

## MEETING NOTES

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# Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake TMDL Task Force

January 15, 2025

### PARTICIPANTS PRESENT:

Abigail Suter, Riverside County Flood Control & WCD	Natasha Thandi, Caltrans (MBI)
Aldo Licitra, Riverside County Flood Control & WCD	Pat Boldt, WRCAC
Ben Foster, City of Lake Elsinore	Rachael Johnson, Riverside County Farm Bureau
Carlos Orellana, March JPA	Rae Beimer, City of Moreno Valley
Chris Stransky, GEI Consultants	Rebekah Guill, Riverside County Flood Control & WCD
Carlos Norvani, City of Lake Elsinore	Richard Boon, Riverside County Flood Control & WCD
Cynthia Gabaldon, City of Menifee, Perris, San Jacinto, and March JPA	Ryan Kearns, Riverside County Flood Control & WCD
Dan Cortese, City of Hemet	Samuel Wilson, City of Moreno Valley
Dustin Christensen, City of Beaumont	Sharon Erb, March JPA
Garth Engelhorn, NV5	Steven Wolosoff, GEI Consultants
Hannah Kranz, WSP USA	Stormy Osifeso, City of Riverside
Hunter Raskin, Willdan	Sudhir Mohleji, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District
Jagroop Khela, Regional Water Quality Control Board	Tess Dunham, Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLP
Jim Klang, WRCAC	T Milford Harrison, SAWPA
John Rudolph, GEI Consultants	Gil Botello, SAWPA
Kris Hanson, City of Wildomar (Interwest)	Jasmine Hall, SAWPA
Lauren Briggs, Regional Water Quality Control Board	Rachel Gray, SAWPA
Lenai Hunter, EVMWD	Zyanya Ramirez, SAWPA
Mayra Martinez	Rick Whetsel, SAWPA
Michael Roberts, City of Riverside	

### Call to Order & Introductions

The Lake Elsinore/Canyon Lake TMDL Task (Task Force) meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Rick Whetsel, with participants participating remotely.

### Approval of Meeting Notes from November 12, 2024 Task Force Meeting

The November 12, 2024 meeting notes were approved as posted.

### Status: Regional Board Update (Regional Board)

Lauren Briggs, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board informed the Task Force that the Regional Board Hearing on the LE&CL TMDL updates is scheduled for February 14, 2025. Regional Board staff has released all draft documents for public comment, for the 45-day comment period, on December 27<sup>th</sup>. The comment period closes February 10<sup>th</sup> at noon.

Lauren Briggs also informed the Task Force of additional revisions to the compliance language in the draft Basin Plan Amendment by Regional Board staff. Tess Dunham will discuss the key revisions later as part of her update on TMDL activities.

### Discussion: EPA Inclusion of San Jacinto River, Reach 1 on State's 303d List (Tess Dunham, KSC)

Tess Dunham, KSC presented slides on the State's 2024 draft Integrated Report, which in this listing cycle included the Santa Ana Region. As part of the 2024 listing process, the State Water Board determined that water bodies with a California Stream Condition Index (CSCI - an index used to assess the health of biological communities within a water body) score below 0.79 could be classified as impaired, provided a causal pollutant could be identified as contributing to the impairment.

The State Water Board identified 44 water bodies with CSCI scores below 0.79, that did not meet the criteria for impairment since they were not associated with a specific causal pollutant. The State planned to classify these waterbodies under Category 3, which includes water bodies with insufficient data to establish a connection with a causal pollutant. Under Category 3, these waterbodies were to be monitored and reevaluated by the State in

the next listing cycle to determine if they should be removed from the listing or reclassified under Category 5 listing, which would require a TMDL.

However, during its review of State's listings, the EPA rejected California's Category 3 classification for these 44 water bodies. The EPA argued that identifying a causal pollutant is not necessary for a waterbody to be designated as impaired and directed that all 44 waterbodies be placed on the impaired waterbodies list.

Moving forward, if sufficient water quality data can demonstrate that no causal pollutant is present, indicating no impairment, then it may be appropriate to remove that waterbody from Category 5, as a TMDL cannot be developed without an associated pollutant.

Within the Santa Ana River, five of the 44 listed waterbodies fall under this category:

- San Jacinto River - Reach 1
- Santa Ana River - Reaches 2 and 3
- Perris Valley Channel, and Silverado Creek.

San Jacinto River - Reach 1, located between Canyon Lake and Lake Elsinore, was designated impaired due to listing for aluminum. It was listed by State Board staff as part of the 2024 listing cycle.

Through the efforts of Tess and our team of consultants, the Task Force was able to demonstrate to Santa Ana Regional Board staff that the aluminum exceedance was based on a single monitoring event related to a storm. As a result, Santa Ana Regional Board staff recommended to the State Water Board that San Jacinto River - Reach 1 be removed from the aluminum listing. However, the State Water Board did not remove it and instead listed it as impaired due to its low CSCI score for benthic macroinvertebrate communities (biology).

Tess is recommending the Task Force submit a comment letter regarding the aluminum listing for San Jacinto River - Reach 1. Comments to EPA are due end of day January 15, 2025. Late last week she circulated a draft comment letter, addressed stakeholders feedback, and is now requesting approval from the Task Force for LESJWA to submit the comment letter to EPA on behalf of the LE&CL TMDL Task Force.

Following brief discussion, the Task Force unanimously approved finalizing and submitting the draft comment letter to EPA.

Related to this item, Tess informed the Task Force that on December 30, 2024, the Central Valley Water Board released a study performed by SCCWRP evaluating the applicability of the CSCI and the Algal Stream Condition Index (ASCI) for modified channels and intermittent streams.

She noted that although this study focused on Central Valley water bodies, it has Statewide implications. Recognizing its potential impact, the Central Valley Water Board agreed that the study should be released for public review and comment, with comments due by January 30, 2025.

Tess inquired whether stakeholders were interested in submitting a comment letter on behalf of the LE&CL TMDL Task Force. Following brief discussion, the Task Force unanimously approved drafting a comment letter to the Central Valley Water Board. Tess stated that she will reach out to John Rudolph of GEI for help in preparing the letter for review and comment by the Task Force.

A copy of the presentation prepared by Tess Dunham is available on the SAWPA website under Agendas and Meeting Materials: <https://sawpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/T.Dunham-January-15-2025-LECL-Task-Force-Meeting.pdf>

**Update: TMDL Update Activities (Tess Dunham, KSC and Steve Wolosoff, GEI)**

Tess Dunham, KSC presented a few slides on additional revisions to the TMDL Basin Plan Amendment language provided by Regional Board Legal Counsel.

The first issue raised by Legal Counsel concerned the introductory language related to the compliance determination. Their concern was that decisions made by the current Water Board cannot constrain the decisions of future Water Boards.

However, from the Task Force's perspective, this revision weakened the Basin Plan Amendment's ability to ensure that future permits drafts align with the Basin Plan amendment. The language in question includes key components outlined in both the Technical TMDL report and the Basin Plan Amendment. These options, such as offsets, are essential for determining compliance with the load allocations and waste load allocations for Canyon Lake and Lake Elsinore, both for the 20-year interim milestones and the 30-year final allocations.

Working with Regional Board staff, Tess was able to get Legal Counsel to revise their proposed language. The revised language now states that compliance options should be incorporated into future permitting actions to the extent permitted by law.

The second revision focused on clarifying the Phase 2 milestone language. In working with Regional Board, it was agreed that permit requirements must align with the TMDL exception requirements, including the Phase 2 milestones. Therefore, the Phase 2 milestones and interim numeric targets will be implemented as milestones or interim water quality based effluent limits within compliance schedules, as applicable. Additionally, compliance schedules will still adhere to interim waste load allocations at 20 years and final waste load allocations at 30 years.

Tess noted that all other revisions by Regional Board staff were minor clarifications and did not raise significant concerns.

Tess then provided a brief update on the Task 9 Minor Sources Study. At this time consultants and staff are evaluating whether this task can be done internally by the Task Force or if external technical assistance is needed. The proposed approach is to form a subcommittee of the Task Force to define the scope of work. Then the Task Force can decide how to proceed and whether outside resources will be necessary.

Tess requested that anyone interested in participating on this subcommittee to please reach out to her and Rick Whetsel.

A copy of the presentation prepared by Tess Dunham is available on the SAWPA website under Agendas and Meeting Materials: <https://sawpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/T.Dunham-January-15-2025-LECL-Task-Force-Meeting.pdf>

#### **Update: LEAMS Future Options Study (Steve Wolosoff, GEI)**

Steven Wolosoff, GEI provided an update to the Task Force on the Lake Elsinore In-Lake Nutrient Reduction Alternatives Analysis, which is being conducted and funded by the LEAMS Operators in support of the LE&CL TMDL Task Force.

The primary goal of this study is to conduct in-depth analysis of alternatives to improve nitrogen and phosphorus (N&P) offsets in Lake Elsinore, while also enhancing overall lake water quality.

Today's meeting included a review of the list of project alternatives considered:

- Preliminary screening of alternatives
- Description of short-listed oxygenation alternatives
- Ranking of oxygenation alternatives

Next steps include:

- Draft comprehensive report (February 2025)
- Slideshow providing details of sediment study (February 2025)
  - Scientific basis for estimated annual nutrient load reduction (TN and TP)
  - Scientific basis for oxygen delivery rate to achieve oxic conditions at sediment-water interface
- Final comprehensive report (March 2025)

A copy of the presentation prepared by Steven Wolosoff is available on the SAWPA website under Agendas and Meeting Materials: <https://sawpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Lake-Elsinore-In-Lake-Options-Study-update-to-LECL-Task-Force-011525.pdf>

**Update: Lake Elsinore Water Quality Plan (Ben Foster, City of Lake Elsinore)**

Ben Foster, representing the City of Lake Elsinore, provided an update to the Task Force on the City of Lake Elsinore Water Quality Plan.

Ben reported on the ongoing cyanobacteria (microcystin toxin) monitoring. As of latest date (December 5<sup>th</sup>), all monitoring locations were classified under “No Advisory” level, as determined by Regional Board. He noted that for the past three months (since September), the lake has consistently remained at the “No Advisory” level, except for a single monitoring location in October. The City plans to continue with monthly monitoring at least until the hotter weather arrives.

The City is currently operating three Nanobubbler barges on the lake, along with an additional portable unit on a trailer. This portable unit was previously positioned at a detention pond near Summerly. Moving forward, the City plans to relocate it to the Coors Light Cove, near the T peninsula and test its effectiveness in a smaller contained part of the lake.

Ben stated that lake level has been dropping, due to the lack of rainfall. However, the lake remains approximately five feet above the minimum optimal lake level of 1,240 feet above sea level.

The City will continue to provide updates to stakeholders at future Task Force meetings as needed.

**Update: Canyon Lake (LESJWA Staff)**

Rick Whetsel informed the Task Force that the spring 2025 alum application is being targeted for mid-March depending on upcoming weather conditions.

**Task Force Administration (LESJWA Staff)**

Rick Whetsel presented the following items for the Task Force to consider:

- A. Rick Whetsel informed the Task Force that a Request For Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to oversee and implement the TMDL Compliance Monitoring Program was issued on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The closing date for the RFP is set for February 24<sup>th</sup>.

Rick Whetsel introduced a preliminary draft FY 2025-26 LE&CL TMDL Task Force Budget for discussion. A formal draft budget will be emailed to the Task Force for review, discussion and approval at the next scheduled Task Force meeting.

**Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

**Schedule Next Meeting**

The next LE/CL TMDL Task Force meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 3, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

### Table Summary of Agreements and Actions

<b>Date of Action/Agreement</b>	<b>Action/Agreement</b>	<b>Responsible Entities Reaching Agreement</b>
September 28, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve funding in the amount of up to \$30,000 to CDM Smith to assist Task Force technical issues, including but not limited to, initial discussions regarding content and scope of TMDL Implementation Plan revisions should the Task Force decide to provide resources for further revising the 2018 draft TMDL.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members.
November 3, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve moving forward with the proposed step-wise approach to updating the TMDL Technical Report and its timeline.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members
January 10, 2022	-	-
March 2, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Task Force agreed to submit a comment letter to the Draft Staff Working Proposal for MS4 Permit by March 18, 2022. Regional Board confirmed that they would accept the comments past their soft deadline of March 10.</li> <li>Approved the alum application to the Canyon Lake if the February monitoring data exceeds 0.09.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members
April 20, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved execution of the Key Principles for Technical TMDL Revision by Mark, Norton Task Force Administrator on behalf of the voting members of the task force subject to revisions discussed at the 4/20/2022 task force meeting.</li> <li>Approved submittal of the Task Force Comment letter to Regional Board on the Staff Working Proposal for the MS4 Permit upon revision discussed at the 4/20/2022 task force meeting. Regional Board abstained from action and conversation of this matter.</li> <li>Approved amendment #3 to extend the LE/CL TMDL Task Force Agreement for a period of three years to June 30, 2025, with the option that the Agreement, while still in full force and effect, may be extended an additional two years, to June 30, 2027, by means of Administrative Action by the Task Force Administrator</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members; Excludes Regional Board in relation to the Comment Letter to Regional Board on the Staff Working Proposal for the MS4 Permit.
June 27, 2022	-	-
August 17, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved execution of the Key Principles for Technical TMDL Revision by Mark Norton, Task Force Administrator on behalf of the voting members of the LE&amp;CL TMDL Task Force.</li> <li>Approved a proposal by CDM Smith and a recommendation to the LESJWA Board to authorize a Task Order to update and revise the technical document and additional TMDL technical support services.</li> </ul>	Mark Norton, Task Force Administrator on behalf of the voting members of the LE&CL TMDL Task Force
September 27, 2022	-	-
November 14, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer the remaining balance of the contract work supported by Steven Wolosoff as of December 31, 2022 from CDM Smith and enter into an agreement with GEI Consultants to complete work starting on January 1 2023.</li> <li>Exercise an option for a two year extension with WSP USA to oversee and implement TMDL Compliance Monitoring. Program.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members
January 10, 2023	-	-
February 15, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Task Force moved to provide LESJWA staff in coordination with the Task Force consulting team the authority to make a determination on the need for a Spring 2023 alum application based upon review of the February 2023 Canyon Lake monitoring results to be provided by WSP USA.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members.
March 28, 2023	-	-
April 25, 2023	-	-
June 5, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task Force approved LESJWA staff to rework the nutrient offset credits based solely on the need for total phosphorus offset credits and to invoice stakeholders for only 2022 TP offset credits. All</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members.

	remaining funds are to be applied to stakeholders 2023 LEAMS budget allocation.	
August 7, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task Force approved for LESJWA staff to prepare a Change Order for WSPUSA for an amount not to exceed \$10,330 to perform two additional Lake Elsinore in-lake monitoring events, one each in November and December 2023 using funds available from the LE&amp;CL TMDL Task Force reserve.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members.
August 27 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task Force approved LESJWA staff to extend Agreement for Services with Tess Dunham, Kahn, Soares &amp; Conway to serve as Regulatory Compliance Expert for the Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake TMDL Task Force for two additional years for FYEs 2026 and 2027.</li> <li>Task Force approved LESJWA staff to extend Agreement with Aquatechnex in one-year increments. At this time LESJWA staff will extend the agreement for CT 2025 to provide for two semi-annual Canyon Lake alum dosings to support the Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake TMDL Task force.</li> </ul>	Voting Task Force members.