



**SAWA MEETING MINUTES**

September 25<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 9:02 A.M.

**II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Melody Aimar – SAWA; Brian Brady – SAWA; Jennette El Morsy – SAWA; Kerwin Russell – RCRC; Allyson Beckman – SAWA; Kimberly Kuznicki – SAWA; Jose Mora – IERCD; James Law – SAWA; David McMichael – OCWD; Teri Biancardi – TEAMRCD; Mandy Parkes – IERCD; 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 July 24, 2025
- b. Approve Financial Statement for July 2025
- c. Approve Financial Statement for August 2025

Director Parkes moved to approve the consent calendar as presented. Director Russell seconded, and the motion passed, 4-0-1

Parkes	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Biancardi	<i>Abstained</i>		

**V. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

a. ILF Project – Brian Brady

Mr. Brady handed off the reporting of the ILF Project update to Mr. Law reported that Laurie, from Dudek, had emailed the Corps asking for an update and never received a response from the Corps. Dudek will send out another email to reach out to the Corps for an update. Mr. Law believes everything is moving forward and is hopeful that everything will be wrapped up by the end of the year. Mr. Brady added that Dudek originally had a contract for about \$30,000 and has extended it for about another \$20,000, which should wrap it up.

b. Treasurer’s Report – Mandy Parkes

Ms. Parkes reported that there is about \$318,000 in accounts receivable. The only thing over 90 days is one big bill from the Corps Mainstem Project, and there is also money owed by the Inland Empire Community Foundation from the RFFC project. Ms. El Morsy added that the IECF check should be coming in the mail in the upcoming week, and that SAWA was awarded funding from the Corps. Ms. El Morsy pulled a little money out, but the Corps shut down for the end of the fiscal year, and the rest of those invoices will be caught up on the first.

**VI. ACTION ITEMS**

a. Discussion and Possible Approval of Lands Restoration and Maintenance Consulting Services Agreement Extension with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD)

Mr. Brady reported that last year, at the request of SBVMWD staff, SAWA’s Habitat Restoration Services Department proposed on completing management actions required to provide restoration and maintain the integrity of habitats, comply with environmental permit requirements, reduce the threat of spreading wildfire, and remain compliant with California Fire Code (including property treatment requirements dictated in abatement notices issued to San Bernardino Valley from various Cities and the County of San Bernardino). The tasks identified in the scope of work include the following categories: 1) Habitat restoration actions associated with the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Preserve System (Tributary Restoration Projects, and San Bernardino kangaroo rat mitigation lands). 2) Land management actions on properties owned by San Bernardino Valley MWD. 3) Habitat restoration actions on lands San Bernardino Valley are managing on behalf of West Valley Water District resulting from environmental permits for water projects (Cactus Basins #2 and Sterling Natural Resource Center, respectively). SAWA requests the Board to authorize the SAWA Executive Director, Brian Brady, to execute a Consulting Services Agreement Extension with the SBVMWD to conduct habitat restoration, lands management, and maintenance of portions of the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan Preserve System, properties owned by SBVMWD, and additional lands being managed by SBVMWD on behalf of other agencies. The total amount for this proposed work is not to exceed \$1.4 million. Director Parkes moved to approve the Lands Restoration and Maintenance Consulting Services Agreement Extension with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD). Director Biancardi seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Parkes	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Biancardi	Aye		

b. Discussion and Possible Approval of IRS Required Change in Retirement Plan

Mr. Brady reported that the IRS regulations have recently been updated requiring that if SAWA offers an employer contribution to our employees, it must begin at the start of the employment period. SAWA can no longer wait for the current 6-month probationary period. SAWA has had to go back and retroactively adjust with recent hires. On a related matter, Staff also believe that having the vacation accrual begin after the 6-month probation period also needs to be updated in line with the state sick accrual that begins after 90 days of employment. The Executive Director, Brian Brady, recommends that the Board ratify staff’s HR procedural changes. Director Biancardi moved to approve the IRS required changes in Retirement plan and ratify SAWA staff’s HR procedural changes. Director Russell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Parkes	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Biancardi	Aye		

c. Election of SAWA Corporate Officers

Section 305 of SAWA By-laws calls for the election of SAWA Board Officers at the annual meeting to be held on the fourth Thursday in September. Section 400 identifies the Officers of the Corporation as the Chairperson, the vice Chairperson, the Secretary, and the Treasurer. The SAWA Board agreed to keep the current slate of Corporate Officers en banc. Mr. Brady reported that the current slate of Corporate Directors is as follows: Director Mills remains Chairperson, Director Russell remains Vice-Chairperson, Director Parsons remains Secretary, Director Parkes remains Treasurer, and Director Biancardi as Director. Director Russell moved

to approve the current slate of Corporate Officers as presented. Director Alternate McMichael seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0

Parkes	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Biancardi	Aye		

d. Designation of SAWA Board Committees and Assignment of Committee Members  
 Section 600 of SAWA By-laws call for the designation of Board advisory committees by the Board of Directors. The following are the committees approved by the Board: Administration (policies and procedures, human resources, and legal); Audit and Finance (accounting, budget, purchasing, and investment). Section 601 of the By-laws stipulates that the committees shall continue as such until the annual meeting of the Board and until his or her successor is appointed. The SAWA Board agreed to keep the current slate of Board Committees and assignments the same. Mr. Brady reported that the current slate of Committee Members is as follows: Director Mills and Director Russell on the Administration Committee; Director Parkes and Director Biancardi on the Audit & Finance Committee. Director Parkes moved to approve the current slate of Board Committees and Assignment of Committee Members as presented. Director Russell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Parkes	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Biancardi	Aye		

**GENERAL ITEMS**

**VII. SAWA PROJECT REPORTS**

a. Brian Brady, Executive Director – SAWA

Mr. Brady reported that SAWA staff were issued the final paperwork mid-June to sign from the ACOE staff to release the 2025 funding for on-going SAWA projects. After 90 days of delays within the federal government review process, SAWA was notified last week (9/17) that the grant funds had been released. Staff are developing long-term office and warehouse space requirements and alternatives as several leases come up for renewal. Lee & Associates has provided additional site options for SAWA’s review. Staff have completed work with SAWA’s auditors to finalize the 2024 calendar year financial statements. The audit results will be submitted for Board review and approval in October. SAWA is actively recruiting for the MSHCP Program Administrator Position.

b. Kerwin Russell – RCRC

Mr. Russell reported that weeding is all done, RCRC has maintenance going on right now. RCRC is setting up new Goldspotted Oak Borer and Shothole Borer monitoring stations. RCRC found Goldspotted Oak Borer in Temescal, and there are Shothole Borer in some of RCRC property.

c. Sheryl Parsons – OCWD

Absent; Alternate Mr. McMichael reported that Mr. Law’s crew has been doing a lot of Arundo work for OCWD. OCWD is going to continue cowbird trapping. OCWD are vegetation mapping down in the Prado Basin. OCWD do it every three years to see if there are any changes and are thinking about starting to do it every year.

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

Ms. Biancardi reported that TEAMRCD have a couple of big grants that they have applied to in partnership with the Nature Conservancy to the Wildlife Conservation Board for a grant to advance the I-15 Rainbow Canyon Wildlife Crossing to 65% engineered plans and do the

environmental work that is associated with that as well. TEAMRCD also have a cannabis grant application they have submitted.

e. Mandy Parkes – Inland Empire RCD

Ms. Parkes reported that IERCD amended their arundo removal agreement with SAWPA and have been working with Mr. Law for some of the removal that SAWA is going to do. Ms. Parkes added that IERCD has bio budget and work for the WHMS department.

f. Brett Mills – San Jacinto Basin RCD

Mr. Mills reported that SJBRCD is going through a lot of conservation parcels work that is going to need to be done with SAWA. SJBRCD will try to assist with the arroyos over in the Trautwein/Alessandro area that have homeless encampments and all kinds of palms.

g. Jennette El Morsy, Administrative Services Manager – SAWA

Ms. El Morsy reported on A/R July invoice totaling \$365,428.35 and A/R August invoices totaling \$396,255.88. Successful SAWA Team Building event - escape room. 2024 Financial Audit - Field time complete, wrapping up. State Fund Workers' Comp Audit - Complete, no issues. Renewed City of Riverside & City of Chino Hills Business Licenses. Purchased two new trucks for the RCA MSHCP project and transferred old trucks to the HRS department. USFWS Final Financial Reports - approved. The HRS Department is moving to SBVMWD property to include office and yard space. Negotiating terms for Admin/MSHCP office and warehouse leases. Rewarded USFWS Grant for CA Least Bell's Vireo Survey & Cowbird Trapping. Ms. Alicia Barajas-Reninger transferred to MSHCP department to replace Lucas Haralson who resigned. In the process of hiring a new MSHCP Administrator. Transitioning WHMS Bio staff to permanent remote status as we downsize office space to accommodate HRS move and staff reduction for cost saving. Researching app for field staff check in/out process. Restocking field/first aid supplies as needed.

h. James Law, Habitat Restoration Services Manager – SAWA

Mr. Law reported on new job proposals and administrative tasks including ILF placement, waiting on response from ACOE, warehouse relocation, removal season, OCWD removal and Riv. Flood RFQ. Mr. Law also updated on other work within individual member agencies' jurisdiction:

- Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD: No treatments were conducted for TEAM RCD since the last board meeting.
- Riverside-Corona RCD: The HRS department conducted treatments at: Anza Creek, Anza Creek Extension, Lower Hole Creek and Old Ranch.
- Inland Empire RCD: No treatments were conducted for IERCD since the last board meeting.
- San Jacinto Basin RCD: No treatments were conducted for SJBRCD since the last board meeting.
- Orange County Water District: No treatments were conducted for OCWD since the last board meeting.

i. Melody Aimar, Biological Programs Manager – SAWA

Ms. Aimar reported on MSHCP Dept. Monthly WRC MSHCP Management and Monitoring Coordination Meeting Presentations: 8/14 Presentation: "*Creating suitable wetland habitat for shorebirds and wildfire damage in lower-priced properties.*" by Dr. Erin Conlisk (UCR Center for Conservation Biology Institute). 9/11 Presentation: "*Seasonal Alkali Wetlands of Western Riverside County.*" by Fred Roberts, Botanical Consultant and lead author of *Vascular Plants of Western Riverside County and the Santa Ana Mountains regions* (2013). Mr. Campanella managing workflow. Monthly reports submitted. Monthly Leads meeting via Zoom for project updates. Ms. Aimar attended monthly RCA Managers Meetings. New Regional Conservation

Deputy Director, Harry Sandoval, introduced. Zack West, Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager, left RCA on 9/5. Ms. Aimar preparing Administrator duties/deadlines and instructions. Ms. Aimar reviewed resumes and interviewed Administrator candidates with Admin. 2024 CAGN report submitted to RCA for review. Avian Lead attended several BUOW coordination meetings with CDFW. Mammal Lead, coordinating with the USFWS/USGS/SBVMWD on SBKR habitat monitoring and SBKR trapping (in progress) 2025-2026. Leads meeting on 7/31 and 8/28. Biologist preparing educational presentation for SRP volunteers. Biologist resigned, was replaced with WHMS biologist assistant that was laid off. Biologists participated in SAR Native Fish Surveys with SBVMWD and USGS. Biologist Supervisor, Data Manager, Mammal Lead attended USGS AI photo processing training. Staff attended SAWA team-building event on 8/12. Herp Lead joined USGS for Pond Turtle trapping in Shady Canyon on 8/19. Ms. Aimar also updated on other MSHCP work including:

- Rare Plants: 2024 Report – submitted to RCA for review. 2025 Rare Plant surveys in progress. 2025 Engleman Oak surveys – in progress.
- California Gnatcatcher (Nesting): 2024 Report – submitted to RCA for review.
- Grasshopper Sparrow: 2024 Report – submitted to RCA for review.
- Northern Harrier: 2025 Surveys – completed – no nesting found.
- Lincoln Sparrow: 2025 Surveys – completed – none found.
- BUOW: 2024 Summary Reports – submitted to RCA for review. 2025 Camera trap monitoring – in progress.
- Mammals: SR 60 Undercrossing camera trap – in progress. Anza Knowls Guzzler camera trap – in progress. 2024 Carnivore summary report – submitted to RCA for review. SBKR USFWS regional surveys – trapping in progress.
- Clinton Keith Overcrossing: Final Report – submitted to RCA for review.
- Herps/Fish: 2024 Summary Reports – submitted to RCA for review. 2025 Artificial Cover surveys – completed. 2025 Drift Fence Camera surveys – in progress. 2025 Mountain Snake Surveys – in progress.
- Quino Checkerspot Butterfly: 2024 Report – submitted to RCA for review. 2025 Surveys – flight season over.
- Delhi Sands Flower-loving Fly: 2025 Surveys – completed.
- Vernal Pools: 2025 Surveys – Most pools dried up (no Covered Fairy Shrimp).
- Data/GIS Analysis: 2024 Data QC – distributed to RCA and various stakeholders. GIS Analyst coordinating with IT about server and email retrieval.

Ms. Aimar reported on WHMS Dept. LBVI: All LBVI related work stopped on 7/31 due to stalled funding. Funding received 9/17. BHCO: All USFWS/Corps-related BHCO work stopped on 7/31 due to stalled funding. All habitat traps removed, repaired and supplies cleaned by 7/31. No winter trapping until funds are received. SBVMWD BHCO for SAR – data QC'd. Upper SAR (new route) funded through SBV Water Conservation District, shared funds with IERCD and SBVMWD – data QC'd. OCWD – BHCO report – in progress. March-Meridian (RLC) BHCO report – completed. Cielo Vista BHCO report – in progress. Biologist assistant laid off in August following trap retrieval from field. Ms. Aimar attended LBVI Recovery Team meeting on 8/26 and was working on new 2026 projects with Lennar and FHBP. Ms. Aimar is preparing list of managerial duties with instructions and conducting Grant and RFP portal research for potential funding. Biologist assisting with Annual Mitigation Report. Biologist conducting biomonitoring for HRS projects. Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) – Santiago Creek. Report – in progress. Staff attended SAWA team-building event on 8/12. Biologists scanning historical data and recycling or shredding hard copies as appropriate. Biologists downsizing supplies and files in office. Ms. Aimar also updated on other work within individual member agencies' jurisdictions including:

- Inland Empire RCD: Ms. Aimar in collaboration with IERCD on future projects – funds for 2nd half of 2025.
- Orange County Water District: BHCO report in progress.

- Riverside-Corona RCD: No work this month.
- San Jacinto Basin RCD: No work this month.
- Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD: No work this month.

**VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

The Board thanked Ms. Aimar for all her work with SAWA.

**IX. NEXT MEETING** – October 23, 2025 will be held at the SAWA Headquarters, 1835 Chicago Avenue, Suite C, Riverside, CA 92507 and remotely via Zoom.

**X. ADJOURN** – The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 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.**

Please post 72 hours before meeting