



SAWA MEETING MINUTES

August 27th, 2026
Meeting Location:
5029 La Mart Drive, Suite E
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

Matt Bearden – OCWD; Teri Biancardi – TEAMRCD; David McMichael – OCWD; José Mora – IERCD; Brett Mills – SJBRCD; Kerwin Russell – RCRCD; Jennette El Morsy – SAWA; Brian Brady – SAWA; Kimberly Kuznicki – SAWA;

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. CLOSED SESSION

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (Gov. Code section 54957(b)(1).)

Title: Executive Director

Chairperson Mills called the meeting into closed session at 9:04 A.M. Chairperson Mills reported the end of closed session, and back into the open session portion of the meeting at 9:28 A.M. Chairperson Mills reported that there was no reportable action from the Board at this time.

Allyson Beckman – SAWA; Max Barrett – SAWA; Tesa Madsen-Hepp – SAWA; joined the meeting at this time.

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approve Minutes for July 23, 2026

b. Approve Financial Statements for July 2026

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

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

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. ILF Project – Brian Brady

Mr. Brady reported that SAWA had a second meeting with the County of Riverside Parks regarding the proposal that SAWA will be sending in. During that time, Mr. Brady took the opportunity to talk to Dustin McLain. From the County of Riverside Parks perspective, they are pretty well set relative to accepting the remaining ILF Funds. The County of Riverside Parks briefed their Board of Supervisors individually and their Board are good with the transfer of funds and the designation of the mitigation bank that the County of Riverside Parks is

controlling. The County of Riverside Parks are having additional discussions with SAWPA (Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority). SAWPA currently has a mitigation bank with the County of Riverside Parks. SAWA has scheduled a Zoom update with Dudek, the Corps, and Dustin's organization, to try to put together a definitive schedule so that Mr. Brady can bring that back to SAWA's Board and go through the various documents that will require the Board's approval.

b. Treasurer's Report – Mandy Parkes

Chairperson Mills stated that there wasn't anything to report on at this time.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

a. Discussion and Possible Approval of the Fifth Amendment to Employment Agreement between Executive Director Brady and the Santa Ana Watershed Association

Director Russell moved to approve the Fifth Amendment to Employment Agreement between the Executive Director Brady and the Santa Ana Watershed Association. Director Alternate Mora seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0

Director Biancardi stated that there was a lot of great discussion about the performance metrics and thinks it's important. Ms. Biancardi believes that it would be helpful for the Board to have a score card that tracks those performance metrics, so that Mr. Brady can check off each item is accomplished. Ms. Biancardi added that it would help the Board track how those metrics are coming down the line. Ms. Biancardi asked Mr. Brady if that was something he could set up. Mr. Brady added that it was part of the plan.

Alternate Mora	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Alternate Biancardi	Aye		

b. Discussion and Possible Approval of Contract with Creekside Homeowners Association for the Provision of Vegetation Management Services

Mr. Brady reported that this contract was brought to the Board because any new contract over \$50,000 that staff have not discussed, either in the development of the annual budget or in the mid-year review, needs to be approved by the Board. This contract with the Creekside HOA is for five acres of arroyo restoration eradication of invasives, in the amount of \$108,000. SAWA staff request the Board approval, and to have Mr. Brady sign off on this contract. Chairperson Mills asked Mr. Barrett for clarification on the "not to exceed" order for phase one, and how many phases SAWA expected there to be. Mr. Barrett stated that it would depend on how much the HOA wants to portion it out. Mr. Barrett added that after this first pilot goes, SAWA will scope out the rest of the project and give Creekside HOA portions to work with them in terms of how much they want to spend per year to continue working on this project. Mr. Barrett also added that there will be follow-up phases, and that this is an initial phase because the scope is complicated with the sheer number of palms.

Director Biancardi moved to approve the contract with Creekside Homeowners Association for the Provision of Vegetation Management Services. Director Russell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0

Alternate Mora	Aye	Russell	Aye	Alternate McMichael	Aye
Mills	Aye	Alternate Biancardi	Aye		

GENERAL ITEMS

VIII. SAWA PROJECT REPORTS

a. Brian Brady, Executive Director – SAWA

Mr. Brady reported that the Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District (RivCoParks) has issued an RFP for Ecological Restoration Services within Hidden Valley and

adjacent open space along the main stem of the Santa Ana River. The \$975,000, five-year contract encompasses arundo eradication (with biological monitoring), hydrological modeling and restoration of native habitat. SAWA is partnering with GEI Consultants (as SAWA's sub-contractor) for the engineering-related tasks. TEAM RCD has successfully submitted the IERC Reclamation Training Initiative Application, along with SAWA as a subcontractor. TEAM RCD's District Manager reports that IERC is in the top tier of the 11 competing applications. Recruitment search interviews for Habitat Restoration Services Manager candidates have concluded and reference checks are in progress. ACOE contract funding for cowbird management and vireo monitoring covering the remainder of 2026 was approved early this month, allowing work to continue. The audit of SAWA's 2025 financials is complete and will be brought to the Board for approval in September after discussion at the finance and audit committee.

b. Kerwin Russell – RCRC

Mr. Russell reported on fish survey work. RCRC is having their staff take an additional ten-minute break every hour while working in the heat.

c. David McMichael – OCWD

Mr. McMichael reported that OCWD is coming to an end for their field season and are beginning reports. OCWD did a series of bumblebee surveys the last couple of weeks and are wrapping that up. OCWD are starting to clean out the wetlands. OCWD still have some birds still nesting, so they must keep the ponds wet. OCWD has 735 vireo territories, which is their second highest, 175 nests, and 436 fledglings. Director Bearden will be attending the next meeting and giving the update for OCWD.

d. Arturo Garcia – Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD

Ms. Biancardi reported on behalf of Mr. Garcia that TEAMRCD applied for the Inland Integral Ecology Research Center Grant. IERC (Integral Ecological Research Center) had additional questions about TEAMRCD's application. Ms. Biancardi felt IERC were most concerned about whether, if they were to grant TEAMRCD this grant, it would also cover the Santa Ana Watershed. IERC are very familiar with the Santa Ana Watershed area, and there is a lot of destruction that has happened in the watershed. TEAMRCD confirmed that if they received the grant, they would be training the crew that does the clean-up in the Santa Ana Watershed. With this, Ms. Biancardi is hopeful that TEAMRCD will receive the grant. Ms. Biancardi added, regarding Flood Control and vegetation management, TEAMRCD's master contract lapsed. Riverside Flood reached out to Ms. Biancardi and reported that the contract is with counsel and are anticipating renewing that body of work soon. With regards to the wildlife crossing, TEAMRCD hired Jacob's Consulting and are having monthly meetings with Cal-Trans.

e. Mandy Parkes – Inland Empire RCD

Mr. Mora reported on behalf of Ms. Parkes that IERC was able to secure funding from the National Forest Foundation to continue doing work with garlic mustard by the Lake Arrowhead area. IERC also received funding to do Spanish broom in the Mill Creek area. IERC will continue to work out there and continue to battle that garlic mustard.

f. Brett Mills – San Jacinto Basin RCD

Mr. Mills reported that he had an interview with the auditors for the SAWA audit. SJBRCD have been working on Native Fish surveys and are still working on gathering up mitigation projects and sites that SJBRCD will need SAWA to work on.

g. Jennette El Morsy, Administrative Services Manager – SAWA

Ms. El Morsy reported on A/R July invoice total \$201,320.64. Purchasing new truck - Ford Ranger for MSHCP. Received OCOE/USFWS funding. Financial audit completed, waiting for RCA receivables confirmation before issuing final report. Renewed System for Awarded Management (SAM) entity registration for USFWS grant. HRS Department - needs to find a new warehouse that has yard space. Renewed MSHCP domain registration. Renewed City of Riverside Business License. Biologist Lisa Schauer is still out on workers' comp. Third round of interviews for HRS Project Manager. State Fund Safety & Risk Assessment field evaluation. Heat Awareness in the field. Restocking field/first aid supplies as needed.

h. Max Barrett, Field Operations Manager – SAWA

Mr. Barrett reported on new job proposals and administrative tasks including Creekside HOA: \$108k start in September. TEAMRCD – Greer Ranch: \$64k, start in September. SCE: 1 acre mitigation, potential additional acreage. Oakmont II HOA: Proposal submitted, awaiting updates. Riverside County Parks RFP: \$975k for 5 yr. Riverside Flood Control – On Call Services/ SARM 9: NTE \$600k for 5 yr, SAR mow polygons, awaiting updates for both. Mr. Barrett also updated on other work within individual member agencies' jurisdictions:

- Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD: The HRS department conducted no treatments.
- Riverside-Corona RCD: The HRS Department conducted treatments at the following: SAR Corridor, Old Ranch Creek, Lower Hole Creek, Hidden Valley Creek, Waterman Riparian, Waterman Alluvial.
- Inland Empire RCD: The HRS Department conducted treatments at: SAR Corridor.
- San Jacinto Basin RCD: The HRS Department conducted no treatments.
- Orange County Water District: The HRS Department conducted treatments at: SAR Upstream River Rd. Phase I CDFW.

i. Allyson Beckman, Wildlife Habitat Management Services Manager – SAWA

Ms. Beckman reported on LBVI/BHCO projects including partial USFWS/USACE funding for FY 2026 received. Ms. Beckman will contact appropriate individuals regarding acquisition of remainder of FY 2026 funds. Ms. Beckman and biologist Ms. Falatek conducted LBVI surveys. BHCO trapping – traps removed from field by 8/12/2026. Proofing summer BHCO data. HRS Projects: Completed bioassessment datasheets/upload photopoints. Admin: Meet and communicate with Brian/Jennette/Max regarding upcoming proposal submissions. Ms. Beckman also updated that there was no other work within individual member agencies' jurisdictions.

j. Tesa Madsen-Hepp, MSHCP Biological Monitoring Program Administrator – SAWA

Ms. Madsen-Hepp reported on the monthly WRC MSHCP Management and Monitoring Coordination Meeting Presentation: 8/13 Presentation: "*Native Bumble Bee Detection Strategies: Bombus crotchii and beyond*" by Melissa Arellano, PhD student, Department of Entomology, University of California, Riverside. Updating protocols for 2026, replacing soil moisture sensors and weather station. Ms. Madsen-Hepp attended monthly RCA Managers meeting. All 2025 RCA Survey Reports have been finalized. Ms. Madsen-Hepp is working with RCA to begin surveying for Crotch's Bumblebee. CDFW is completing on MOU for the BMP to begin mitigation surveys. Ms. Madsen-Hepp is working on a revised vegetation map for the RCA using a reproducible remote sensing pipeline in Google Earth Engine. Ms. Madsen-Hepp and RCA Management and Monitoring Manager are developing 27-28 Work Plan, and revising the current Work Plan to include additional Engelmann Oak recruitment plots this fall. Ms. Madsen-Hepp and Ms. Drennen are working on database migration to Microsoft Azure SQL. Mr. Campanella is coordinating with Ms. Madsen-Hepp to serve as interim Manager while she is on maternity leave. Ms. Madsen-Hepp also updated on other MSHCP work including:

- Currently conducting Aguanga Kangaroo Rat, Arroyo Toad, artificial cover, Delhi Sands flower-loving fly and SW Pond Turtle Surveys.
- Avian Surveys Completed for 2026, including: BUOW: No reproduction observed at the San Jacinto WA site or at the Skunk Hollow site this year. There were owls observed on Flood Control property in Perris, at least one owl was present. LOSH: Detected, and successfully reproduced, in four of eight Core Areas. WTKI: Detected in two of ten Core Areas. A suspected successful nest site, along with juvenile birds, was detected within the San Jacinto WA Core Area. Riparian Birds: No SWFL or YBCU detected. LBVI detected in seven of eight Core Areas, and successful reproduction documented in five of eight Core Areas.
- Rare Plants: 2025 Rare Plant Report – finalized. 2025 Engleman Oak Report – finalized. 2026 Rare Plant surveys – in progress.
- Birds: 2025 Lincoln’s Sparrow report – finalized. 2025 Northern Harrier Report – finalized. 2026 White-tailed Kite surveys – complete. 2026 Loggerhead Shrike surveys – complete. 2026 Riparian Birds surveys – complete.
- Mammals: 2025-26 SR 60 Undercrossing camera trap – in progress. 2025-26 Anza Knowls Guzzler camera trap – in progress. 2025 Carnivore summary report – finalized. 2025 SBKR Report – finalized. 2026 AKR habitat and trapping surveys – in progress.
- Clinton Keith Overcrossing – 2024 Final Report – finalized.
- Herps/Fish: 2025 Arroyo Toad Report – finalized. 2025 Western Spadefoot Report – due 2027. 2025 Artificial Cover Report – finalized. 2025 Drift Fence Camera Trap Report – finalized. 2026 Drift Fence Camera surveys – in progress. 2026 Artificial Cover surveys – in progress. 2026 Arroyo Toad surveys – in progress. 2026 Southwestern Pond Turtle surveys.
- Quino Checkerspot Butterfly: 2025 QCB Report – finalized. 2026 QCB surveys – completed.
- Delhi Sands Flower-loving Fly: 2025 DSF surveys – in progress.
- Vernal Pools: 2025 VP Report – finalized. 2026 VP Surveys – completed.
- Data/GIS Analysis: 2025 Datasets – 16 certified.

IX. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairperson Mills welcomed Director Bearden to the SAWA Board and looks forward to working with him in the future.

X. NEXT MEETING – September 24, 2026 will be held at the SAWA Headquarters, 5029 La Mart Drive, Suite E, Riverside, CA 92507 and remotely via Zoom.

XI. ADJOURN – The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 A.M.

Notice: All open session agenda materials will be available for inspection by members of the public at the SAWA office located at 5029 La Mart Drive, Suite E, 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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