



## **SAWA MEETING MINUTES**

April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Meeting Location:  
1835 Chicago Avenue, Suite C  
Riverside, CA 92507  
9:00 A.M.

### **BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Mills called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

#### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Melody Aimar – SAWA; Kerwin Russell – RCRCD; James Law – SAWA; Jennette El Morsy – SAWA; Brian Brady – SAWA; Mandy Parkes – IERCD; Sheryl Parson – OCWD; Teri Biancardi – TEAMRCD; Brett Mills – SJBRCD;

#### **III. PUBLIC INPUT** – Oral communication from the public audience on any subject matter within SAWA's subject matter jurisdiction. There was no public input at this time.

#### **IV. CONSENT CALENDAR**

a. Approve Minutes for March 13, 2025

b. Approve Financial Statement for March 2025

Director Biancardi moved to approve the consent calendar as presented. Director Parsons seconded and the motion passed, 5-0

|        |     |           |     |         |     |
|--------|-----|-----------|-----|---------|-----|
| Parkes | Aye | Russell   | Aye | Parsons | Aye |
| Mills  | Aye | Biancardi | Aye |         |     |

#### **V. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

a. ILF Project – Brian Brady

Mr. Brady reported that SAWA is moving slowly with the Corps. Mr. Law added that he and Mr. Brady were supposed to have a meeting with the Corp at the beginning of April and the Corps cancelled and said they had pushed it back. SAWA staff emailed Sweezy and Sweezy have been contacting SAWA's project representative and still have not heard back on a new meeting date. Mr. Law spoke with Sweezy earlier and Sweezy said he might have to get back in contact with Cori Farrar to see about pushing this along to get a date on the calendar for a follow-up meeting. Mr. Law will report back once SAWA has a date for the new meeting.

b. Treasurer's Report – Mandy Parkes

Ms. Parkes reported that there is only one thing over 90 days, City of Chino Hills – Carbon Canyon project, and it is about \$27,000. Ms. Parkes added that otherwise, everything else looks great.

### **GENERAL ITEMS**

#### **VI. SAWA PROJECT REPORTS**

a. Brian Brady, Executive Director – SAWA

Mr. Brady reported that the environmental law firm of Lozeau | Drury LLP in Oakland, CA has finalized an arrangement with SAWA, whereby SAWA would be awarded court-directed mitigation funds to be applied to projects in the Santa Ana Watershed. SAWA is in receipt of two settlements: 1) Pursuant to the first settlement, SAWA will receive a \$35,000 payment from L.A. Lumbar Treating Ltd. 2) Pursuant to the second settlement, SAWA will receive a \$35,000 payment from Fontana Wood Treating, Inc. The settlement agreements contain the following identical provisions related to these payments: 1) “[the respective entity] agrees to make a payment totaling thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) to the Santa Ana Watershed Association for the sole purpose of implementing an environmentally beneficial project relating to water quality improvements in the Santa Ana River Watershed. Such grants shall not be used to support litigation or efforts designed in support of litigation.” 2) “The Santa Ana Watershed Association shall provide notice to the Parties within thirty (30) days of when the funds are dispersed, setting forth the purpose of the funds.” Mr. Brady also reported that staff have been reviewing several elements of the strategic plan metrics for discussion with the Board, including: 1) Reducing Inefficiencies; 2) Maintain/Enhance a Solid Image. Staff have been carefully following the actions of the incoming federal administration with implications for SAWA’s continued federal funding. SAWA has been recently informed by the ACOE staff that 2025 funding has been released for on-going SAWA projects. Staff are developing a long-term office and warehouse space requirements and alternatives as several leases come up for renewal.

b. Kerwin Russell – RCRC

Mr. Russell reported that RCRC is working on weed control, fire clearance on some parcels, a lot of monitoring habitat, assessments, gram, relevys, all that for reporting. The big thing for RCRC, is their 1600 has changed and the department has put in a lot of requirements for monitoring burrowing owls, bats, or crotch’s bumble bee. RCRC have a couple of sites that have the bee on the property, staff aren’t doing anything there that impacts the bee, staff are mainly monitoring to see its’ presence or absence. It’s been a little more time doing field work, but it hasn’t been a big issue for staff.

c. Sheryl Parsons – OCWD

Ms. Parsons reported that OCWD are in the middle of vireo season. Ms. Parsons added that vireo showed up late this season, so the numbers are down. OCWD’s focus is on getting vireo done for this year.

d. Teri Biancardi – Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD

Ms. Biancardi reported that Jeff Brandt has really been pushing his cannabis grant. Ms. Biancardi is working with Mr. Law on potential work for some restoration on RCA land. RCA is also into working on that project. TEAMRCD have also been getting a lot of interest in their Community Wildfire Resilience working group. TEAMRCD are getting people from Fire Safety Counsels, a lot of fire professionals, and some agency people. TEAMRCD are having a meeting next Tuesday. Ms. Biancardi added that she would love to figure out how to fund a position of a home hardening expert that RCD could use for the wider community.

e. Mandy Parkes – Inland Empire RCD

Ms. Parkes reported that IERCD are close to finishing their work on the master plan at Louis Robidoux Parkland and Pecan Grove. It has been a long process and will hopefully be done soon. IERCD brought in some big partners and people that are able to help with a side-by-water reestablishment. On Saturday, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, IERCD have their second annual Spring Fling even from 12pm – 4pm.

f. Brett Mills – San Jacinto Basin RCD

Mr. Mills reported that SJBRCD are dealing with weeding and conservations. Mr. Mills has been in contact with Mr. Law about a few conservation parcels that SJBRCD will want SAWA to work on. Mr. Mills added that he is also working with Ms. Biancardi on a couple of grant opportunities and the cannabis grant as well.

g. Jennette El Morsy, Administrative Services Manager – SAWA

Ms. El Morsy reported on A/R for March Invoices totaling \$368,354.69. A-13 warehouse flood insurance claim closed. Acquired a new copier for MSHCP office. Liability Insurance Renewal in progress. End of the year financials. USFWS final financials reports. Ongoing IT updates. Working purging files according to SAWA Document Retention Policy. Hired 8 seasonal part-time BHCO field assistants. Recruitment for Restoration Technicians. WHMS Defensive Driver Training. WHMS & MSHCP biologist CPR & First Aid Life Saving Certified Training.

h. James Law, Habitat Restoration Services Manager – SAWA

Mr. Law reported on ILF placement. ACOE postponed the meeting, waiting to hear when the next meeting is. New proposals – Riv. Flood Outfalls. Mr. Law also updated on other work within individual member agencies' jurisdictions:

- Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD: The HRS department conducted treatments to: TEAM RCD – Riv. Flood Projects and homeless monitoring.
- Riverside-Corona RCD: The HRS Department conducted treatments at the following: Cactus Basins, SBVMWD – Anza Extension and planting at SBVMWD – Waterman Cactus Basins.
- Inland Empire RCD: SAWA's HRS Department conducted treatments at: SBVMWD Facilities.
- San Jacinto Basin RCD: The HRS Department conducted treatments at: No treatments have been conducted since the last report.
- Orange County Water District: The HRS Department conducted treatments at: OCWD – Prado – Fall 24 and IECF – Prado – Fall 24.

i. Melody Aimar, Biological Programs Manager – SAWA

Ms. Aimar reported on MSHCP Dept. Monthly WRC MSHCP Management and Monitoring Coordination Meeting. Presentation(s): 4/10 - Presentation: "*Conservation in the Anthropocene: Using genetic and population modeling to understand the past and manage for recovery of the Stephens' kangaroo rat.*" by Debra M. Shier, Ph.D. (Brown Endowed Associate Director of Recovery Ecology, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance). Mr. Campanella managing remote workflow. Monthly Leads meeting via Zoom for project updates. Ms. Aimar attended the monthly RCA Managers Meeting. Leads are training for the transition to ArcGIS Pro. Staff working on public outreach supplies in preparation to have a table at Nature Fest at MSR. Avian Lead attended several BUOW coordination meetings with CDFW. Rare Plant Training at UCR Botanic Garden and multiple field sites. Mammal Lead, coordinating with the USFWS/USGS/SBVMWD on San Bernardino K-Rat trapping 2025-2026. SBKR habitat monitoring in progress. Staff attended CPR/First Aid class on 3/26. Ms. Aimar also updated on other MSHCP work including:

- Rare Plant: 2024 Report in progress. 2025 survey prep. 2025 Rainbow Manzanita surveys in progress.
- California Gnatcatcher (Nesting): 2024 Report in progress.
- Grasshopper Sparrow: 2024 report in progress.
- Northern Harrier: 2025 Surveys – in progress.
- Mammals: SR 60 Undercrossing camera trap – in progress. Anza Knowls Guzzler camera trap – in progress. 2024 Carnivore report in progress. SBKR – Survey prep coordinated with USFWS regional surveys.
- Clinton Keith Overcrossing: Final report – in progress.

- Herps/Fish: 2024 Spadefoot Toad surveys – Report in progress. 2024 Arroyo Toad surveys – Report in progress. 2024 Pond Turtle Trapping – Report in progress. 2025 Artificial Cover Surveys – in progress. 2025 Drift Fence Camera Surveys – in progress.
- Quino Checkerspot Butterfly: 2024 Report in progress. 2025 surveys – in progress (1st Quino larvae detected 2/21 and 1st adult detected in 3/25 at MSR).
- Delhi Sands Flower-loving Fly: 2024 Report in progress.
- Vernal Pools: 2024 Report in progress. 2025 Surveys – in progress (Spadefoot egg masses/tadpoles detected on 2/21 in Murrieta and near Lake Mathews) – most pools drying up.
- Data/GIS Analysis: 2024 Data QC – done. GIS analyst coordinating with IT about server and email retrieval.

Ms. Aimar reported on WHMS Dept. LBVI - Arrivals are very late, and the numbers are extremely low so far. SBVMWD BOD has decided that they no longer want to fund Vireo work. We had \$300K budgeted for this work in 2025. BHCO - All habitat traps are open, dairy traps remain open. SBVMWD agreed to use 2024 contract surplus for SAR trapping in 2025. New route in Upper SAR funded through SBV Water Conservation District, shared funds with IERCD and SBVMWD. SAWA was awarded OCWD – BHCO contract for 3 years in Prado. March-Meridian (RLC) – Traps open. Cielo Vista – Trap open. Staff attended CPR/First Aid class on 5/26. Biologist III, Jess Burton, gave notice after almost 10 years with SAWA – last day is May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Mr. Aimar attended SAWA's Managers Meeting. Ms. Aimar updated 2025 work plan to account for funding loss and smaller crew. Bonnnie Johnson has been contracted to help meet Vireo monitoring obligations. Ms. Aimar was invited to join the LBVI Recovery Framework Team. Members include USFWS, USGS, BLM, CDFW, American Bird Conservancy. Ms. Aimar gave presentation to the LBVI Recovery Framework Team on 4/22 titled "*SAWA's Least Bell's Vireo Monitoring and Management Program; 25 years of success.*"

Ms. Aimar also updated on other work within individual member agencies' jurisdictions:

- Inland Empire RCD: Ms. Aimar is in collaboration with IERCD on future projects.
- Orange County Water District: Prado BHCO trapping.
- Riverside-Corona RCD: No work this month.
- San Jacinto Basin RCD: No work this month
- Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD: No work this month.

## **VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

There were no Board Member comments at this time.

## **VIII. NEXT MEETING** – May 22, 2025 will be held at the SAWA Headquarters, 1835 Chicago Avenue, Suite C, Riverside, CA 92507 and remotely via Zoom.

## **IX. ADJOURN** – The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 A.M.

**Notice: All open session agenda materials will be available for inspection by members of the public at the SAWA office located at 1835 Chicago Avenue, Suite C, Riverside, CA 92507. Please contact Maria Arellano at (951) 780-1012 x106 for this information (Government Code Section 54957.5). In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Government Code Section 54954.2, if special assistance is needed to participate in a Board meeting, please contact the Administrative Services Manager at (951) 780-1012 x101. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to meeting time will assist staff in assuring that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility at the meeting.**

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