

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance
January 28, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.**

Meeting Attendees

Agency – MOU Members	Representative	
City of Banning	Art Vela	Absent
City of Beaumont	David Fenn 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	Present
Cabazon Water District	Taffy Brock	Present
City of Calimesa	Edgar Garcia	Absent
Desert Water Agency	Steve Grasha	Present
High Valleys Water District	Stan Houghton	Present
Mission Springs Water District	Amber Duff	Present
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	Anthony Mendoza John Covington	Present
Riverside County EDA / Flood Control	Julianna Adams	Present
San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency	Lance Eckhart	Present
South Mesa Water Company		Absent
Yucaipa Valley Water District	Joyce McIntire	Present

Members of the Public in Attendance: None

1. Call to Order - Roll Call

Chairman Daniel Slawson called to order the regular meeting of the San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance at 5:01 p.m. Roll call was conducted of the attendees and is reflected in the list of meeting participants above.

2. Public Comments: None.

3. Consent Calendar

- A. Approval of Alliance Meeting Minutes from September 24, 2025
The Consent Calendar was approved by the following vote:

MOVED: Slawson	SECONDED: None
CONSENT CALENDAR APPROVED	VOTE 7-0-2
City of Banning	Absent
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	ABSTAIN
Mission Springs Water District	YES
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	YES
Riverside County EDA / Flood Control	Absent
San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency	YES
South Mesa Water Company	Absent
Yucaipa Valley Water District	ABSTAIN

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

- A. **San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency:** Lance Eckhart provided an end-of-year retrospective, reporting:
- Continued regional progress has been made on recycled water planning, with the SGPWA, City of Beaumont, and Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District working with a consultant to address regulatory and liability questions and identify storage/disposal options for recycled water during low-demand winter months.
 - DWR issued an initial 10% State Water Project allocation, with possible indication that allocation may increase (potentially as high as 20–30%). The region has recovered well since 2022, with more than 50,000 acre-feet recharged over the last three years.

Operations and Agency Business

- Approximately 19,000 acre-feet were recharged in 2025, continuing a multi-year trend of about 20,000 acre-feet annually; recharge ponds in Beaumont have been continuously active for over three years.
- Water transfer and storage activity included:
 - 3,000 acre-feet transferred from Yuba City
 - 5,000 acre-feet stored in the San Bernardino Basin (seed water for long-term banking)
 - 600 acre-feet returned to CLAWA as part of prior obligations

- Over 200,000 acre-feet recharged total to date
 - Ongoing Ventura water lease through 2042 (with extension option).
- SGPWA Director Kevin Walton moved out of the area and Treasurer/Director Tickemyer has joined the Board.
- The region is the third largest investor in the Sites Reservoir project, following Metropolitan Water District and San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District.
- SGPWA is in good standing with SGMA groundwater sustainability requirements; groundwater basins are stable and compliant with state agencies.
- The residential property adjacent to Agency headquarters was purchased for potential future expansion.
- The Delta Conveyance Project continues moving forward but is slowed by litigation and state-level processes.
- Regional collaboration for the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) continues. SGPWA is working with BCVWD and others to align data and planning efforts.
- Installation of \$2 million in scientific monitoring wells funded by DWR, including drilling activity near the Four Paws Inn area in Banning.
- The importance of groundwater flow monitoring and modeling, particularly regarding Cabazon-area flow to the Low Desert and boundary coordination with Beaumont Basin partners, emphasizing that “good science keeps you out of court.”
- SGPWA has fiscal strength, including approximately \$150 million in the bank, with a portion restricted for State Water Project purposes.

Agency Initiatives

- ARPA-funded County Line Recharge project (Calimesa area) is under construction and expected to be operational by summer.
- Progress on the regional heli-hydrant network, with four installed and additional units planned (Beaumont, Calimesa, and Banning Heights), totaling seven heli-hydrants when complete.
- Progress on an Agency history project (coffee-table style publication) expected later in the summer.
- Adopted a resolution supporting efforts by both President Trump and Governor Newsom regarding increasing water movement in California.
- Increased legislative engagement, including hosting Metropolitan Water District leadership and participating in Sacramento advocacy to support Delta Conveyance-related legislation and subsidence funding.
- Upcoming Beacon Economics study (anticipated Q2) regarding the economic impacts of imported water on the region.

Local Engagement

- Continued public education efforts, including school programs, fairs, aquifer demonstrations, and Master Gardener workshops in partnership with Inland Empire Resource Conservation District.
- The gap funding program assists agencies in bridging grant reimbursement delays; Cabazon, High Valleys, Banning Heights, and South Mesa have used the program successfully.

Partnerships

- Execution of multiple MOUs supporting long-term regional strategy, including with San Bernardino Valley, Kern County partners, Metropolitan Water District, and Antelope Valley/East Kern for banking agreements.
- Ribbon-cutting events held for South Mesa and High Valleys projects, including heli-hydrant installations and infrastructure improvements.
- The Cabazon heli-hydrant was reportedly used shortly after installation, demonstrating immediate operational value.

Following the presentation, Eckhart was asked to elaborate on the region's water storage position, particularly regarding water stored outside of the Beaumont Basin. Mr. Jagers noted that the region has not only restored groundwater levels depleted during the recent drought but has also stored additional water in outside basins, enhancing long-term supply reliability.

Mr. Eckhart confirmed that SGPWA has stored water in multiple locations, including approximately 5,000 acre-feet in the San Bernardino Valley area and additional water in the Antelope Valley/East Kern (AVEK) region. He stated that roughly 3,200 acre-feet remain as "wet water" in AVEK and that SGPWA is working toward formalizing longer-term banking agreements that would allow for larger storage volumes in the future.

Mr. Jagers commented that the region's water security has significantly improved compared to drought conditions experienced several years ago. He emphasized the strategic importance of storing water south of the Delta and Tehachapi constraints, noting that these efforts provide a greater level of supply assurance for the Pass area.

In response to Chair Slawson, Mr. Eckhart explained that the structure purchased by SGPWA appears to have safety issues, and is likely to be demolished rather than repurposed. Stan Houghton suggested that, prior to demolition, the structure could potentially be used by the fire department for training exercises.

John Covington asked whether plans to expand San Luis Reservoir by approximately 130,000 acre-feet were progressing. Mr. Eckhart replied that the project appears to be gaining traction and is being led by the federal government. He explained that the expansion would primarily increase federal storage capacity; however, operational flexibility between federal and state systems often allows shared use of available storage space when feasible.

Mr. Eckhart discussed a staffing transition, stating that one employee would be departing and a new team member would be introduced at a future meeting. He also reported that SGPWA is adding an operator to support field operations.

Mr. Covington then asked about the status of the voluntary agreements related to Delta operations. Mr. Eckhart stated that the voluntary agreements remain active and have been rebranded as "Healthy Rivers and Landscapes." He explained that the effort is intended to reduce overlapping regulatory conflicts and allow for more adaptive, science-based water management. Progress has been slow due to the complexity of regulatory processes and agency coordination, and he noted that there may be future opportunities for coordinated regional advocacy when appropriate.

B. City of Beaumont – David Fenn and Thaxton Van Belle reported:

- City Council reorganization for 2026, with Jessica Voigt serving as Mayor and Lloyd White serving as Mayor Pro Tem.
- A shift in Council focus from residential growth toward economic development, including attracting additional retail and service-based businesses.
- Continued construction of the Target development, with projected sales tax revenue estimated at approximately \$900,000 annually.
- Progress on major regional transportation projects, including the Potrero ramps groundbreaking anticipated in April, as well as ongoing work on the Pennsylvania grade separation and Highland Springs interchange projects.
- Residential development slowing substantially, with remaining projects consisting primarily of final phases of Fairway Canyon, smaller infill developments, and near buildout of the Altis 55+ community.
- Council direction to avoid further residential annexation due to unfavorable tax-sharing impacts, while remaining open to annexation for commercial, retail, or industrial uses.
- Approval of the Beaumont Point warehouse project, a large industrial development proposed along the south side of the SR-60 corridor, with financing and LAFCO-related progress ongoing.
- Continued monitoring of potential state-level changes to warehouse point-of-sale tax revenue allocation, noting current legislation appears paused but remains a concern for long-term city revenue planning.
- Participation in regional economic development initiatives, including a newly opened business development facility in Calimesa supported through partnerships with the County and Mt. San Jacinto College.
- Continued coordination with BCVWD toward an MOU supporting recycled water planning, including sharing CEQA documentation to assist project development.
- Wastewater infrastructure improvements underway, including Mesa Lift Station upgrades delayed by electrical equipment procurement, planned treatment plant enhancements including a demonstration garden, and evaluation of a moderate-scale solar project to offset utility costs.
- Planned sewer maintenance work, including manhole replacements on First Street between Michigan and California in the coming month.

Jaggers initiated discussion regarding the Riverside County Board of Supervisors' January 13, 2026 meeting addressing a proposed General Plan amendment affecting the Cherry Valley area. It was noted that the amendment would reduce minimum lot sizes from one acre to approximately one-half acre and allow for development of roughly 148 ranch-style homes, along with limited local-serving commercial uses. Concern was expressed that the developer had not yet engaged local agencies regarding water supply or sewer service planning, and that the proposal could significantly impact surrounding public services.

Covington reported that community opposition in Cherry Valley has been substantial, and that public attendance at the Municipal Advisory Council meetings was high. He emphasized that the primary concern was not necessarily opposition to half-acre residential lots or limited commercial development, but rather frustration with the County's

practice of approving General Plan amendments for private development purposes. General Plans are intended to be long-term guiding documents developed through extensive public process, and frequent amendments were described as undermining public confidence in land use planning. It was further noted that similar amendments have been occurring throughout Riverside County, contributing to broader public concern.

Councilman Fenn reiterated his position that further residential annexation is not desirable due to the fiscal imbalance between service demands and revenue generation. He stated that residential growth often requires Community Facilities District (CFD) assessments to offset service costs, and that additional housing without sufficient revenue support would likely be opposed. It was further noted that if sewer service were required, the City of Beaumont would be the provider, which could present additional challenges.

In contrast, it was stated that annexation for warehouse, industrial, or commercial projects may be more feasible due to reduced demand for municipal services and stronger revenue potential, including potential sales tax income. The discussion also addressed ongoing statewide debate regarding sales tax allocation from fulfillment centers, noting that cities hosting warehouses bear traffic and infrastructure impacts and may face financial harm if the State reallocates those revenues. Participants agreed that continued monitoring of County planning actions and State legislative proposals is warranted due to the long-term fiscal and service implications for local agencies.

C. **City of Banning** – Absent

D. **Banning Heights** – Absent

E. **Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District** – Daniel Slawson and Dan Jagers highlighted:

- Continued progress on District capital projects, including well drilling, well rehabilitation, and pipeline improvements, with one pipeline project released for bid and strong contractor interest observed at the pre-bid tour.
- Ongoing impacts of ARPA-funded project timing and construction market conditions, noting the District anticipates improved bid pricing as stimulus-related demand declines.
- Re-bidding and reassessment of a previously bid reservoir project, after bids came in high and the apparent low bidder withdrew.
- Monitoring of a pending chromium-6 regulatory lawsuit filed in Fresno County Superior Court, noting the case may affect statewide compliance requirements and treatment cost impacts for agencies.
- Continued regional coordination on recycled water planning efforts, including interest in upcoming Beaumont Basin Watermaster discussion related to Yucaipa Valley Water District's Calimesa project and indirect potable reuse concepts.
- Concern regarding increasing burdens from unfunded mandates, citing electric vehicle charging infrastructure requirements as an example of added cost pressures on rate-supported agencies.
- BCVWD has supported modernization of the Water Alliance website and requested that member agencies review and provide updates to their listed representative information.

F. Cabazon Water District – Taffy Brock reported:

- The District's General Manager, Michael Pollack, will depart on February 5, with James Clark assuming the role; the Board anticipates a smooth transition

G. City of Calimesa – Absent

H. High Valleys Water District – Stan Houghton reported:

- Activation of the District's heli-hydrants, which have been tested and approved by the fire department and are fully operational.
- Ongoing work on infrastructure improvements, including installation of new meters and participation in programs supported by the Pass Agency.
- Assumption of water service to Silent Valley Campground after the campground's wells failed, preventing potential closure of the facility.
- Coordination through the LAFCO process to formalize service arrangements for the campground.
- Resolution of initial system leaks and high usage issues at the campground, with service now stabilized.
- Continued focus on advancing additional projects as weather conditions improve.

I. Mission Springs Water District – Amber Duff reported:

- Rehabilitation work underway on four wells, as part of preparations for increased summer demand.
- Continued shutdown of chromium-6 wells that exceeded regulatory limits, explaining that the District proactively removed the wells from service to remain in compliance and protect customers. It was noted that, because no public notification was required after taking the wells offline, the District may not qualify for certain state funding programs intended to assist systems that issued exceedance notices, potentially creating additional financial burden.
- Progress toward restoring well capacity by bringing rehabilitated wells back online to reduce operational strain.
- Continued success of the Real Academy high school internship program, now in its fifth cohort, exposing students to water, wastewater, laboratory, and government relations work.
- Positive outcomes from internships, including students shifting career interests toward the water and wastewater industry.
- Successful adoption of a Proposition 218 five-year rate increase for water and sewer services, effective mid-February.
- Plans to use new rate revenue to address unfunded mandates and advance capital improvement projects.

J. Morongo Band of Mission Indians – Anthony Mendoza and John Covington reported:

- Completion of a 1-million-gallon reservoir in Potrero Canyon, increasing on-reservation storage capacity and improving system reliability.
- Progress on two new wells (approximately 85% complete), with electrical and switchgear delivery delays anticipated to resolve by early spring and full operation expected by mid-2026.

- Installation of one well to serve enterprise facilities (casino, restaurants, and new hotel) supplying a 1.6-million-gallon reservoir, and a second well to support approximately 3 million gallons of storage in Potrero Canyon.
- Expansion of sewer infrastructure along Malki Road, including construction of a 12-inch main to serve a new school site, with manholes and supporting infrastructure completed.
- Receipt of EPA primacy authority for surface water quality standards, allowing the Tribe to adopt and enforce standards on and off the reservation where waters traverse tribal lands, marking completion of a process initiated in 2018.
- Issuance of recent PFAS sampling notifications by the State and encouragement for small systems connected to regional lines to confirm receipt and review compliance requirements.
- Federal discussions regarding Colorado River funding, including proposed reauthorization of approximately \$150 million for recycled water programs aimed at reducing Colorado River demand.
- Ongoing federal budget negotiations, with current information suggesting efforts to avoid a government shutdown.
- Adoption by the State Water Resources Control Board of emergency regulations related to Proposition 4 funding, intended to expedite water and wastewater recycling program allocations.
- Approval by the State Water Board of the updated Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired water bodies and transmittal to EPA.
- Anticipated staffing reductions of approximately 1,000 employees at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which may affect federal regulatory timelines.

K. Riverside County EDA / Flood Control District – No report.

L. South Mesa Water Company – Absent

M. Yucaipa Valley Water District – No report.

N. Beaumont Basin Watermaster – No report

6. Suggested Presentations and Topics for Future Meetings

- Funding for the Regional Cabazon/Banning Backbone Project
- PFAS
- Lead and Copper Rule
- Preparation of 2025-2026 Urban Water Management Plans
- Update on Chromium 6 court case (Fresno Superior court)

7. Future Meeting Dates

Meeting time is 4th Wednesday of odd months at 5 p.m.

- March 25, 2026
- May 27, 2026 (Annual Business Meeting)
- July 22, 2026
- September 23, 2026
- *Committee is dark in November*

8. Adjournment. Chairman Daniel Slawson adjourned the meeting at 6:41 p.m.