



**SAWPA COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 6, 2025**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

None

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT;
NON-VOTING**

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

STAFF PRESENT

Jeff Mosher, Karen Williams, Shavonne Turner, Dean Unger, John Leete, Rick Whetsel, Ian Achimore, Sara Villa, Alison Lewis, Natalia Gonzalez, Marie Jauregui, Emily Fuentes, Zyanya Ramirez

OTHERS PRESENT

Thomas S. Bunn, Lagerlof, LLP; Nick Kanetis, Eastern Municipal Water District; John Kennedy, Orange County Water District; Kevin O'Toole, Orange County Water District; Carly Pierce, Western Municipal Water District; Craig Miller, Western Municipal Water District; Mallory O'Connor, 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, CA 92503 and Commissioner 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.

4. ITEMS TO BE ADDED OR DELETED

There were no items to be added or deleted.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: APRIL 15, 2025

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

B. TREASURER'S REPORT: MARCH 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, Paule
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	None

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **LEGAL SERVICES REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) UPDATE (CM#2025.35)**

Jeff Mosher provided a presentation on the Legal Services RFQ Update, contained in the agenda packet on pages 47-52.

The RFQ for legal services was released per the Commission's guidance on March 13, 2025, and proposals were due April 24, 2025. The following six (6) proposals were received:

- Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo (Irvine, CA)
- Colantuono, Highsmith, Whatley, PC (Pasadena, CA)
- Donal and Associates (Culver City, CA)
- Lagerloff, LLP (Pasadena, CA)
- Lewis Brisbois (Los Angeles, CA)
- Liebert Cassity Whitmore (Los Angeles, CA)

Staff are requesting direction from the Commission before reviewing the submitted proposals. The proposed approach involves forming a Selection Committee of Commission Chair Mike Gardner, Jeff Mosher, and Karen Williams. The Selection Committee will review the proposals, conduct initial screening interviews (online), and then making a recommendation to the Commission in June timeframe.

Commissioner Bilodeau requested that the selected firm report directly to the Commission, rather than to the General Manager. Mr. Mosher confirmed that this requirement is outlined in the RFQ, specifying that the legal services firm would report to the Commission and it is also listed on SAWPA's Organizational Chart.

Chair Gardner noted that he is okay with being the Commission's representative as part of the Selection Committee, though if anyone else is interested in taking on the role, he is open to it. Commissioners Jasmin Hall and Philip Paule agreed that, as the role of the Chair, it is more appropriate for this responsibility to fall to Chair Gardner.

Commissioner Botello asked if there are any concerns with selecting a firm, will it be brought back to the Commission for discussion before presenting a final version for approval. Chair Gardner noted that the six (6) proposals would be reviewed and narrowed down to the firms they feel should be interviewed. The full Commission will then conduct interviews and can discuss the findings afterward.

Commissioner Paule asked if any of the firms currently represent any of the member agencies. Mr. Mosher noted that staff have not reviewed the proposals yet, but one of the questions that is asked is whether they have any potential conflict of interest, and they would provide a response to that. However, firms that collaborate with the member agencies would not submit proposals.

MOVED, that the Commission provide direction on the process to review the responses to the Legal Services RFQ.

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

B. LESJWA STRATEGIC PLAN (CM#2025.36)

Rick Whetsel provided a presentation on the LESJWA Healthy Lakes, Connected Communities: A Strategic Plan for the San Jacinto River Watershed, contained in the agenda packet on pages 65-82.

The development of this strategic plan began in early 2023, when the LESJWA Board chose to update its 2004 strategic business plan. The primary aim was to modernize the plan through broad engagement and input from the Board and member agency staff. To facilitate this effort, LESJWA contracted with Water Systems Consulting.

A major component of this initiative was stakeholder engagement. This involved Board workshops, review sessions, and consultation calls with staff from member agencies. The five (5) key components of the plan include vision, mission, values, goals, and objectives. These elements work together to guide LESJWA's efforts in sustaining and improving the watershed. Mr. Whetsel provided a thorough overview of the following strategic goals:

1. Define and Promote Healthy Lakes
2. Strengthening Collaboration and Data Sharing
3. Ensure Long-Term Sustainability
4. Promote Transparency and Accountability
5. Secure and Leverage Funding
6. Explore Promising Technologies

Mr. Whetsel noted that LESJWA has approved funding for the next two fiscal years to implement Goal 1, which focuses on defining what constitutes "healthy lakes" and supporting efforts that align with this definition.

The first year will involve collaborating with Board members and agency staff to establish what defines a healthy lake. Following that, staff will gather input from stakeholders to ensure we are incorporating diverse perspectives on lake health. Afterward, staff will develop a clear approach to define metrics for assessing the health of the lakes. A key part of this process will be turning the defined goals into a structured work plan with a timeline. In the long term, this will guide the implementation of specific projects and tasks that emerge from the plan. There was no discussion.

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. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Presenter: Jeff Mosher

B. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

Jeff Mosher reported that over the past two weeks, he has provided three (3) presentations. One of them was to the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, where a standard update on Cloud Seeding was provided. Mr. Mosher noted he will be attending the San Bernardino Valley Board meeting on May 20th, where he will provide a presentation on the updated validation study report. In addition to meeting with the General Managers on May 19th, this will serve as an opportunity to present the latest findings.

Mr. Mosher noted he presented to the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) meeting. They requested a presentation as part of the process to appoint a representative from Orange County municipalities to the Steering Committee for OWOW. They were very interested in hearing about SAWPA's activities, which led to the appointment of Director Jung from the Orange County Water District. Director Jung, who also serves as an alternate Commissioner here at SAWPA, will be joining the OWOW Steering Committee. The next OWOW Steering Committee is scheduled for later this month.

Mr. Mosher noted that the last presentation he gave was to the Regional Board, and he cannot emphasize enough how much they value SAWPA. Our task forces have been incredibly helpful to them in carrying out their work, and their board fully recognizes the importance of our relationship. They are very interested in our ongoing activities and projects. The current Executive Officer, Jayne Joy, is retiring in June. As for her replacement, it is unclear whether that process will be quick or take some time to finalize. Staff are tracking this, as we have had such a strong and productive relationship with their previous executive officers.

The recruitment of the Assistant General Manager position has been released, and a brochure has been sent out to the Commissioners. The construction on the lobby begins next week. We are gearing up for demolition, and as a result, we are making plans to have staff work more frequently remotely due to the impact of the construction. In terms of Commission meetings, they will be rotating locations, with the first meeting scheduled for May 20th at IEUA.

Commissioner Botello reported that he will be joining the meetings remotely when held at IEUA and EMWD. Mr. Mosher noted that we can have up to two (2) members of the Commission participate remotely, but we will need a majority to be physically present, so at least three (3) members in-person. The Clerk will be tracking the Commissioners' participation prior to each meeting. Chair Mike Gardner encouraged all Commission members and alternates to make every effort to ensure we have a legitimate quorum for each meeting to avoid cancelling a meeting due to a lack of quorum.

C. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/REPORT

There were no Chair comments received.

D. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Bilodeau noted that he will not be able to attend the June 3rd Commission meeting as he will be out of town but has asked Commissioner Fred Jung to represent OCWD at that meeting. Mr. Bilodeau attended a MET inspection tour of the Bay Delta last week and noted it was a very informative experience.

E. COMMISSIONERS' REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no requests for future agenda items.

Chair Gardner recessed the meeting at 9:58 a.m. for Closed Session.

8. CLOSED SESSION

A. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Significant exposure to litigation pursuant to paragraph (2) or (3) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9: (one case) (claim for benefits).

9. CLOSED SESSION REPORT

Chair Gardner resumed the Open Session at 10:38 a.m. and Legal Counsel, Thomas S. Bunn announced that the Commission received a report from Counsel; no reportable action was taken on Agenda Item No. 8.A.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for review, Chair Gardner adjourned the meeting at 10:39 a.m.

Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.

Signed by:

Mike Gardner

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Mike Gardner, Chair

Attest:

DocuSigned by:

Sara Villa

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Sara Villa, Clerk of the Board