



**SAWPA COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 20, 2025**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

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

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Jasmin A. Hall, Inland Empire Utilities Agency

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT;  
NON-VOTING**

T. Milford Harrison, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District [via – zoom]  
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, Linda Kim

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Thomas S. Bunn, Lagerlof, LLP; Nick Kanetis, Eastern Municipal Water District; Lisa Haney, Orange County Water District; Carly Pierce, Western Municipal Water District; Adekunle Ojo, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Aaron Echols, Inland Empire Resource Conservation 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 Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Board Room, 6075 Kimball Avenue, Building A, Chino, CA 91708 and Commissioner Denis Bilodeau at 601 N Ross Street, Room 327, Santa Ana, CA 92701, and Commissioner Gil Botello at 380 E. Vanderbilt Way, San Bernardino, CA 92408.

**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: MAY 6, 2025**

**Recommendation:** Approve as posted.

**MOVED**, to approve the Consent Calendar as posted.

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

## 6. **NEW BUSINESS**

### A. **INLAND EMPIRE BRINE LINE RATE RESOLUTION (CM#2025.37)**

David Ruhl provided a presentation on the Inland Empire Brine Line Rate Resolution 2025-2, contained in the agenda packet on pages 23-36.

The current and proposed Fiscal Year 2025-26 Brine Line Rates for Flow, Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Total Suspended Solids (TSS), fixed pipe, and fixed treatment are shown in the table below. The proposed rates have been calculated using the financial model prepared in 2018 and are based on the approved two-year budget (FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27).

*Summary of FY 2024-25 (Current) Rates and FY 2025-26 (Proposed) Rates*

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Flow (MG)</i>	<i>BOD (1,000 lbs)</i>	<i>TSS (1,000 lbs)</i>	<i>Fixed Pipeline*</i>	<i>Fixed T&amp;D*</i>
Current FY 2024-25	\$1,097	\$396	\$497	\$6,654	\$13,505
<b>Proposed FY 2025-26</b>	<b>\$1,119</b>	<b>\$416</b>	<b>\$522</b>	<b>\$6,787</b>	<b>\$13,775</b>

\*Fixed pipeline and Fixed Treatment and Disposal (T&D) charges are per million gallons (MG) per month.

The Brine Line rates include the cost that Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) charges SAWPA to treat and dispose of brine, which includes a Flow, BOD and TSS charge. The OC San Flow charge (\$308/MG) is included as part of the total SAWPA Brine Line Flow rate (\$1,119/MG). The OC San BOD and TSS charges are considered "pass-through" costs.

In April 2025, SAWPA received the proposed Brine Line rates from OC San (Flow, BOD, TSS) that include a 5% increase in their charges from last fiscal year. Due to the minor increase in the rates from OC San, SAWPA is able to maintain the proposed rate increase of 2% for Flow, Fixed Pipeline and Fixed Treatment and Disposal. Since BOD and TSS are pass through costs the rate for BOD and TSS will increase 5%.

The truck disposal rates will continue to be based on two (2) tiers: a Brine Tier and a Non-Brine Tier. These charges will increase 2.4% from FY 2024-25. The proposed Capacity Lease rates for FY 2025-26 will increase 2.0% from FY 2024-25 for discharges not exceeding 250 mg/L of BOD and 250 mg/L of TSS. Dischargers exceeding BOD and TSS, surcharge rate will increase by 5%. The proposed permit fees for FY 2025-26 remain unchanged from FY 2024-25.

Mr. Ruhl noted that the PA 24 Committee reviewed this item at its May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, evaluated the proposed rates and charges, and recommended approval of the resolution to the Commission. There was no discussion.

**MOVED**, to adopt Resolution No. 2025-2 establishing the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Inland Empire Brine Line Rates to be effective July 1, 2025.

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

**B. CHANGE ORDER NO. 1 FOR ARUNDO DONAX REMOVAL IN THE SANTA ANA RIVER BASIN HEADWATERS PROJECT (CM#2025.38)**

Ian Achimore provided a presentation on the Change Order No. 1 for Arundo Donax Removal in the Santa Ana River Basin Headwaters Project (Project), contained in the agenda packet on pages 43-67. A brief overview of Arundo Donax and Project was provided.

Arundo Donax is a highly invasive, non-native plant that thrives in riparian zones. It can grow up to 4 inches per day and reach heights of 33 feet. It is flammable, contributes to flooding, consumes more water than other invasive plants in the region, and spreads through rhizomes, often establishing in downstream waterways.

The headwaters-focused project involves identifying, accessing, and removing stands of Arundo across the Santa Ana River Basin. Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD), one of four resource conservation districts in the watershed, leads the effort with a qualified team of field staff certified in herbicide application by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Given that the project is already in progress, staff believe it's important to continue this work while conditions allow, with the goal of removing as much Arundo as possible. Additional efforts are needed to remove Arundo in the upper watershed, including areas that gaining access is difficult (Devore, Zanja, and San Timoteo). Using the most recent data from IERCD (April 2025) a total of 1,291 stands have been inventoried; 375 stands have been treated, and 916 stands remain to be treated.

Mr. Achimore referenced a map showing the current extent of Arundo infestation included in the agenda packet and noted that the request is returned to the Commission as a proposed amendment to the existing project. IERCD would implement Change Order #1 to the current contract. The existing contract budget is \$147,770. The change order would increase the budget by \$468,268, bringing the total to \$616,045. Additionally, staff are recommending an extension of the contract duration and a re-adoption of the General Services Agreement with IERCD.

Mr. Achimore emphasized that this amendment would be funded by Proposition 13 funds through SAWPA. This funding source does not require any additional contributions from member agencies. The SAWPA Commission adopted Resolution 427, ensuring that any expenditures from Proposition 13 are aligned with its original intent. Staff have reviewed the resolution and confirmed this amendment is consistent with those guidelines.

Commissioner Botello referenced page 58 of the agenda packet and asked if the Loma Linda property mentioned part of privately owned land? If so, why is Arundo being removed from private property? Jeff Mosher noted that Arundo Donax doesn't recognize property boundaries, it spreads regardless of whether it's growing on public or private land. The goal of their work in the upper watershed is to eliminate Arundo at its source to prevent it from reestablishing downstream. They can continue removing it in the lower watershed, but as long as it remains upstream, it will keep coming back. That's why this project is focused on the

upper reaches to reduce or ideally eliminate Arundo as a persistent source of reinfestation. Targeting these headwaters is essential to make lasting progress across the entire watershed.

Aaron Echols of IERCD noted that they estimate that approximately 50% of the Arundo Donax stands are identified for treatment on private property. These range from small parcels to large holdings including some over 200 acres in San Timoteo Canyon. The overall goal of this work is to eradicate Arundo from the upper watershed, removing it as a key source of reinfestation further downstream. Regarding the Loma Linda property, they were contacted by a concerned resident. In this case, the Arundo stand is on their neighbor's land, but it's affecting them directly, damaging their fence and proving impossible to control. They reached out asking for assistance. This is a good example of how aggressive Arundo can be and also highlights the value of building community support through responsiveness and outreach.

Commissioner Botello referenced page 53 of the agenda packet and questioned why Waterman Canyon and East Twin Creek had 0% ground surveyed. Commissioner Botello expressed his full support for this effort and the staff's recommendation. However, he has concerns about scope. If we begin targeting specific private properties that are not directly adjacent to the Santa Ana River or located within the upper watershed, he believes we risk losing focus on the primary objectives of the Project. In such cases, he doesn't believe it appropriate to extend project resources for Arundo removal. That responsibility should ultimately lie with the private property owner. Our focus should remain squarely on strategic removal efforts that support watershed-wide outcomes, particularly in areas where infestations have the greatest potential to impact the river system.

Commissioner Paule added that he agrees with the concern. It appears the Arundo is damaging a private fence, which, in his view, is the responsibility of the property owner, not something a public agency should address using public funds.

Commissioner Camacho noted that he understands both perspectives, however since this portion is being funded through Proposition 13, it doesn't directly impact ratepayers because it's backed by proposition funds. If this were a \$400,000+ change order coming directly out of pocket, he would agree that we shouldn't be doing this type of work on private property. But given that it's funded by Prop 13, with money already allocated for this purpose, and considering the goal is eradication in the area, he can support it under the circumstances.

Commissioner Bilodeau noted that although it may not be intuitive, we're ultimately going to need to access private properties to effectively address the Arundo problem. In some cases, landowners might be unaware of the environmental impact. Given that this effort is funded through Proposition 13 it makes sense to approach this as both a removal and educational effort. Helping property owners understand why Arundo needs to be eradicated and encouraging their participation could be a valuable part of the overall strategy.

Commissioner Botello asked if the team that he's coordinating with working with other agencies or organizations within the watershed that are engaged in similar Arundo removal efforts? Are drone technology or other advanced tools to map the locations of Arundo infestations and prioritize areas for treatment being utilized?

Mr. Achimore noted that IERCD is actively coordinating with other entities throughout the watershed. SAWPA is also contributing through its watershed-wide aerial imagery efforts. Coordination is taking place with a range of stakeholders, including Mitigation banks, flood control districts, other resource conservation districts, and Santa Ana Watershed Association. Regarding the use of drone technology, currently no, a few years ago prior to the start of the current project.

Commissioner Botello emphasized that the focus should be on raising awareness and educating private property owners about the benefits of Arundo removal. We can't selectively do this in certain parts of the watershed and exclude areas like Waterman Canyon. It is his understanding, letters have been sent to private property owners, but some have not responded. Is that accurate? From what he knows, the team is actively attempting to contact every private property owner, but some have yet to respond, and follow-up outreach has not been completed in all cases. Commissioner Botello stated that regardless of whether these are grant funds, they are still public funds, and it is risky to start selectively targeting private properties within the watershed for removal efforts. He asked that it go on record stating that he does not believe this is good policy, and thinks the commissioners should avoid directing staff individually on specific actions. That's why we have this commission to provide guidance and oversight collectively.

Commissioner Bilodeau asked regarding the herbicide application, are we using glyphosate for the Arundo treatment? Mr. Achimore noted the herbicides being used are glyphosate and imazapyr. Both are approved for aquatic environments and are applied at dilution rates authorized by the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR).

Commissioner Bilodeau shared that his Board has formally decided not to support the use of glyphosate for treatments within the watershed. Given the substantial legal actions related to Roundup and still faces over 100,000 pending lawsuits. At Orange County Public Works, they have completely stopped purchasing and using glyphosate for this reason. Though it's highly effective, there's concerns about the potential environmental and health impacts, especially in drinking water and requested that it be something the Commission consider.

Chair Gardner asked if there is a suitable alternative and if there is a time crunch on this item? Mr. Achimore noted that there are other water agencies, such as the Irvine Ranch Water District, that have integrated pest management plans that prioritize the use of organic herbicides and emphasize mechanical removal methods whenever possible. It would be worthwhile for us to review those approaches in more detail and consider bringing recommendations back to the Commission for further updates or potential actions.

Chair Gardner noted that the Commission would benefit from a clearer understanding of what alternative herbicides are available and whether there is a significant cost difference compared to our current products. Having that information will allow them to make a more informed decision. If it pleases the Commission, he suggested tableting the item for a future meeting. There was a consensus from the Commission.

**MOVED**, to table Agenda Item No. 6.B (Change Order No. 1 for Arundo Donax Removal in the Santa Ana River Basin Headwaters Project) to a future meeting.

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

## **7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

Recommendation: Receive for Information.

### **A. CASH TRANSACTIONS REPORT – MARCH 2025**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**B. INTER-FUND BORROWING – MARCH 2025 (CM#2025.39)**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**C. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS/FINANCIAL REPORTING – MARCH 2025 (CM#2025.40)**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**D. PROJECT AGREEMENT 25 – OWOW FUND – FINANCIAL REPORT, MARCH 2025**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**E. PROJECT AGREEMENT 26 – ROUNDTABLE FUND – FINANCIAL REPORT, MARCH 2025**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**F. BUDGET VS ACTUAL VARIANCE REPORT FYE 2025 THIRD QUARTER – MARCH 31, 2025 (CM#2025.41)**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**G. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE THIRD QUARTER ENDING MARCH 31, 2025**

**Presenter:** Karen Williams

**H. STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

**Presenter:** Jeff Mosher

**I. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT**

Jeff Mosher reported that he has two (2) presentations scheduled this week. Today, he will be at San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, where they've requested an update on Cloud Seeding with a focus on the Validation process. Staff received an updated Validation Report from DRI last week, so there will be new information to present. After the presentation, the slides will be distributed to all the Commissioners. There are still some outstanding questions regarding the Validation, which we are actively working through. Once the Final Validation Report is complete, we will bring it back to the Commission for further review.

On Wednesday, he will be at Orange County Water District. They will be considering for approval of SAWPA's budget and have asked for a presentation on an update of SAWPA's activities. This is an opportunity to share progress and periodically remind them of what we're doing and why.

Mr. Mosher noted that as part of our meeting rotation, the two meetings in June will be held at the Eastern Municipal Water District. Staff will reach out to Commissioners and member agency staff to ensure everyone is informed and attends the correct location.

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

Chair Gardner reported that the Governor has included a budget trailer Bill aimed at expediting the permitting process and helping to secure funding for the Delta Conveyance Project. This is an important step forward for California's water system. Typically, budget trailer bills have a strong chance of passing, so we'll be watching closely to see how this develops.

**K. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

There were no Commissioners' comments received.

**L. 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 Gardner adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

**Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, June 3, 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