



**SAWPA COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 4, 2025**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Mike Gardner, Chair, Western Municipal Water District
Gil Botello, Vice Chair, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
Jasmin A. Hall, Inland Empire Utilities Agency
Denis Bilodeau, Orange County Water District [via – zoom]

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Philip E. Paule, Secretary-Treasurer, Eastern Municipal Water District

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT;
NON-VOTING**

David Slawson, Eastern Municipal Water District [via – zoom]
T. Milford Harrison, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
Fred Jung, Orange County Water District [via – zoom]

STAFF PRESENT

Jeff Mosher, Karen Williams, David Ruhl, Rachel Gray, Shavonne Turner, Dean Unger, John Leete, Haley Gohari, Sara Villa, Zyanya Ramirez, Alison Lewis

OTHERS PRESENT

Thomas S. Bunn, Lagerlof, LLP; Nick Kanetis, Eastern Municipal Water District; John Kennedy, Orange County Water District; Adekunle Ojo, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Carly Pierce, Western Municipal Water District; Mallory Gandara, Western Municipal Water District

The Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Mike Gardner on behalf of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, California, and Denis Bilodeau at 601 N. Ross Street, Room 327, Santa Ana, CA 92701.

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: FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

B. TREASURER'S REPORT: JANUARY 2025

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

MOVED, to approve the Consent Calendar as posted.

Result:	Adopted by Roll Call Vote
Motion/Second:	Botello/Hall
Ayes:	Bilodeau, Botello, Gardner, Hall
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	None

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES (CM#2025.18)

Karen Williams provided a presentation on the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Investment Management Services, contained in the agenda packet on pages 71-88.

SAWPA’s current Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Karen Williams, will retire in December 2025. Recruitment for the new Director of Finance is planned, with a start date in Fall 2025 to allow a three-month overlap for training of new hire. The new Director of Finance will manage the organization's financial needs and oversee the external firm responsible for investments. Currently, the CFO manages investments. The plan is to outsource investment management to reduce the workload for the new hire. It may be brought back in-house later, once the new Director of Finance is more familiar with the role.

Ms. Williams noted that the RFP has been distributed to member agency financial staff for review and feedback. Comments were received from IEUA and WMWD and have been incorporated into the RFP. If the RFP is approved today, questions will be accepted until March 27th, responses to RFP will be due by April 24th, interviews, if necessary, will be conducted in May, and a contract will be brought forward to Commission for approval in June.

Commissioner Gil Botello asked who will be on the Selection Committee and suggested inviting the member agencies, General Managers. Ms. Williams noted that herself, a SAWPA staff member, and she extended the invitation to the member agencies financial staff.

MOVED, to direct the General Manager to issue a Request for Proposals for Investment Management Services.

Result:	Adopted by Roll Call Vote
Motion/Second:	Botello/Hall
Ayes:	Bilodeau, Botello, Gardner, Hall
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	None

B. REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEGAL SERVICES (CM#2025.19)

Jeff Mosher provided a presentation on the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Legal Services, contained in the agenda packet on pages 107-115.

Mr. Mosher reported that the Commission is being asked to authorize the release of an RFQ for legal services based on the directions from the Commission. Specific types of legal services required are outlined in the RFQ, including areas such as human resources and policies related to the brine line. The selected firm will provide services in accordance with the highest legal, ethical, and professional standards. A general services agreement and a task order would be processed for legal services, and it will be based on an annual fiscal

year, similar to the current process. Work will be performed on an hourly basis, with the possibility of special tasks that may arise.

Mr. Mosher noted that the selection committee will follow the same process as previously used, which included the General Manager, CFO, and a representative from a member agency. The General Manager will reach out to the general managers to seek a volunteer for the committee. Chair Mike Gardner suggested allowing more than one general manager to be a part of the selection committee if there's interest.

Vice Chair Gil Botello asked why interviews will be held "if needed" and suggested doing open session interviews. Mr. Mosher noted that it is standard if after reviewing the proposals and one stands out above the rest, it may not be necessary to do an interview.

Chair Mike Gardner emphasized that the action today is to authorize the release of an RFQ. The Commission can provide directions on how to proceed with interviews and who should be on the selection panel at a later time. This gives the opportunity to consult with the general managers and possibly legal counsel to gather their input and recommendations. It was asked how the RFQ will be posted/released. Mr. Mosher noted that the RFQ will be posted on PlanetBids, SAWPA's website, and distributed to a list of firms.

MOVED, to authorize the release of a Request for Qualifications for Legal Services.

Result:	Adopted by Roll Call Vote
Motion/Second:	Botello/Bilodeau
Ayes:	Bilodeau, Botello, Gardner, Hall
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	None

C. FYE 2026 AND 2027 OWOW AND ROUNDTABLES FUND DRAFT BUDGETS (CM#2025.20)

Karen Williams provided a presentation on the FYE 2026 and 2027 OWOW and Roundtable Funds Draft Budget, contained in the agenda packet on pages 119-172.

Ms. Williams noted that on January 21, 2025, staff presented the FYE 2026 and 2027 Goals and Objectives to the Commission for their review. On February 6, 2025, the first draft FYE 2026 and 2027 Budget was presented to member agencies' financial staff at the Budget Workshop. As per the Budget Schedule, the Budget will be presented to the Commission in three meetings. The OWOW and Roundtables Fund Budgets will be presented today, and the Brine Line Budget will be presented to the PA 24 Committee following this meeting. On March 18, 2025, the General Fund will be presented, and the combined Comprehensive Budget will be presented for approval on May 6, 2025.

A brief overview was provided on the OWOW, Roundtable Funds, Labor Distribution and Indirect Cost Allocation Rate, and Member Agency Contributions. Vice Chair Gil Botello highlighted how the member agency contributions increase less than 2% each year over 20 years and asked why for the FY 2026-27 did the Roundtable contributions double from \$10,000 to \$20,000? Mr. Mosher noted that staff have allocated additional funding for further studies related to habitat, and we are working with the team to determine how those funds will be applied. This is related to the Riverwalk project, it is a relatively small amount of funding, but we have discussed it with Fish and Wildlife, and there are a lot of benefits to implementing the Riverwalk, especially in terms of the outcomes. The effort to expand this project is particularly important because the Santa Ana Sucker is a significant concern for many people along the river. Some of the funds will be used to assess conditions before and after storms in relation to that project.

Commissioner Jasmin Hall referenced page 171 of the agenda packet and asked about the State and Federal Outreach contributions. Mr. Mosher noted that they are contributions from the member agencies that fund the state outreach efforts. West Coast Advisors serves as our advocate in Sacramento and staff collaborate closely with the member agencies, holding weekly phone calls with West Coast Advisors to track legislation. They assist us in staying informed about where IRWM is headed and any developments happening in Sacramento.

Chair Mike Gardner asked regarding the sale of the mitigation bank credits as revenue and how certain it is. Ms. Williams noted that they are currently working on the sale with SAWA, and we are hoping to buy back and recover the money from the remaining credits, but everything so far is moving forward.

Vice Chair Gil Botello asked if there has ever been discussion about the state reporting being duplicative. Each of the member agencies has a federal and state consultant who reports on a quarterly or monthly basis. Has there ever been any consideration of eliminating that line of item in the budget? Mr. Mosher emphasized that SAWPA's advocate, West Coast Advisors, is focused on things specific to SAWPA's purview, such as IRWM. The member agencies advocate traditionally do not oversee IRWM and we track work with DWR, monitor legislative developments, and keep an eye on bond issues. SAWPA holds weekly calls with your external affairs and legislative teams, using that as a forum to collaborate on what the member agencies want from us. Sometimes we track legislation or bring forward letters of support for bills that the member agencies are interested in, especially when they want regional approval rather than just individual agency support. Chair Mike Gardner requested that Mr. Mosher raise the question with the General Managers and get their input on having the member agencies perform the role of SAWPA's State Advocacy Consultant.

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

D. WATER-ENERGY COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK (WECAN) PROGRAM UPDATE (CM#2025.21)

Haley Gohari provided a presentation on the Water-Energy Community Action Network (WECAN) Program Update, contained in the agenda packet on pages 185-199. Ms. Gohari provided a brief overview of the WECAN program, noting that it is in its third phase, and SAWPA is one of the awardees of the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program, working collaboratively in Riverside's East Side neighborhood. This program is designed to improve both health and the environment in partnership with the City of Riverside, with a specific focus on water conservation efforts, such as the lawn replacement program funded by the TCC grant.

The project area boundary map for the TCC program was referenced and the residents' eligibility criteria, with all activities funded by the grant taking place within this area. The boundary was updated to include a larger number of single-family homes eligible for the program. The benefits for East Side neighborhood residents include lower water bills, reduced landscape maintenance, drought-friendly California native plants, custom landscape designs, and training on plant maintenance to ensure successful landscaping over time.

Ms. Gohari noted that there is still a need to remove and replace an additional 17,447 square feet of turf. There are about five pending projects that have not yet been included in the completed totals. The WECAN program faced some of the following challenges: the grant was awarded in early to mid-2020, which, due to COVID-19, caused delays in starting the projects and increased costs. There have been engagement challenges, including lower turnout at neighborhood events and difficulty accessing residents due to locked gates and inaccessible front doors, which has made outreach harder. The original project boundary only covered about 1,800 single-family homes, but after an update, it now includes 2,800 eligible

homes, and weather-related impacts, such as heavy rain during wet months, have delayed construction efforts.

Ms. Gohari noted that over the next six months, SAWPA will continue outreach and engagement efforts in the East Side neighborhood through city-hosted events and canvassing. They will participate in established community events like food pantries hosted by the Community Settlement Association, to increase participation in the program. SAWPA will continue to work with their grant partners, the City of Riverside, and the Strategic Growth Council to ensure the program's goals are met and to streamline enrollment for interested residents.

Commissioner Jasmin Hall noted there are schools that have community gardens on their campuses and suggested reaching out to the school district and identify which schools are within the service area, they could potentially engage more homes by involving the students and the schools themselves. This could be a great way to expand outreach and get more people involved by connecting with the schools directly. Vice Chair Gil Botello noted that Church groups typically use volunteers to distribute flyers by placing them on fences, since most neighborhoods are fenced for safety reasons. The flyers are rolled up and placed on the fences and is an effective strategy for engaging communities. Chair Mike Gardner noted that the current representative for that area is Council Member Philip Falcone, who is involved in the neighborhood and suggested coordinating with him.

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

7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

Recommendation: Receive for Information.

A. OWOW QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT: OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024

Presenter: Rachel Gray

B. ROUNDTABLES QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT: OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024

Presenter: Rachel Gray

C. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Presenter: Jeff Mosher

D. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

Jeff Mosher reported to the Commission that the OWOW and Roundtables status reports are prepared by the planning department. If they would like to stay updated on the progress of each project and task force, these are included as information reports on the agenda items 7.A and 7.B. Mr. Mosher also noted that staff are working on validating cloud seeding and will be bringing it back to the Commission once they have addressed some ongoing issues. There is a significant amount of information to gather before deciding on whether to proceed with cloud seeding next winter, starting in November. Staff are actively working on this and will be in communication with the general managers. We plan to present something to the Commission soon. As we move into the summer and approach fall, one key factor will be assessing how the burn scars are recovering and looking at the winter forecast. If the forecast suggests a wet winter, it might make sense to give the burn scars another year.

Mr. Mosher noted that staff are working on the PFAS study and are wrapping up phase 2. Once that is completed, we will be returning to the Commission in a closed session to discuss the findings.

E. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/REPORT

There were no Chair comments received.

F. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There were no Commissioners' comments received.

G. COMMISSIONERS' REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no requests for future agenda items.

8. CLOSED SESSION

There was no Closed Session.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for review, Chair Mike Gardner adjourned the meeting at 10:44 a.m.

Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, March 18, 2025.

Signed by:



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Mike Gardner, Chair

Attest:

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Sara Villa, Clerk of the Board