

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance
January 25, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.**

Meeting Attendees

Agency	Representative	
City of Banning	Art Vela Rick Minjares	Present
City of Beaumont	Jessica Voight Thaxton Van Belle	Present
Banning Heights Mutual Water Company		Absent
Beaumont Basin Watermaster	Art Vela Dan Jagers	Present
Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District	Daniel Slawson Dan Jagers Robert Rasha	Present
Cabazon Water District	Taffy Brock	Present
City of Calimesa		Absent
High Valleys Water District	Stan Houghton Sam Hughes	Present
Mission Springs Water District	Amber Duff	Present
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	John Covington	Present
Riverside County EDA / Flood Control	Jason Uhley (5:42 p.m.) Julianna Gonzalez (5:42 p.m.)	Present
San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency	Robert Ybarra Lance Eckhart Larry Smith Ron Duncan Kevin Walton	Present
South Mesa Water Company		Absent
Yucaipa Valley Water District		Absent

1. Call to Order - Roll Call

Daniel Slawson called to order the regular meeting of the San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance at 5:00 p.m. He welcomed the City of Beaumont returning.

Mr. Van Belle introduced himself and Council Member Jessica Voight. Amber Duff, newly elected to the Mission Springs Water District (MSWD) Board, will be representing MSWD this year.

Roll call was conducted of the attendees and is reflected in the list of meeting participants above.

2. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

3. Consent Calendar

- A. Approval of Alliance Meeting Minutes from September 28, 2022
The Consent Calendar was approved by the following vote:

MOVED: Covington	SECONDED: Slawson
CONSENT CALENDAR APPROVED	VOTE 10-0
City of Banning	YES
City of Beaumont	YES
Banning Heights Mutual Water Company	Absent
Beaumont Basin Watermaster	YES
Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District	YES
Cabazon Water District	YES
City of Calimesa	Absent
High Valleys Water District	YES
Mission Springs Water District	YES
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	YES
Riverside County EDA / Flood Control	YES
San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency	YES
South Mesa Water Company	Absent
Yucaipa Valley Water District	Absent

4. Discussion items

- A. Discussion regarding the selection of Officers for 2023

Chair Slawson explained that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) indicates that officers are to be selected and review of the budget is to be done in May. He noted that last year officers were changed in January.

Member Covington added that review of the MOU would also happen in May and reminded there is no annual contribution made by agencies, but when the Alliance was started, there was a \$500 per year contribution.

Member Covington requested the current version of the MOU be circulated to the group. Chair Slawson indicated he was pretty sure the most recent MOU was in 2018 and is on the website. Mr. Jagers noted that upon request of Joyce McIntire, the group had

reviewed the MOU, but there were no changes. Member Covington added the review was done in June 2018 and July 2021, but no material changes were made to the MOU, so there was no requirement for the MOU to be re-signed by the agencies.

Mr. Jagers indicated the agency with the current chairmanship would be responsible for preparation of minutes and agendas.

Alliance members indicated satisfaction with the current slate of officers.

B. Discussion regarding teleconference / in-person / hybrid meetings

Chair Slawson said he has been advised this is probably not a Brown Act committee but would like Jason Uhley to check with County Counsel. Although he would like to meet in person, teleconferencing is very convenient for attendees, if legally possible.

Mr. Jagers pointed to the Best Practices – the meetings were intended to be transparent and open to the public. There is no quorum needed. The Alliance is intended to support collaboration in the region and to embrace as many of the Brown Act transparency activities as possible, and that is being done. He discussed AB 361 and AB 2449 relating to virtual attendance at meetings. In-person meetings were previously held at either the City of Beaumont or City of Banning, he recalled.

Member Covington recalled prior discussion of parliamentary procedures. The County advised that the Committee was supposed to be following the Brown Act as much as possible, but the original MOU from 2014 does not indicate that, he noted.

Member Vela cautioned that the more that is followed, the greater the expectation that the Brown Act will be followed, creating headaches for all and potentially evolving into a more formal group, which is not as desirable for free-flowing discussion. He said he supported continuing with virtual meetings as more convenient for everyone and dedicating one or two meetings during the year to meet in person. The City of Banning has teleconference capability for anyone who may want to join remotely.

Member Covington pointed out that the SGPRWA was formed by the Board of Supervisors, therefore there must be a staff report that may dictate what the group does.

Member Jagers reviewed some items in the Best Practices that may merit revision and those that reflect Brown Act practices:

- Meeting now bi-monthly, meeting time
- Agendas to be posted 72 hours in advance with all materials posted on the website
- Action minutes will be recorded and audibly recorded
- May meeting will be the annual business meeting

Chair Slawson posited that hybrid meetings will continue to allow the public easy access.

Member Eckhart acknowledged the spirit of the bringing people together and there are people from all over joining this meeting. Without hybrid meetings, he said he strongly believed there would be less participation. Holding onto the informal nature will also be important, he added.

Chair Slawson and Mr. Jagers will reach out to Jason Uhley to consult with County Counsel regarding Brown Act status.

C. Beaumont Basin Watermaster

Member Vela, Watermaster Chair, reported that the Watermaster Committee recently hired Dudek to act as administrator for the Watermaster. Several tasks have been identified, for example, groundwater level monitoring procedures. The next meeting is Wednesday, February 1 at 11 a.m.

Mr. Jagers added that the SGPWA has been attending and he encouraged all members interested to attend in person or virtually. In 2023, work will begin on quantifying the decade-revision / reallocation of the safe yield.

D. San Geronio Pass Water Agency activities update

SGPWA General Manager Lance Eckhart shared a PowerPoint and highlighted the following:

- SGPWA focus on expansion of more robust water portfolio
- Administrative and governance issues over the past year
- Groundwater Sustainability Agencies formed in January: Yucaipa and San Geronio Pass bringing a level of certainty
- Local adjudication is administered / managed by the Court
- Signed long term (20-year) lease with City of Ventura for their share of State Project Water
- Sold 400 af of supply to Central Coast Water Authority (\$1,500 per af with return double the amount; set aside the \$600,000 for future water market)
- Amendment to contract for State Water Contractors to move water more freely
- Investment in Sites Reservoir (90,000 af stake) (operational early 2030s)
- Delta Conveyance Project is moving forward, SGPWA is investing
- Collaborating with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD) on a recharge facility along County Line Road that will be used by both agencies
- Looking to expand local recharge opportunities; seeking property in the greater Beaumont Basin
- Working on a backbone pipeline to bring water to the eastern part of the service area (Cabazon) and seeking partners to push further east (close to conceptual engineering phase)
- Trying to install wells in the Banning-Cabazon area for scientific purposes
- Positioning local projects for grant opportunities
- Working with HOAs to convert large common areas of intensive water use turf to more California adaptive, and be a conduit for federal and state grants
- Working with the City of Beaumont and BCVWD on best uses for clean water from the recycled water plant
- Working with smaller agencies to assist with grant writing and has had some success (\$3.5 million for Banning Heights)
- Provided combined drought messaging over the summer with partnerships; talking about branding and a unified message

- Cabazon secured about \$2.5 million in grant funding through the DWR, and SGPWA provided gap funding to alleviate cash flow issue
- Assisting with replacement of the flume
- Partnering with SBVMWD and Yucaipa in the Bunker-Hill-San Bernardino Basin on groundwater modeling work for storage of up to 20,000 af in the Bunker Hill Basin to be returned via either paper exchanges with SBVMWD or pump back
- Increased visits to schools and partnership with the Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD)
- Staffed a booth at the Cherry Festival with BCVWD and IERCD
- Increasing public information support to promote awareness
- Dr. Blair Ball, Robert Ybarra, and Kevin Walton were re-elected for four-year terms
- Updating strategic plan

Member Covington requested Mr. Eckhart share his recent presentation on the Sites Reservoir at a future meeting.

E. Grant opportunities and funding

Member Jason Uhley assured that the agency is always looking for grant opportunities and gave the example of the Beaumont MDP Line 16 project. He noted potential availability of funding / flood hazard mitigation grants in response to the Governor's disaster declaration.

There may still be some ARPA funding for water and sewer projects, Uhley continued. BCVWD has taken advantage of that, he noted.

Member Vela pointed to a recent email indicating there is \$80 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Act funds for projects that conserve water. It is focused on watershed, he said and reminded that often projects are built around the funding program.

Mr. Uhley advised of the availability of a grant funding list from the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG).

F. Ongoing drought restrictions and outreach activities

Mr. Eckhart noted the area does not have many water restrictions. He noted that the snowpack is 200 percent above average that it is hoped will come down in spring. The watershed has been wetted from the last atmospheric rivers and the largest reservoir, Lake Oroville, is now above its average. Water that would normally have gone out to the ocean is being pumped into reservoirs to the south and are filling up.

Eckhart continued. DWR states there is still a drought, and is expected to communicate the allocation for the year, although they have been burned in the past by overstating the amount of water and having to do a pullback. He said he expects moving a lot of water this coming year to replenish local aquifers.

But still conserve, and "do your part," he cautioned. The drought is not over. Mr. Jagers confirmed that per the Governor's declarations, lawns still may not be watered. Updates

are expected from the Governor, and BCVWD is monitoring, he assured. The District is cautiously optimistic for some relief, and is tracking water levels, he said.

The water system needs to be modernized, Jagers continued. The new weather patterns need to be managed to assure positioning for the next 100 years, he noted.

Member Vela noted there is confusion regarding the emergency regulations. Agencies were required to implement Stage 2 of their Water Shortage Contingency Plans and is in effect through June 10, 2023. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) recently adopted new emergency regulation effective in December which omits the implementation of Stage 2 and defines some prohibitions. Per the SWRCB, both regulations are currently in effect, he explained.

5. Comments and Updates by the Elected Official or Agency Representative

A. City of Banning – Art Vela reported:

- The chromium 6 standard will likely be equal to what was set by the State in the last round: 10 parts per billion. There is a promising new treatment technology.
- The upper flume (Phase 1A) has been completed and water deliveries are being received back into the water canyon. This had not been functional since the Apple Fire in August 2020. The City of Banning had been providing water to Banning Heights.

B. City of Beaumont – Jessica Voight reported:

- The City appreciates collaboration and being welcomed back to the SGPRWA
- The \$100 million upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is almost finished. The City has worked with BCVWD on a mutually beneficial plan. With recent storms, the team was able to process up to 12 million gallons per day.

Mr. Van Belle noted:

- The WWTP new membranes could handle the spikes in flow. The Reverse Osmosis system is running as designed. It is close to receiving approval from the Department of Drinking Water for recycled water classification.
- The next step is to pursue permission from the State to withdraw the water from the creek and make it available for future recycled projects. There is salt mitigation, and it may be a while before that water becomes available.

C. Banning Heights Mutual Water Company – Absent.

D. Beaumont Cherry Valley Water District - Daniel Slawson and Dan Jaggars reported:

- New officers were elected:
 - President David Hoffman
 - Vice President John Covington
- MDP Line 16 on Grand Avenue is almost completely finished and water from the last storm was diverted into the reservoirs. It alleviates flooding at Brookside Avenue. Pipelines were replaced at the same time, and paving has begun. A drone video was shown, and project detail was provided. Soon, stormwater recharge will begin into the basins. As hillsides are urbanized, everything that can be done to harden and convey stormwater for recapture is important, and the District will continue to look for opportunities. Flood Control has been receptive to the partnership. The partnerships built through this Alliance are functioning well, Uhley added.
- Replacement pipelines are being tackled while working with the City of Beaumont and the SGPWA.

E. Cabazon Water District – Ms. Taffy Brock reported:

- The new General Manager is accomplishing tasks including new gate valves, painting of storage tanks, and more.

F. City of Calimesa – No report.

G. High Valleys Water District – Stan Houghton reported:

- Through the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan program, a grant was awarded for a 2" line replacement.
- Lots of dirt roads are under repair after washout with lines exposed.

H. Mission Springs Water District – Ms. Amber Dunn reported:

- Executed a \$68 million reimbursement grant agreement with the State Water Board for the regional water reclamation facility and conveyances. Construction began in April 2022 and is approximately 45 percent complete, with it being operational by the end of this year.
- According to the recent Census, Desert Hot Springs is the fastest growing community in the Coachella Valley.
- Invited all to the MSWD 70th anniversary on Feb. 3 at Mission Springs Park.

I. Morongo Band of Mission Indians – John Covington reported:

- Moderate to medium damage has been experienced with the recent storms – roadways, exposed pipelines, and continued debris flow moving through the San Gorgonio River.
- Several water and wastewater infrastructure projects are underway, mostly funded by grants. There are materials and labor challenges.
- A stormwater feasibility study and hydrology study are underway.
- Two grant applications have been made for improvement of stormwater spillway areas.
- Design of two new fire stations is in progress.

J. Riverside County EDA / Flood Control District – Jason Uhley and Julianna Gonzalez reported:

- A series of 11 atmospheric rivers pummeled central and northern California and the tails provided much needed rain here: Beaumont is at about 12 inches of rain for the year, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of average but came all at once and unleashed some spectacular mud and debris flows in the mountains and caused some issues in Oak Glen. The loosened material is slowly making its way down the system.
- The Apple – El Dorado fire areas and others are being closely monitored.
- Some damage occurred to the system below Brookside and at Noble Street. Mr. Jagers added he would like to talk with Flood Control regarding working together to protect the road. Jagers may reach out to Ms. Gonzalez and SGPWA should be included.

K. San Geronimo Pass Water Agency – No further report.

L. South Mesa Water Company – Absent.

M. Yucaipa Valley Water District – Absent.

6. Suggested Presentations and Topics for Future Meetings

- Best practices regarding presentation of rate hikes to customers
 - Transparency and knowledgeable staff to field questions
- SGPWA presentation on Sites Reservoir
- Teleconference / hybrid / in -person meetings
- Grant funding
- Selection of officers for 2023
- Drought
- Supply issues and how agencies are affected
- Drought response actions and presentation from Lance Eckhart, SGPWA
- Update and Discussion Regarding Funding for the Sites Reservoir Project
- Discussion Regarding Funding for the Delta Conveyance Project
- Discussion Regarding Funding for the Regional Cabazon/Banning Backbone Project

7. Future Meeting Dates

Meeting time is 5:00 p.m.

- March 22, 2023
- May 24, 2023
- July 26, 2023
- September 27, 2023

9. Adjournment

Daniel Slawson adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.