



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

**OWOW STEERING COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 23, 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	Absent
<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	Absent
<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, Jasmin Hall, Gil Botello
<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>	Adekunle Ojo, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Amber Smalley, Riverside County; Andrew D. Turner, Lagerlof LLP; Christy Suppes, Orange County Public Works; Eddie Lin, Inland Empire Utilities Agency; Melissa Matlock, Western Municipal Water District; Toyasha Sebbag, City of Rialto.

The OWOW Steering Committee meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Convener 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

B. PROPOSITION 1 STATUS UPDATE (SC#2024.5)

Due to lack of quorum, Agenda Item No. 5 will be brought before the Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

6. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

A. **INTEGRATED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY PROGRAM REGIONAL RESILIENCE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SANTA ANA WATERSHED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE PLAN (SC#2024.6)**

Rachel Gray provided a PowerPoint presentation titled Round 1 Regional Resilience Grant Program – ClimateShed Resilience contained in the agenda packet on pages 37-46.

In the OWOW Steering Committee meetings held on July 27, 2023, and November 16, 2023, staff outlined a strategy to enhance the One Water One Watershed (OWOW) Plan with a new Regional Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (Plan). This Plan aims to address climate risks such as drought and wildfire by defining watershed-scale vulnerabilities, developing adaptation strategies, and creating a portfolio of resilience projects. Stakeholder input will be crucial throughout the adaptation analysis phase, with the Watershed Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (WRTAC) focusing on programmatic approaches and prioritization criteria, while the Watershed Resilience Community Advisory Panel (WRCAP) will ensure community engagement. The goal is to integrate equity outcomes for underrepresented communities and forge broad-based partnerships to advance shared interests across the watershed.

Staff applied for and received grant funding from the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program Regional Resilience Planning and Implementation Grant Program. This funding will support multi-beneficial projects aimed at increasing watershed resilience. The regional Plan will highlight the interconnectivity of projects, considering affordability and climate vulnerabilities faced by underrepresented communities, and establish connections between resilience initiatives and equitable outcomes. The RRGF will invest in capacity building, planning, and project implementation to address climate risks. Both the WRTAC and WRCAP will guide the planning process, incorporating a range of perspectives to ensure effective and collaborative resilience strategies.

Jeff Mosher pointed out that the plan is not a SAWPA plan, it is designed for member agencies and aims to position everyone in the watershed for future state grants.

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



**B. OVERVIEW OF GRANT APPLICATION FOR INTEGRATED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY PROGRAM ADAPTATION PLANNING FUNDING (SC#2024.7)**

Ian Achimore provided a presentation titled Overview of Grant Application for Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program Adaptation Planning Funding contained in the agenda packet on pages 49-60.

SAWPA staff is applying for a grant from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program's (ICARP) Adaptation Planning Grant Program (APGP), with a submission deadline of June 3, 2024. This grant supports tribal, local, and regional climate-related planning, aids in identifying climate resilience priorities, and funds resilient infrastructure projects statewide. The grant amounts range from \$100,000 to \$650,000, with a total of \$9,500,000 available, and no local match is required.

The grant application aligns with state priorities and aims to secure future funding opportunities. The proposed project is the Santa Ana River Watershed Regional Invasive Species Management Plan (the plan), focusing on addressing the invasive species *Arundo donax* (Giant reed). The project will include public outreach on invasive species, analysis of their ecological impacts, creation of a strategic plan and workgroup, and aerial mapping for monitoring. The plan aims to request \$650,000 in funding and is scheduled to start in December 2024 and finish in December 2026. Removing *Arundo donax* is expected to save approximately 20 acre-feet of water per year.

Jeff Mosher noted that the grant application, approved by the SAWPA Commissioners, is part of ongoing watershed-wide *Arundo* management efforts, aimed at accessing regional climate adaptation funding. He stressed the need for a regional approach, as previous efforts have been fragmented. Mr. Achimore added that they are recruiting partners for the plan, with mapping showing more work is needed than initially thought. The plan will form a regional coalition and create a workgroup and strategic plan to coordinate efforts across multiple entities. The application is due June 3, 2024, with awards expected by summer 2024.

Committee member Milford Harrison raised concerns about focusing on studies instead of immediate *Arundo* removal, questioning why efforts aren't solely on removal. Mr. Mosher explained that while individual projects have been done, a regional approach has been missing. He noted that some organizations, like OCWD, have been active, but others, like the Army Corps of Engineers, are just becoming interested. He also mentioned that CAL FIRE has its own program, and a regional collaboration would be more effective. Committee member Harrison then asked if *Arundo* travels past Seven Oaks Dam, and Jeff replied that it's being investigated, but the dam likely acts as a barrier, making it logical to start removal efforts there. Committee member Speake agreed, stressing the importance of proper *Arundo* removal and treatment, especially after storms.

Convener Brenda Dennstedt added that *Arundo* is fast-growing, abrasive, highly flammable, and consumes large amounts of water. Committee member Harrison suggested that using drones would be a good method for monitoring and treating the plant, with Mr. Mosher agreeing that the master plan would incorporate advanced methods.

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



**C. SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED WEATHER MODIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM UPDATE (SC#2024.8)**

Rachel Gray provided a presentation titled Santa Ana River Watershed Weather Modification Pilot Program Status Update contained in the agenda packet on pages 125-154.

On July 19, 2022, the SAWPA Commission awarded contracts to North American Weather Consultants Inc. for the Santa Ana River Watershed Weather Modification Pilot Project and to the Desert Research Institute (DRI) for independent validation of the project. The four-year pilot, running from November 15 to April 15 each winter starting in 2023, focuses on cloud seeding in four target areas to increase snow precipitation. Since the project's initiation in August 2022, site access agreements were secured, biological surveys were completed, and cloud seeding units were installed. The first operational year began in November 2023, with 12 storms seeded, and lessons learned included improved communication with fire departments, public transparency, and equipment troubleshooting.

DRI is conducting independent validation of the cloud seeding project, focusing on evaluating operations, analyzing snow chemistry, calculating the snow-water equivalent, conducting statistical analyses, and assessing stream flow impacts to measure the effectiveness of increasing precipitation and stream flows. Results are expected in June, with snow reports from ski resorts contributing to the analysis. A draft schedule will be ready in June, and mobilization for year two will begin once the results are available.

Committee member Bill Ruh asked if there was a plan to inform local cities about cloud seeding. Jeff Mosher responded that they are notifying the county supervisors, but specific outreach to individual cities isn't planned beyond making the information available. Convener Brenda Dennstedt emphasized the importance of being prepared to answer questions from the public.

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

**D. DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM: RESOLUTION REGARDING 2021 URBAN AND MULTI-BENEFIT DROUGHT RELIEF GRANT PROGRAM SET-ASIDE FUNDING (SC#2024.9)**

Rick Whetsel provided a presentation titled DWR DACI Program Set-Aside Funding, 2021 Urban and Multi-benefit Drought Relief Grant Program, contained in the agenda packet on pages 159-172.

The SAWPA Commission authorized the submission of a portfolio of water infrastructure projects for up to \$5 million in Proposition 1 IRWM Disadvantaged Community Involvement (DACI) Grant Set-Aside funding, as part of the 2021 Urban and Multi-benefit Drought Relief Grant Program. These projects aim to improve water supplies in disadvantaged communities, addressing drought impacts and protecting public health and wildlife. Approved projects include installation of a new water tank by Box Springs Mutual Water Company, rehabilitation of wells for the City of Colton, Devore Water Company, Marygold Mutual Water Company, and the City of Fullerton, with completion dates ranging from 2023 to 2024. While most projects are on schedule, delays have occurred in Colton and Fullerton due to unexpected issues. To mitigate delays, SAWPA is working with project partners and the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to extend the grant timeline to June 2026 and to replace the City of Colton's project with one



of similar scope and benefit.

Committee member Milford Harrison thanked everyone on staff and noted that progress on the projects is excellent. He inquired about the likelihood of getting an extension from DWR. Mr. Whetsel responded that preliminary discussions with DWR indicate they are generally supportive of the extension. The extension agreement has been submitted, but approval is taking some time.

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

**7. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT**

No additional comments.

**8. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/REPORT**

No additional comments.

**9. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

Convener Brenda Dennstedt proposed discussing the organization of a walkthrough of one of the projects at a future OWOW Steering Committee meeting. Jeff Mosher agreed and said they would send out a few options for consideration.

**10. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no comments.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting ended at 12:16 p.m.

**APPROVED:** November 21, 2024

Signed by:

*Brenda Dennstedt*

Brenda Dennstedt, Convener

Attest:

Signed by:

*Zyanya Ramirez*

Zyanya Ramirez, Executive Assistant II