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Karen Williams Appointed as SAWPA's Next General Manager

Riverside, CA – August 21, 2025 – The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) Commission has unanimously appointed Karen Williams as the agency's next General Manager.

"SAWPA is entering an exciting new chapter with Karen Williams at the helm," said SAWPA Commission Chair Mike Gardner. "Her strategic vision, expertise, and strong relationships throughout the watershed make her the ideal leader to guide SAWPA into a future defined by innovation and resilience."

Williams brings more than 36 years of experience across both public and private sectors. She joined SAWPA in 2001 and has most recently served as Chief Financial Officer and Deputy General Manager. She holds both bachelor's and master's degrees in Business Administration from California State University, San Bernardino.

"I'm honored and excited to lead SAWPA into this next phase," said Williams. "We have important work ahead to position SAWPA as a regional leader in resilience, innovation, and planning. I look forward to working alongside our talented staff and member agencies to achieve these goals."

SAWPA is a Joint Powers Authority composed of five member agencies: Eastern Municipal Water District, Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Orange County Water District, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, and Western Municipal Water District. The agency is known for its collaborative approach to regional water solutions, particularly through the One Water One Watershed (OWOW) program—a roundtable initiative that fosters innovative projects and ideas within the Santa Ana River Watershed.

One key initiative born from OWOW is the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP), which identifies climate risks and vulnerabilities in the watershed and will propose forward-thinking infrastructure and projects to address them.

"Karen's deep understanding of SAWPA's legacy, combined with her forward-thinking mindset, makes her the perfect leader for this moment," added Gardner. "Her leadership will ensure that programs like CARP deliver multi-benefit solutions for the entire watershed."

For more information about SAWPA or Karen Williams, visit sawpa.gov.

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About SAWPA

The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA), a public water agency was formed as a joint powers authority and is located in Riverside, California. SAWPA focuses on a broad range of water resource issues including water supply reliability, water quality improvement, recycled water, wastewater treatment, groundwater management, brine management, and integrated regional planning. SAWPA's mission is to manage the Inland Empire Brine Line and to develop and maintain regional plans, programs, and projects that will protect the Santa Ana River basin water resources to maximize beneficial uses within the watershed in an economically and environmentally responsible manner. To learn more, please visit sawpa.gov.