



**SAWPA COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 1, 2026**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Mike Gardner, Chair, Western Municipal Water District
Gil Botello, Vice Chair, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
David Slawson, 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, Dean Unger, Erika Beyer, John Leete [via -zoom], Alison Lewis [via -zoom], Sara Villa, Natalia Gonzalez [via -zoom], Haley Gohari, Joel Osuna-Williams [via -zoom], Linda Kim [via -zoom], Shavonne Turner, Emily Fuentes, Lucas Gilbert [via -zoom], Marie Jauregui [via -zoom], Rick Whetsel [via -zoom]

**OTHERS PRESENT
[via – zoom]**

Julie Riley, Lagerlof, LLP; Arijanto Instandar, Inland Empire Utilities Agency; Eddie Lin, Inland Empire Utilities Agency; Adam Hutchinson, Orange County Water District; John Kennedy, Orange County Water District; Adekunle Ojo, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Ashley Spradlin, Western Municipal Water District; Derek Kawaii, Western Municipal Water District; Tom Lindsey, Yorba Linda Water District; Michael Miller, The Ferguson Group

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Gardner on behalf of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, California and Commissioner Bilodeau at 601 N. Ross Street, Room 327, Santa Ana, California

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: AUGUST 18, 2026

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

B. TREASURERS REPORT: JULY 2026

Recommendation: Approve as posted.

MOVED, to approve the Consent Calendar as posted.

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

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. CALIFORNIA WATER PLAN 2028 TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP WORKSHOP 1 UPDATE (CM#2026.51)

Erika Beyer provided a presentation titled *California Water Plan 2028: SAWPA's Role at the Table*, contained in the agenda packet on pages 27-40.

Ms. Beyer provided an update on the California Water Plan 2028 Technical Working Group (TWG) Workshop No. 1, held August 13–14. The presentation explained that Senate Bill 72 directs the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to modernize statewide water planning, with the California Water Plan 2028 serving as the first step. SAWPA is participating in the TWG to provide a regional watershed perspective as DWR develops its technical approaches and models, particularly regarding imported water dependencies, groundwater complexity, adjudicated basins, conjunctive use, operations, and existing regional planning frameworks.

Ms. Beyer explained that TWG consists of subject matter experts from throughout California and provides technical reviews, advice, and recommendations rather than setting policy. Workshop No. 2 is scheduled for October 8–9, 2026, when DWR is expected to consolidate feedback and receive formal recommendations from TWG. A third workshop is anticipated for July–August 2027 to review and provide feedback on DWR's selected approaches. Ms. Beyer also noted that TWG is only one component of DWR's broader public and regional engagement process, which is expected to include South Coast regional forums in late 2026 or early 2027, as well as statewide forums and other engagement opportunities.

Ms. Beyer provided an overview of the Water Evaluation and Planning Framework System (WEAP-FS) as a statewide screening and scenario-analysis tool that integrates climate, hydrology, surface water, groundwater, infrastructure, operations, and future scenarios. She emphasized that WEAP-FS is intended to augment, rather than replace existing local and specialized models, project-level feasibility and engineering analyses, operational and groundwater planning, CEQA, or permitting processes. The model is intended to identify broad regional vulnerabilities, compare adaptation strategies and portfolios, determine where additional analysis may be warranted, and support statewide and regional discussions.

Ms. Beyer highlighted the importance of SAWPA's continued participation to ensure that the unique characteristics of the Santa Ana watershed including imported water dependencies, adjudicated basins, conjunctive use, differing operational and jurisdictional boundaries, and extensive existing local planning are appropriately reflected as the statewide framework develops. SAWPA's technical priorities include maintaining appropriate regional scale and fidelity, incorporating institutional and legal context, recognizing cross-basin connections and existing regional planning, and maintaining transparency regarding assumptions, limitations, uncertainty, and intended uses of the model.

Ms. Beyer further reported that the current planning effort includes a statewide interim water supply planning target of approximately 9 million acre-feet by 2040. The initial WEAP-FS effort

will focus on five hydrologic regions, while developing a statewide database of projects and actions and beginning to evaluate water management strategies. These efforts are intended to establish the foundation for the California Water Plan 2033, which is expected to expand the analysis statewide, develop longer-term 2050 water supply targets, conduct watershed-scale analyses, evaluate regional project portfolios, and incorporate additional economic and cost analyses.

Chair Gardner asked whether Riverside and San Bernardino Counties fall within any of the five initial hydrologic regions being considered in the California Water Plan 2028 analysis.

Ms. Beyer noted that the Santa Ana Watershed is categorized within the South Coast hydrologic region, although the regional designation does not necessarily reflect local perceptions of the watershed. She explained that the modeling framework will be organized around many watersheds rather than solely the five hydrologic regions, with surface water, groundwater, and Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) boundaries being considered in the analysis. She noted that DWR was receptive to feedback from technical experts during the first workshop and appeared committed to incorporating stakeholder input as the model develops.

Ms. Beyer noted that staff will continue participating in TWG, monitor how water supply, groundwater systems, and imported water dependencies are represented, engage member agencies, and provide updates through the OWOW Steering Committee and future Commission meetings. Staff will also monitor upcoming South Coast Regional Forums and other engagement opportunities and work with member agencies to identify gaps in the Watershed Hub project inventory.

Commissioner Botello expressed appreciation for the presentation and discussed several areas for follow-up, that staff inquired during the October TWG workshop about coordination for the anticipated Tribal Water Summit, emphasizing the importance of providing tribal nations with sufficient advance notice and ensuring that outreach is led by respected tribal representatives. He also requested that staff raise concerns regarding the Santa Ana watershed being grouped within the South Coast hydrologic region and ensure that the watershed's unique conditions receive appropriate consideration and visibility. Ms. Beyer explained that while the hydrologic regions are primarily being used to organize public engagement, the technical modeling is being conducted at the watershed scale, which presents its own boundary-related concerns.

Commissioners commended DWR's approach and staff's participation, particularly the recognition that the WEAP-FS model is not intended to replace local agency or district-level technical planning and analysis. Ms. Beyer noted that DWR was receptive to constructive criticism and acknowledged that the statewide framework cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach. The Commission also discussed the importance of ensuring that member agencies and their general managers are aware of the California Water Plan 2028 effort and have opportunities to provide input. Ms. Beyer reported that planning managers have been informed and that relevant staff from member agencies are participating in various aspects of TWG. The Commission supported bringing the topic to a General Managers' meeting for further awareness and discussion.

This item is to receive and file; no action was taken on agenda item no. 6.A.

B. SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE PLAN UPDATES (CM#2026.52)

Haley Gohari provided a presentation titled *Santa Ana River Watershed Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) Updates*, contained in the agenda packet on pages 43-50.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has completed its review of the Climate Hazards Technical Memorandum, which identifies six primary climate hazards affecting the watershed: extreme heat, extreme precipitation, drought, wildfire, coastal flooding, and landslides/

liquefaction. Staff will present the finalized findings to the Commission in October. The TAC is currently reviewing the Climate Risk and Vulnerability Technical Memorandum, which evaluates how identified hazards may affect assets, operations, and communities. Staff will also begin developing the High-Level Criteria Technical Memorandum, which will establish criteria for evaluating and prioritizing projects for potential grants and funding opportunities.

Ms. Gohari explained that the technical work builds upon an annotated summary of 106 existing plans and references from agencies and sectors throughout the watershed. The summary consolidates previously identified climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities, and priorities to ensure the CARP Plan builds upon existing work. She noted that the technical analyses will help identify where climate hazards are most likely to occur and evaluate projects within the context of localized risks and vulnerabilities.

Ms. Gohari also reported that community engagement has been ongoing for approximately one year through Community-Based Organization partners and the Community Advisory Panel (CAP). The community survey has received more than 1,000 responses, and staff will present the survey findings to the Commission in a future update. The CAP will remain involved through completion and approval of the plan and may also participate as partners in future grant applications and projects. Staff will continue TAC and CAP engagement, begin preparing public agency engagement workshops, and return to the Commission in October with additional findings and updates.

This item is to receive and file; no action was taken on agenda item no. 6.B.

C. PROPOSITION 4 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES UPDATE (CM#2026.53)

Haley Gohari provided a presentation titled *Proposition 4 Updates*, contained in the agenda packet on pages 53-60.

Ms. Gohari emphasized programs that prioritize multi-benefit and multi-partner projects, regional collaboration, leveraged funding, community, and tribal engagement, disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, and partnerships with the California Conservation Corps. She reported that DWR's Watershed Resilience Program is expected to release draft Conservation Implementation Program guidelines in September, with approximately \$60 million available for capital projects that provide water conservation benefits. A separate Planning Plus funding component of approximately \$92 million is expected to support development of watershed resilience plans and implementation of priority projects identified through the planning process. Staff will continue monitoring these opportunities and provide additional information following upcoming workshops and September updates.

Ms. Gohari also provided updates on other funding programs, including technical assistance opportunities for small GSAs, Wildlife Conservation Board block grants, the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program, and the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. She noted that these programs may support climate resilience, nature-based solutions, public access, trails, wildlife habitat, agricultural land protection, water quality, forest restoration, watershed resilience, and decision-support tools. Staff will continue tracking programs for guideline releases and application opportunities and will help identify projects within the watershed that may be eligible for funding.

The Commission discussed the importance of ensuring that funding information reaches member agencies, contractors, tribal partners, and other relevant stakeholders. Ms. Gohari explained that information is distributed through planning managers' meetings, task force and workgroup distribution lists, direct outreach, and targeted communications based on the specific funding opportunity. Commissioners requested that additional contacts, including representatives of tribal partners, be incorporated into the distribution lists to ensure broad and

timely engagement, and suggested creating a dedicated section on SAWPA's website to highlight funding opportunities and related resources as the programs develop.

Ms. Gohari noted that outreach is underway with watershed partners involved in forest resilience and restoration, including the Cleveland National Forest and other regional partners. Staff will continue coordinating with these organizations and monitoring opportunities related to forest restoration, fire resilience, trails, and other watershed priorities. Additional updates on Proposition 4 funding opportunities will be provided to the Commission in October.

This item is to receive and file; no action was taken on agenda item no. 6.C.

7. **INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

Recommendation: Receive for Information.

A. **GENERAL MANAGER REPORT**

Karen Williams reported that the auditors were onsite the previous week and the audit appeared to have gone well. The final audit report is expected to be presented to the Commission in December.

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

There were no Chair's comments.

C. **COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

There were no Commissioners' comments.

D. **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 10:24 a.m.

Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Commission on Tuesday, September 15, 2026.

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