



**SAWPA COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 18, 2025**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Mike Gardner, Chair, Western Municipal Water District
Gil Botello, Vice Chair, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
Philip E. Paule, Secretary-Treasurer, 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**

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

STAFF PRESENT

Karen Williams, David Ruhl, Shavonne Turner, Ian Achimore, Dean Unger, John Leete, Rick Whetsel, Alison Lewis, Natalia Gonzalez, Sara Villa, Emily Fuentes, Linda Kim, Olivia Burgess; Marie Jauregui

OTHERS PRESENT

Thomas S. Bunn, Lagerlof, LLP; Arijanto Istandar, Inland Empire Utilities Agency; Ken Tam, Inland Empire Utilities Agency; Kevin O'Toole, Orange County Water District; Carly Pierce, Western Municipal Water District; Allison Edmisten, Yucaipa Valley Water District; Joe Zoba, Yucaipa Valley Water District; Jennifer Ares, Yucaipa Valley Water District; Toyasha Sebbag, City of Rialto; Valerie Amezcua, City of Santa Ana; Mark Swanson, Beaumont Cherry Valley Water District; David Armstrong, South Mesa Water Company; Beth Olhasso, West Coast Advisors

The Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission was called to order at 9:31 a.m. by Chair 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.

4. ITEMS TO BE ADDED OR DELETED

There were no items to be added or deleted.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: NOVEMBER 4, 2025

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

MOVED, to approve the Consent Calendar as posted.

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

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **PROPOSITION 1 ROUND 2 REPLACEMENT PROJECTS APPROVAL (CM#2025.82)**

Ian Achimore provided a presentation titled Proposition 1 Round 2 Replacement Projects Approval, contained in the agenda packet on pages 15-24.

Mr. Achimore provided a brief overview of the Steering Committee's recommendation on approving two replacement projects under Proposition 1, Round 2 of the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program, known as the OWOW Program. The Steering Committee's role is to approve IRWM plans, grant competition requirements, and final project lists before they are submitted to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), which manages Proposition 1 funding; the SAWPA Commission then ratifies those decisions. All Steering Committee actions must follow DWR funding requirements, including guidance on Disadvantaged Community (DAC) projects, which must demonstrate that at least 75% of their service area is disadvantaged based on median household income.

Mr. Achimore noted that for replacement projects, DWR requires that any substitute project must appear on the previously ranked project list and be the next highest-ranked project able to move forward, rather than a new unrelated proposal. Additional funding for an already approved project must reflect an expanded scope or increased benefits. In this round, one replacement project falls under general implementation and the other under DAC implementation, so two ranked lists apply. The original ranked list from the 2022 call for projects identified several approved projects, but in early 2024, SAWPA was notified that the Lead Service Line Replacement in Bloomington Project was no longer moving forward. SAWPA is the lead agency for the Santa Ana River Watershed Weather Modification Pilot and on June 3, 2025, the SAWPA Commission approved terminating the pilot based on the inability to cloud seed for a second year due to inconclusive results.

The remaining available funding from the original project's invoicing is \$630,000, which is recommended for reallocation to the Calimesa Aquifer Storage and Recovery project. This project will recharge highly purified recycled water into the Beaumont groundwater basin and has an estimated total cost of about \$20 million. It provides significant water supply benefits through potable extraction and can be constructed before DWR's deadline of December 31, 2027.

Commissioner Botello asked if it was confirmed whether they'll be able to finish and become operational. Mr. Achimore noted that staff pose these questions as they go through the list and focus on key points, such as whether they can meet the DWR deadline. If they are unable to do so, DWR is unlikely to remain engaged, and continuing would only waste time for all parties involved.

Commissioner Paule asked what ensures that the project will be completed? What factors or assurances can we rely on to trust that they will meet the deadline? Mr. Achimore noted that staff have been through this process multiple times, there's a level of give and take with these projects. Typically, we approve about 10 projects per funding round, but maybe 10-20% of them face delays or issues with their schedules. Staff asks as many leading questions as possible,

dive into their project timelines, review the scope of work, and identify the more challenging tasks.

Mr. Achimore stated that if a project doesn't meet the deadline, staff works with DWR to explore the possibility of an amendment, depending on their willingness and capacity. When it comes to proposition funding, we've directly asked DWR whether there's a hard deadline for spending the funds. Their response has been that, since these are not general funds which have a 5-year deadline due to legislative restrictions, there isn't a final deadline for bond funding. However, it ultimately depends on DWR's capacity and available funding for staff. If they keep extending the timeline, they risk depleting their own funds, which could lead to DWR being less favorable toward the project or the lead grant administrator.

Mr. Achimore continued his presentation and noted that the Lead Service Line Replacement in Bloomington Project for West Valley Water District is no longer moving forward. They conducted an assessment of lead service lines and found that there was no need for improvements in the area they initially identified. They informed SAWPA last year that they no longer required the funding.

Staff reviewed the list, as was done with general implementation projects, and checked in with the remaining projects. Two of them are unable to proceed, similar to the situation with general projects. One of these is the City of Rialto project, which also cannot move forward, but a substitute project has been proposed. Staff worked with DWR to ensure this replacement project aligns with their guidelines. This replacement project involves connecting 12 residential properties to the sewer system, installing 650 linear feet of sewer lines, manhole covers, and abandoning existing septic tanks. The total cost is \$500,000, and the project is set to be completed by the deadline.

Commissioner Hall inquired if the City of Rialto's project was already prepared to connect the 12 private properties to the sewer system, or if the funding is now enabling them to complete the necessary steps. Ms. Toyasha Sebbag noted that the intent of the project is to connect all 12 of the residents, who are currently using septic systems, to the sewer system. These properties do not have any laterals at the moment. The project will involve constructing a sewer main along the middle of a small street, approximately 600 feet long, with an 8-inch diameter. It will also include installing laterals to the properties and the abandonment of the existing septic systems.

Commissioner Botello inquired if the process of obtaining the necessary permits either before or during construction, or has it been completed? Joe Zoba noted that they are in the final stages of obtaining the permits. Right now, they are at the point where they are doing the modeling for the injection wells. After that, they will proceed with the Title 22 report. The next step is conducting a pump test, where they will move water with a surrogate through the system. Once that's done, they will be able to release the permit from the regional board and move forward with the project.

Mr. Zoba noted that the CEQA process is already complete, and the completion of the wells, they've already been drilled. They are currently conducting the pump test and are confident the project is essentially finished. They are now just working through the testing phase and will be able to spend the funds before December 31st.

Mr. Zoba continued by stating they are expecting positive impacts on water quality and have been working closely with Cindy Lee and the Regional Board. The water district is one of the few agencies with a maximum benefit program through the Regional Board. This aligns perfectly with their goals from back in 2004 when they received the permit through the Basin Plan and set more stringent objectives for that area. Everything is moving in the right direction. They now

have a new, drought-proof, high-quality source of water and are really excited about the progress of this project.

Mr. Zoba thanked the Commission for considering it a replacement project. He believes this is a very advanced initiative for an agency of our size, and it sets a strong example for other mid-sized agencies in Southern California. It demonstrates how we can maximize our water supply and make a meaningful impact on the region's water management.

MOVED, to approve Proposition 1 Integrated Regional Water Management Round 2 Replacement Projects for the 1) Weather Modification Pilot and 2) Lead Service Line Replacement in Bloomington Project.

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

B. EXTENSION OF AGREEMENT WITH WEST COAST ADVISORS FOR LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS SERVICES (CM#2025.83)

Karen Williams provided a presentation titled Extension of Agreement with West Coast Advisors for Legislative Affairs Services, contained in the agenda packet on pages 31-39.

Ms. Williams provided an overview regarding SAWPA maintaining a successful partnership with West Coast Advisors from the early 2000s, represented by Michael Boccadoro and Beth Olhasso. They provide state level legislative and regulatory advocacy services. In 2018, staff conducted a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) and awarded a two-year contract with options to extend. The Commission approved a one-year extension in 2024, which extends the contract through December 2025. With the contract expiring at the end of this year, we are now requesting an extension through December 2027.

West Coast Advisors exceeded expectations during the six-year engagement. They have helped maintain strong relationships with key legislators and regulatory agencies, and extending the agreement will ensure continuity in our legislative programs. This also helps avoid administrative delays during the strategic planning process. Importantly, there is no conflict of interest with the member agencies or any other clients.

Ms. Williams noted that West Coast Advisors monitor and tracks state legislation and regulatory policies, develop and executes advocacy strategies in coordination with staff, and represents SAWPA and its member agencies' interests in Sacramento. They conduct weekly coordination calls with regional water agencies, which all member agencies participate in, and prepare monthly reports along with quarterly updates for the Commission.

The total cost would be \$234,000 for the two-year extension (\$117,000 per year). There has been no increase in this amount since 2020, and the funds are included in both the FY 2026-27 budget.

Commissioner Hall noted that the amount has remained unchanged since 2020, which is a positive development, especially given the rising costs everywhere else. It's a blessing that we can continue receiving quality service at the same cost they've been providing.

Ms. Olhasso expressed her appreciation and enthusiasm for continuing to work with SAWPA, collaborate with the Commission and member agency representatives, and is looking forward to seeing them at ACWA.

MOVED, to authorize the General Manager to extend the existing agreement with West Coast Advisors' (WCA) providing state legislative affairs services for an additional two-year term, in an amount not to exceed \$234,000 (\$117,000 per year).

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

C. SAWPA 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION VENUE SELECTION (CM#2025.84)

Emily Fuentes provided a presentation titled SAWPA 50th Anniversary Celebration Venue Selection, contained in the agenda packet on pages 53-101.

Ms. Fuentes provided an overview of the potential venues for SAWPA's 50th Anniversary celebration. The venues were evaluated based on factors like capacity, location, parking, accessibility, catering, and availability. The 50th anniversary celebration will target elected officials and key regional partners, with a corporate style luncheon or dinner. The program will include speeches, resolutions, and a special 50th anniversary video. Our goal is to engage stakeholders and strengthen future relationships.

SAWPA staff evaluated several venues, focusing on those closest to the SAWPA area. However, Citrus Park is no longer available for the desired dates, so we've also considered Lot 84 as an alternative. Below is a list of the top venues, mostly in Riverside, with one in Eastvale and one in Jurupa Valley:

- March Field Air Museum (Riverside): A unique venue surrounded by aviation history with indoor and outdoor spaces. Ideal for milestone celebrations, offering historic aircraft as a backdrop.
- The Desi House (Eastvale): A stylish venue with both indoor and outdoor spaces, previously the ranch house of Desi Arnaz. It can host up to 120 people, though much of the capacity is outdoors, which we'd need to consider for weather in January. It offers access to the Santa Ana River Trail.
- Crestmore Manor (Jurupa Valley): A historic, elegant venue with 10,000 sq. ft. of space and scenic grounds, perfect for formal events.
- Loft 84 (Riverside): A charming, Art deco inspired venue in downtown Riverside. It offers an elegant setting with free decor, but no AV equipment, which would need to be arranged separately.
- Mission Inn Hotel and Spa (Riverside): The most iconic and expensive venue, offering timeless elegance and historic architecture.

Ms. Fuentes noted that if a venue doesn't offer on-site catering, they all have recommended partner caterers, and you can also bring in other caterers. Overall, all of these venues provide easy access to catering solutions suitable for the type of event we're planning.

Commissioner Botello noted that the March Field Air Museum feels a bit too warehouse-like for his taste, and his experience there wasn't particularly enjoyable. As for his top choices, the Mission Inn remains a strong contender, though he acknowledges it is on the pricier side.

He's heard excellent things about Crestmore Manor, though he hasn't personally visited. The photos are impressive, and he's confident that SAWPA staff will be able to transform the space beautifully, and Crestmore Manor is a venue he's drawn to.

Chair Gardner expressed that he's had the opportunity to visit all of the venues, and each one has its advantages and drawbacks. Despite his previous role representing downtown Riverside on the City Council, he would advise against holding the event there. It can be cumbersome, with noticeable parking costs, and if the weather is bad, attendees could be walking quite a distance.

He also likes Desi House, though much of the event would need to be held outdoors, and with the January weather, that's a bit of a risk.

The March Air Museum is a solid option, with ample parking. The Western Garden is nice but still in the early stages of development, so he would suggest revisiting it next year rather than for this event.

Chair Gardner's recommendation is Crestmore Manor. It offers the most flexibility, and you can bring in any caterer you choose. They also work regularly with trusted caterers, but you have plenty of options. The venue has great parking, and the surroundings are beautiful, there's a pond and lovely water features. Crestmore Manor seems like the most suitable and flexible choice, and it would provide a great atmosphere for the event.

Ms. Williams asked if it should be a lunch or dinner event. Chair Gardner acknowledged that while dinner tends to be more formal and elegant, it's also likely to be more expensive, and lunch might be easier for staff to manage. Ms. Williams commented that either option is fine for staff, though given that it's SAWPA's 50th anniversary, a dinner would be a nicer choice. Commissioner Botello said that a dinner could be more accommodating, especially if it's later in the day. A luncheon might be harder for some to attend if it runs a couple of hours longer.

The Commission reviewed the venue options for SAWPA's upcoming 50th Anniversary Celebration and provided direction to staff on the preferred location of the Crestmore Manor based on the event needs, desired format (dinner), and available budget.

No formal action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.C.

7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

Recommendation: Receive for Information.

A. CASH TRANSACTIONS REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2025

Presenter: Karen Williams

B. INTER-FUND BORROWING – SEPTEMBER 2025 (CM#2025.85)

Signed by: **Presenter:** Karen Williams

Mike Gardner

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C. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS/FINANCIAL REPORTING – SEPTEMBER 2025 (CM#2025.86)

Presenter: Karen Williams

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

Signed by: **Presenter:** Karen Williams

Sara Villa

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

Presenter: Karen Williams

F. STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Karen Williams reported that at the ACWA Fall Conference there will be a reception for Senate Bill 72. She has the RSVP details and can send them to anyone interested in attending. It's an important event, especially regarding the signing of the bill, which includes key new provisions. It was requested that the information be sent to Commissioners Harrison, Bilodeau, and Hall.

Ms. Williams also noted that ACWA is hosting a Legislative Symposium on February 11th.

G. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

Karen Williams reminded the Commissioners on the Groundwater Replenishment System and the Orange County Regional PFAS Groundwater Treatment Tour and asked them to sign up if interested in attending.

The RFP for the Strategic Plan closed, and six (6) proposals were received. Although 42 firms reviewed the RFP, only six (6) submitted proposals. Ms. Williams asked if the Commission is interested in participating in the review of the proposals as well as the General Managers. It was suggested that Chair Gardner and Commissioner Botello be apart of the review. Ms. Williams noted she would also extend it to the member agency General Managers.

Ms. Williams inquired whether, due to ACWA, we should still proceed with the Commission meeting on December 2nd. The only significant item scheduled for that date is a PFAS update, which would be presented in a closed session. Chair Gardner proposed maintaining a quorum with alternates if necessary. It was also mentioned that Commissioners Bilodeau, Harrison, and Hall would be attending ACWA. Additionally, it was noted that the meetings on January 6th will be canceled.

Ms. Williams noted that she will be speaking at the California Water Environment Association P3S Conference in February. David Ruhl and she will be giving a presentation on building stewards of water through brine management.

Ms. Williams reported that the position for the Water Resources and Planning Manager has been filled. Erica Bayard comes from an organization where she's worked as a civilian for the Navy. Ms. Bayard has extensive experience working globally at various naval facilities, focusing on groundwater modeling and other technical areas. She's very technically astute and should be a great addition to SAWPA. Ms. Bayard will be starting on December 8th.

H. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/REPORT

There were no Chair comments received.

I. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There were no Commissioners' comments received.

J. 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 10:28 a.m.

Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, December 2, 2025.

Signed by:

Mike Gardner

Mike Gardner, Chair

Attest:

Signed by:

Sara Villa

Sara Villa, Clerk of the Board