



**SAWPA COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JUNE 3, 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  
Jasmin Hall, Inland Empire Utilities Agency  
Fred Jung, Alternate, Orange County Water District [via – zoom]

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

None

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT;  
NON-VOTING**

T. Milford Harrison, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

**STAFF PRESENT**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Thomas S. Bunn, Lagerlof, LLP; Nick Kanetis, Eastern Municipal Water District; Leighanne Kirk, Eastern Municipal Water District; Joe Mouawad, Eastern Municipal Water District; Craig Miller, Western Municipal Water District; Carly Pierce, Western Municipal Water District; Adekunle Ojo, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Kevin O'Toole; Orange County Water District; Steven Wolosoff, GEI Consultants, Inc.; Amy Stevens, Water Systems Consulting

The Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission was called to order at 9:33 a.m. by Chair Mike Gardner on behalf of Eastern Municipal Water District, Board Room, 2270 Trumble Road, Perris, CA 92570 and Commissioner Fred Jung at 303 W. Commonwealth Avenue, Fullerton, CA 92832, 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 20, 2025**

**Recommendation:** Approve as posted.

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

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

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. MIDDLE SANTA ANA RIVER PATHOGEN TMDL TASK FORCE – 2026 TRIENNIAL REPORT AND SYNOPTIC STUDY (CM#2025.42)**

Rick Whetsel provided a presentation on Middle Santa Ana River (MSAR) Pathogen TMDL Task Force – 2026 Triennial Report and Synoptic Study, contained in the agenda packet on pages 37-49.

Mr. Whetsel provided an overview of the MSAR TMDLs, it was adopted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board in February 2005, amending the Basin Plan to include TMDLs for bacterial indicators and pathogens. The purpose of the Task Force is to implement the regulatory requirements outlined in the 2005 adopted TMDLs. Key activities include evaluating long-term implementation strategies, developing a cost sharing framework among participating entities, conducting, and reporting on water quality monitoring, and assessing urban sources of pollution in the watershed.

The Triennial Report submitted every three years to the Regional Board provides an update on monitoring data, operations and maintenance, studies, and activities conducted by stakeholders. Staff are currently preparing the 2026 Triennial Report, due to the Regional Board in February 2026. Simultaneously, the Task Force is coordinating with the Regional Board to revise and extend the Basin Plan language. The current TMDLs are set to expire in December 2025, and staff are seeking to extend them to December 2035.

The Triennial Report will include a Synoptic Study, which is a snapshot-style, simultaneous assessment of water quality across the watershed. This study builds on previous efforts from 2007, 2012, and 2019, and will help identify potential pollution sources.

Mr. Whetsel referenced GEI Consultant's scope of work outlining that the consultant is to prepare a detailed study plan outlining monitoring locations and methods, conduct field sampling and data collection, compile the 2026 Triennial Report, summarizing the previous three years of work, and providing regular updates to the Task Force and participate in meetings.

Staff's recommendation is to authorize the General Manager to execute Task Order GEI384-03 with GEI Consultants for the amount not-to-exceed \$168,039 to conduct a Synoptic Water Quality Study and prepare the 2026 Triennial Report in support of the Middle Santa Ana River (MSAR) Bacteria TMDLs. There was no discussion.

**MOVED**, to authorize the General Manager to execute Task Order GEI384-03 with GEI Consultants for the amount not-to-exceed \$168,039 to conduct a Synoptic Water Quality Study and prepare the 2026 Triennial Report in support of the Middle Santa Ana River (MSAR) Bacteria TMDLs.

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

**B. PHASE 4 NETWORK COORDINATOR COST SHARING AGREEMENT AND FYE 2026/FYE 2027 NETWORK COORDINATOR TASK ORDER APPROVAL (CM#2025.43)**

Ian Achimore provided a presentation on the Phase 4 Network Coordinator Cost Sharing Agreement and FYE 2026/FYE 2027 Network Coordinator Task Order Approval, contained in the agenda packet on pages 55-68.

Mr. Achimore provided an overview of the project known as the Roundtable of Regions Network Coordinator effort. It is a collaboration among Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) regions across California, including nine IRWM regions participating in this funding cycle. The Roundtable is a statewide network that enables coordination among regional partners, legislative bodies, and state agencies, especially in securing and managing water-related funding.

SAWPA represents the Santa Ana River Watershed, also known as the Santa Ana IRWM region on the Roundtable of Regions. Through this role, SAWPA has been instrumental in facilitating regional efforts such as SARCCUP and other funding opportunities. Roundtable functions as an informal partnership with the OWOW Steering Committee comprised of staff from IRWM regions. This network leverages limited local resources to create collective impact. SAWPA represents the OWOW program in this collaborative.

Mr. Achimore noted that this will be the fourth phase of the cost-share agreement. Like previous phases, this agreement pools funds from the participating regions to retain a Network Coordinator Consultant, currently Water Systems Consulting, Inc. SAWPA has served as the contract lead since December 2018 and will continue in that administrative role.

The total project cost is \$100,600 for FYE 2025-26 and 2026-27, and the scope of work includes maintaining contact lists and facilitating collaboration among IRWM regions, preparing quarterly meeting agendas, coordinating with the steering committee, finalizing the IRWM transition plan, and drafting comment letters to the State and Legislature.

Mr. Achimore noted that participation in the Roundtable positions SAWPA as a key voice in shaping the future of IRWM and climate resilience planning statewide. The Roundtable is a trusted partner of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and collaborates with organizations such as the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA). Supporting the Network Coordinator advances SAWPA's regional priorities and its role in statewide discussions.

Staff's recommendation is to approve the Phase 4 California IRWM Roundtable of Regions Network Coordinator cost-sharing agreement and approve Task Order WSC373-04 with Water Systems Consulting Inc. for \$100,600 to serve as the Roundtable of Regions Network Coordinator for FYE 2026 and 2027.

Commissioner Botello commended Mr. Achimore for all his efforts and noted that as the OWOW Convener, is supportive of SAWPA continuing to take the lead on this effort.

**MOVED**, to execute the following items related to the Roundtable of Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Regions:

1. Phase 4 California IRWM Roundtable of Regions Network Coordinator Cost Sharing Agreement, and
2. Task Order WSC373-04 with Water Systems Consulting Inc. for \$100,600 to serve as the Roundtable of Regions Network Coordinator for FYE 2026 and 2027.

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

**C. CLOUD SEEDING PROGRAM STATUS UPDATE (CM#2025.44)**

Jeff Mosher provided a presentation on Cloud Seeding Program Status Update, contained in the agenda packet on pages 97-115.

Mr. Mosher noted that staff have reviewed data from Year 1 of the cloud seeding pilot program and recommends the Commission consider terminating the program due to two main factors: Operational Limitations and Validation Study Results.

The Operational limitations are due to recent burn scars from the 2024 wildfires have triggered suspension criteria that would prevent cloud seeding this upcoming winter. Feedback from flood control districts across the region (including Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties) either advised against seeding or limit cloud seeding during specified conditions due to the potential for high debris flow risks.

Mr. Mosher stated that there were twelve storms that were cloud seeded out of twenty, during this period of November 2023 to April 2024. The Year 1 Validation Study, conducted by the Desert Research Institute (DRI), aimed to assess whether cloud seeding provided measurable water supply benefits. Key findings in DRI's recently submitted revised draft Preliminary Report included Snow Chemistry, where silver iodine was not consistently detected in seeded snow; levels were comparable to unseeded storms and below the expected concentrations. Target-control Snow Gauge Analysis was inconsistent and low increases in precipitation were observed. Overall, benefits were on the low end for two target areas (around 4% for NE and SE) and zero for the other two target areas (NW and SW), which is below the projections from the original feasibility study. Stream Gauge Analysis for one gauge in the NE target area showed no measurable benefit detected.

Based on recent presentations before Member Agency Boards, Mr. Mosher noted that there are concerns from member agency directors and staff. If the program were to continue for multiple years, similarly inconclusive results would raise fundamental concerns about its effectiveness. Given the inability to operate next season and the lack of clear, consistent benefits in the Year 1 validation efforts, staff recommend the Commission considering ending the cloud seeding pilot program.

Commissioner Hall asked if we have completed one year of cloud seeding and still have three years remaining in the original program contract, how does that work, is this an off-ramp?

Mr. Mosher noted that we will not be obligated to pay the full contract amounts to the operations and validation contractors if the program ends early with appropriate notice. At

this point, there are no ongoing operational costs and there is no additional work on the validation report, there's limited validation modeling underway, but it is due to wrap up in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Hall inquired about what communication or outreach is planned to inform the community. She noted it is important that the public understands both the outcome of the study and the rationale behind any decisions to wind down the program. How do we plan to provide that transparency and offer reassurance regarding public safety and the lack of environmental impact?

Mr. Mosher reported that while staff have not finalized a post-program communications strategy, we agree that transparency going forward is needed. We intend to make the validation report available publicly, post it on the website, share it with member agencies, and also clearly communicate the reasons behind decisions made to wind down the program.

Mr Mosher noted that we want to reassure the public, especially those who voiced concerns about health and safety, that there is no evidence of significant impacts from the program. The decision to end the program would not be based on impacts, but rather on a lack of measurable benefit. Proactive and transparent communications will help maintain public trust.

Commissioner Botello commended Mr. Mosher for actively engaging with the member agencies and partners as he brought this issue forward. His willingness to listen and incorporate that input into this recommendation is appreciated. He fully supports the recommendation; it is a prudent course of action at this point. The data and the presentation clearly reflect the program's limited impact and agree with his colleague's assessment.

Chair Gardner asked how this will affect the budget. Would this decision require a budget amendment at SAWPA, and would member agencies also need to revise their budgets accordingly? Alison Lewis stated that it will change the member contributions in the SAWPA Budget for the FYE 2027, to reduce \$34,000 for Cloud Seeding for each member agency.

Chair Gardner requested to amend SAWPA's budget to reduce the total member contributions per agency by \$34,000 for FYE 2027. Commissioner Botello agreed with Chair Gardner and requested that it be included in the recommendation as a modified motion. Commissioners Paule and Hall concurred.

**MOVED**, to approved terminating the Cloud Seeding Pilot Program based on the inability to cloud seed for a second year and the inconclusive results of the first year of cloud seeding (2023-2024) and requested to amend SAWPA's budget to reduce the total member contributions per agency by \$34,000 for FYE 2027.

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

## **7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

Recommendation: Receive for Information.

### **A. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Commissioner Paule noted that as a new member, he has been working to catch up on the many important initiatives SAWPA is involved in. He has had the opportunity to review some of the videos and communications materials, and he specifically commends the Santa Ana River signage project video, he thought it was excellent. He attended the event, which made

it even more meaningful. Overall, he was very impressed with the quality of SAWPA's communications work. As Commissioner Hall noted, expertise is especially valuable when we need to clearly explain complex topics like cloud seeding and why the program may be winding down. It is truly refreshing to have such a strong and capable communications team supporting this work.

**B. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT**

Jeff Mosher reported that the OWOW Steering Committee meeting was on May 22. Commissioner Botello serves as the convener, and Commissioner Jung also participates on the Committee. It was a well-attended and energetic meeting. There were two informative presentations. The first, from Kyla Brown and Oscar Serrato of the Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District, focused on Santa Ana River homeless solutions. The second presentation came from MWDOC, highlighting their regional comprehensive landscape rebate program funded under Prop 1.

Separately, Mr. Mosher participated in Chino Basin Day, hosted annually by IEUA and the Chino Basin Watermaster in coordination with the Regional Board. This year's event was held at the Regional Board office and was well attended. The forum offered an important opportunity to discuss regulatory and related topics affecting the basin.

Mr. Mosher noted he was invited to meet with the South Orange County Water Authority (SOCWA), which serves San Clemente, Laguna Beach, Santa Margarita Water District, and other agencies in their region. They are exploring SAWPA's task force model as a framework for addressing regional issues collaboratively. As a JPA, they are looking to sponsor similar task forces for their member agencies and other interested parties in the area. Based on our conversation, I expect they will move forward with at least a couple of new initiatives modeled after our approach.

Lastly, regarding the Legal Services Proposals that were received in response to the RFQ. The Committee has completed its reviews and has shortlisted it to three firms. Mr. Mosher noted that it would be beneficial for the Commission to conduct interviews with the three shortlisted firms. One of the July Commission meetings could be repurposed for the interviews, allowing each firm to be interviewed in 30-minute segments. Following the interviews, the Commission could make a determination on how to move forward with the selection of legal services.

Chair Gardner noted that Western's practice is to conduct interviews in closed sessions, while the actual contract award takes place in an open session, as required. It would be good to confirm with general counsel that this is consistent with legal requirements, but the direction he'd propose is; closed session for the interviews and initial discussion regarding potential selection; any reportable action from closed session would be disclosed as required; and open session for the formal selection and approval of the legal services contract.

Commissioner Botello agreed and offered to host the interviews at San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. Mr. Mosher noted that in July the meetings are currently scheduled to meet at Western, and SBVMWD is scheduled to host the first meeting in August. Commissioner Hall raised concerns on having the meetings in two different locations within the month of August and requested that SAWPA staff consider holding both August meetings at San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District.

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

Chair Gardner reported that he has been requested to schedule a Closed Session for the next meeting on June 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss the general manager's performance. He strongly encourages

all Commissioners to make every effort to be present in person. However, if necessary, remote participation is also an option.

**D. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Hall noted that Commissioner Paule, as a new member, raised a valuable point about the need to provide updates for new commissioners. It might be helpful to offer an overview of our roles and responsibilities, key policies, communication channels, and reports that would assist in bringing them up to speed. This could also include a review of the employee handbook, policy updates, and any changes in regulations or compliance procedures. By implementing a structured transition for new commissioners, we can ensure they are fully informed about the organization's operations and expectations.

**E. 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 10:31 a.m.

**Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, June 17, 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