



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

OWOW STEERING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 26, 2024

Committee Members	
<u>Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Representatives</u>	
Brenda Dennstedt, Convener, Western Municipal Water District	Present
T. Milford Harrison, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District	Present
<u>County Supervisor Representatives</u>	
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
<u>County Municipal Representatives</u>	
Deborah Robertson, Mayor, City of Rialto	Absent
Wes Speake, Councilmember, City of Corona	Present
Nicholas Dunlap, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fullerton	Absent
<u>Business Community Representative</u>	
James Hessler, Director of West Coast Operations, Altman Plants	Present
<u>Environmental Community Representative</u>	
Garry W. Brown, President, Orange County Coastkeeper	Absent
<u>Regional Water Quality Control Board Representative</u>	
William Ruh, Regional Water Quality Control Board	Present
Others Present	
<u>SAWPA COMMISSIONERS:</u>	Bruce Whitaker, Jasmin Hall, Gil Botello
<u>SAWPA STAFF:</u>	Ian Achimore, Jeff Mosher, Marie Jauregui, Pete Vitt, Rachel Gray, Rick Whetsel; Sara Villa, Zyanya Ramirez
<u>OTHERS PRESENT:</u>	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 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 and MAY 23, 2024

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. **SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT (SC#2024.10)**

Haley Gohari provided a PowerPoint presentation titled Sustainability Assessment Review and Proposed Update contained in the agenda packet on pages 17-30.

The Santa Ana River Watershed Sustainability Assessment was developed to help decision-makers and stakeholders of the One Water One Watershed (OWOW) Plan evaluate progress toward achieving six goals, including water resource resilience, high-quality water access, environmental protection, community engagement, education, and improved data tracking. Initially published in 2020 as part of the California Water Plan Update 2018, the Assessment uses indicators to measure sustainable water management and track changes over time.

Currently, SAWPA is working with member agencies to refine these indicators, aiming to create quantifiable measures that reflect watershed health, resource management effectiveness, and collaboration efforts. The indicators are designed to be qualitative, straightforward, informative, and accessible, providing annual updates to support watershed and state agencies in resource management and fostering public trust.

Convener Dennstedt inquired on the data being collected for PFAS. Mr. Mosher stated that data collection and sharing are complicated due to potential litigation risks, leading to a more cautious approach in public reporting. PFAS assessments are being handled through a limited public project to manage these concerns. The science surrounding PFAS is still developing, and it's important to clarify that not all aspects are being tested yet. The team has access to data on salinity, desalination, and water quality, which will help monitor watershed health. This data will be used to assess progress and adjust strategies as necessary to maintain sustainability.

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

B. **INTEGRATED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY PROGRAM REGIONAL RESILIENCE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE PLAN - WORKFLOW (SC#2024.11)**

Rachel Gray provided a presentation titled Development of the Santa Ana River Watershed Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan Workflow contained in the agenda packet on pages 33-44.



Staff is developing a Regional Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan to complement the One Water One Watershed (OWOW) Plan, aiming to address watershed-scale climate risks, adaptation strategies, and resilience projects. The Plan will focus on equity for underrepresented communities, strengthen partnerships, and provide a framework for multi-beneficial projects that enhance watershed resilience. It also targets securing future funding for these projects.

Staff applied for and received grant funding from the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program to support this effort. The plan will involve a diverse set of stakeholders, with key roles from SAWPA (project oversight), ISC3 (community engagement), and Soboba (tribal involvement), alongside a consultant to assist with agency coordination and data collection. The near-term schedule includes executing agreements in 2024, with consultant selection planned for December 2024.

Convener Dennstedt noted that the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) is currently undertaking a similar water-related process and inquired if staff was monitoring it. Mr. Mosher responded that they have received feedback from the Western Municipal Water District (WMWD), but clarified that their process differs. Rather than developing this initiative for SAWPA, the focus is on the specific needs of their region, with the goal of securing future climate resiliency grant funding. This approach centers on engaging member agencies, local agencies, community-based organizations, as well as the flood control district, councils of government, and other stakeholders. Consultants will assist with outreach to ensure broad and effective engagement across these groups.

She suggested presenting tribal engagement efforts to the Committee to allow an invitation to be extended to those interested in more in-depth involvement. She also noted that member agencies want to know if community-based organizations within their service areas are being engaged, as this would help clarify jurisdictional boundaries. She emphasized the importance of direct outreach to discuss participation opportunities. Mr. Mosher agreed, stating they plan to work closely with community groups, building on existing efforts and expanding involvement. Ms. Dennstedt proposed offering refreshments and food to enhance turnout.

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

C. SANTA ANA RIVER TRAIL AND PARKWAY UPDATE (SC#2024.12)

Ian Achimore provided a presentation titled Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway Update contained in the agenda packet on pages 47-64.

From 2006 to 2018, an MOU between Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties, along with local cities, the Wildlands Conservancy, and SAWPA, coordinated efforts for the Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway (SARTP), a 100-mile trail from the San Bernardino National Forest to Huntington Beach. SAWPA joined the SARTP Policy Advisory Group (PAG) and led the staff-level workgroup in 2013, until PAG's replacement by the Advisory Group to the California Coastal Conservancy, prompted by Senate Bill 1390, which established the Santa Ana River Conservancy (SARCON) in 2014.

SAWPA's current SARTP roles include representation on the Advisory Group, managing a 25-year trail maintenance agreement with Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District, and coordinating on trail segment construction. SAWPA may also expand its contributions by advocating for SARTP funding, assisting in landowner coordination for construction, and creating a dedicated SARTP website for updates.



Convener Dennstedt suggested adding a future agenda item focused on the impact of fires on the watershed, specifically how fire-affected areas that might influence water quality as runoff flows into the Santa Ana River. She proposed analyzing the full scope of the watershed's fire challenges, how these may be addressed in the climate adaptation plan, and their potential impact on related projects.

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

D. SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED CLOUD SEEDING PILOT PROGRAM: YEAR 1 SUMMARY (SC#2024.13)

Rachel Gray provided a presentation titled Santa Ana River Watershed Cloud Seeding Pilot Program: Year 1 Summary, contained in the agenda packet on pages 69-88.

The SAWPA Commission launched the Santa Ana River Watershed Cloud Seeding Pilot Program with contracts awarded to North American Weather Consultants, Inc. (NAWC) for operations and the Desert Research Institute (DRI) for independent validation. This four-year project, running from November 15 to April 15 each winter season, aims to increase precipitation in higher elevation areas through cloud seeding. Year 1 operations (2023-2024) included extensive preparation, such as site agreements, biological surveys, and equipment setup. The program utilized 15 seeding units, conducting operations during 13 storm events over 22 days, using 17,732 grams of silver iodide (AgI). There was one suspension period due to heavy flooding and another inactive period due to wind patterns.

DRI is currently conducting an independent evaluation of the program's effectiveness, including snow chemistry analysis, precipitation assessment, and stream flow analysis. Results from DRI's validation efforts will be presented by August 2024. Based on Year 1 findings, recommendations for Year 2 include improving communication with local fire departments, training local technicians, and considering adjustments to site locations. A detailed schedule outlines the continuation of operations and validation tasks through 2025, with annual reports and updates on the project's progress.

Mr. Mosher stated that due to fire burn scars it is most likely that there will be a suspension of the program for Year 2.

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

No additional comments.

10. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Convener Dennstedt requested the following:

- The impact of recent fires on the watershed, specifically how fire-affected areas that might influence water quality as runoff flows into the Santa Ana River.
- A site visit to an OWOW project to allow the Committee to observe the progress and work that has been done in person.



11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 12:02 p.m.

APPROVED: November 21, 2024

Signed by:

Brenda Dennstedt

Brenda Dennstedt, Convener

Attest:

Signed by:

Zyanya Ramirez

Zyanya Ramirez, Executive Assistant II