previous Alternate Commissioner, June Hayes. A moment of silence was observed in her honor.

Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, November 19, 2024.

DocuSigned by:

Bruce Whitaker

551DD66FD555C4DC...

Bruce Whitaker, Chair

Attest:

DocuSigned by:

Sara Villa

72230038ACC422...

Sara Villa, Clerk of the Board