

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance
March 25, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.**

Meeting Attendees

Agency – MOU Members	Representative	
City of Banning	Shah Nawaz Art Vela	Present
City of Beaumont	David Fenn Thaxton Van Belle	Present
Banning Heights Mutual Water Company		
Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District	Daniel Slawson Dan Jagers	Present
Cabazon Water District	Taffy Brock Knala Keith	Present
City of Calimesa	Edgar Garcia	Absent
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		
Yucaipa Valley Water District	Joyce McIntire	Absent

Other Agencies	Representative	
Desert Water Agency	Steve Grasha	
Beaumont Basin Watermaster	Dan Jagers	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 5:03 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 January 28, 2026
The Consent Calendar was approved by the following vote:

MOVED: Slawson	SECONDED: None
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

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

- A. **San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency:** Lance Eckhart reported:
- Jennifer Ustation has been employed as the new Chief Financial Officer to replace the retiring Tom Todd
 - Highlighted partnerships for construction of seven heli-hydrants in the region
 - Also working on the Countyline Recharge facility and pipeline, and on a connection to the East Branch Extension
 - Transferred 3,000 acre-feet from Napa to round out the water portfolio at \$225 per acre-foot
 - Moving forward with water banking via partnership with Antelope Valley-East Kern (AVEK) in the Lancaster-Palmdale area
 - Sites Reservoir obtained Sacramento River water rights from the State Water Board making it a viable project
 - It is a State Water Project 30% allocation year. Although there was rain, snowpack was needed.
 - Current regional water supply is at approximately 13,000 acre-feet against demands of 15,000–16,000 acre-feet, with additional purchases anticipated and confidence that remaining needs can be met as the year progresses.
 - Availability of approximately 10,000 acre-feet of stored “wet water” across multiple locations (Antelope Valley/East Kern, San Bernardino Basin, and local storage accounts), providing drought resiliency and supply flexibility.

- Despite a low allocation year (approximately 30%), the region is largely meeting replenishment needs due to prior planning, water transfers, and storage strategies developed over recent years.
- Regional water reliability has significantly improved over the past decade, supported by increased storage levels, expanded partnerships, and future supply projects such as Sites Reservoir, positioning the region well for long-term water security

B. City of Beaumont – Thaxton Van Belle reported:

- The City is actively recruiting for a Finance Director and anticipates announcing a new City Manager at the April 7 City Council meeting.
- Coordination continues on recycled water planning with the SGPWA and Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District.
- Habitat and stream monitoring efforts are ongoing, including site identification and data collection, with potential coordination requests to neighboring agencies for well data and real-time monitoring opportunities.
- Announced the return of Beaumont Nights events at the end of April and noted that the Cherry Festival will be held at a new location with support from regional partners.

Mr. Jagers advised about wells drilled near the Amazon building within the San Timoteo watershed when the Olivewood or Fairway Canon development was graded.

C. City of Banning – Art Vela reported:

- Announced the hiring of a new City Manager, Elizabeth Gibbs, noting her recent transition from the City of Beaumont and strong familiarity with regional partners and local issues.
- The transition has allowed Vela to refocus on Public Works operations, while the City continues to advance multiple capital projects, including well sites, booster stations, and upcoming bids for basin and wastewater treatment plant improvements.
- Described chromium-6 compliance as a challenging “no-win” situation, emphasizing the need for agencies to act proactively rather than delay action.
- Noted the City is entering a new rate study process, with anticipated difficult policy decisions regarding whether to incorporate significant chromium-6 treatment costs, which could substantially increase rates and require tradeoffs with other capital projects.

D. Banning Heights – Absent

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

- Easement approved for the heli-hydrant site at Brookside / Beaumont Avenue
- Infrastructure projects beginning on America Street and 11th Street
- Agreed to provide water for the Cherry Festival
- Completing re-drilling of wells 1A and 2A and design of a booster station

- Urban Water Management Plan underway
- New testing for PFAS after previous non-detects
- In the final stages of preparing for implementation of recycled water opportunities with the City of Beaumont

F. Cabazon Water District – Taffy Brock reported:

- The new General Manager is continuing to acclimate to the role, and overall operations are progressing well.

G. City of Calimesa – Absent

H. High Valleys Water District – Stan Houghton:

- Reported seasonal maintenance activities underway, including road repairs, vegetation management, and general system upkeep in preparation for spring.
- Noted near completion of LAFCO-related processes associated with providing service to Silent Valley, with the District now successfully supplying water and maintaining operations for the facility.
- Confirmed heli-hydrants are fully operational, supporting regional fire response capabilities.
- Identified minor brownout issues, but indicated site conditions have improved with regrowth of natural vegetation on previously disturbed areas, stabilizing conditions.

I. Mission Springs Water District – Amber Duff reported:

- Reported four wells currently under repair and remediation, with two anticipated to require chromium-6 treatment and two potentially returning to service without treatment; goal is to bring all wells back online before June.
- Noted wells have remained offline since initial chromium testing to prevent delivery of contaminated water, creating operational challenges in maintaining system supply.
- Described ongoing efforts to implement chromium-6 treatment solutions, including development of a potential pilot program in coordination with the State.
- Reported participation in federal advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., seeking funding support for water infrastructure and treatment needs, while expressing optimism regarding proposed treatment strategies.

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

- Wrapping up major water capital improvement projects, to be resolved in Spring 2026.
- Working with the San Geronio Pass Groundwater Sustainability Agency on the five year update to the plan and with the Indio Subbasin GSA on their five year update
- Well rehabilitation projects in Cabazon and at the Tukwet Golf Course
- Many other building projects within the boundaries of the Reservation which require staff time are swamping the water staff.

- Mr. Mendoza will become the Water Department Manager effective the first week of April; while Covington focuses on his administrative position

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

L. South Mesa Water Company – Absent

M. Yucaipa Valley Water District – Absent.

N. Beaumont Basin Watermaster – Art Vela and Dan Jagers reported:

- At the February 4, 2026 meeting, the BBWM Committee heard an informative presentation by YVWD on the Calimesa Crystal Vault project
- The next BBWM meeting will be April 1; Mr. Vela will be absent

Discussion – Chromium VI regulation

Shaw Nawaz initiated discussion regarding ongoing efforts to address Chromium VI (CrVI) regulatory requirements, including well development, treatment strategies, regulatory uncertainty, and public communication challenges. He asked how agencies are balancing investment in new wells versus treatment, given uncertainty about whether the State may again revise or rescind the maximum contaminant level (MCL).

Jagers explained that BCVWD has been pursuing a long-term strategy of developing new wells to avoid treatment where possible, thereby reducing the risk of stranded treatment assets if regulations change. He noted that two wells are replacement wells and two are growth-related, all moving forward regardless of regulatory uncertainty. He added that the District is also evaluating operational strategies such as modifying well depth, reducing pumping rates, and isolating contaminated zones to reduce CrVI levels without treatment. Jagers emphasized that multiple approaches are being tested simultaneously, including blending, well rehabilitation, and use of non-potable systems for higher-chromium water.

Art Vela confirmed that well depth and location can significantly influence chromium levels, noting that some success has been observed with shallower well completions reducing chromium concentrations, though results vary geographically. He described the situation as a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” scenario, where agencies must balance whether to invest in costly treatment now or risk future regulatory changes. He also noted that upcoming rate studies will likely need to consider substantial capital costs associated with compliance.

Amber Duff stated that MSWD is proceeding with treatment implementation regardless of potential regulatory changes, citing the importance of maintaining public trust and credibility. She noted that the District recently completed a successful Proposition 218 rate adjustment with strong community support based on the commitment to address CrVI. Reversing course due to regulatory changes would create confusion and erode confidence among ratepayers. She further emphasized the challenge agencies face in explaining shifting regulatory standards to the public while maintaining confidence in water quality. Discussion also addressed legal and regulatory uncertainty, including an ongoing lawsuit challenging the State’s economic analysis supporting the current MCL. Jagers noted that agencies have questioned whether the State adequately evaluated treatment costs, and that the case could influence future regulatory direction.

Participants discussed the regulatory environment and legal challenges, including ongoing litigation questioning whether the State adequately evaluated the economic impacts of the current MCL. Mr. Jagers noted that several agencies believe the cost analysis supporting the standard may be flawed, and that the outcome of the case could influence future regulatory direction. Despite this uncertainty, agencies are continuing to move forward with compliance planning due to statutory requirements and timelines.

Significant concern was expressed regarding State regulatory processes, particularly delays in reviewing and approving compliance plans. It was noted that agencies submitted plans months ago but have received little or no feedback, creating difficulty in justifying large capital expenditures to governing boards without regulatory confirmation. Participants clarified that agencies with submitted compliance plans are generally considered in “exceedance” rather than “violation” status, provided they are making progress toward compliance, though required public notifications still apply.

The discussion also highlighted operational and financial challenges associated with treatment technologies. Participants noted that CrVI treatment systems—such as ion exchange or reduction/filtration—can involve high capital costs, significant ongoing operational expenses, and complex disposal requirements for hazardous byproducts. Concerns were raised about long-term disposal options and the potential for vendor or disposal pathway instability, which could create additional risks for agencies investing in these systems. Mr. Jagers noted that, in some cases, developing alternative supplies or surface water treatment facilities may be more cost-effective and operationally sustainable than chromium-specific treatment.

Public communication emerged as a major issue, with agencies reporting increased customer concern and scrutiny following required notification mailings. Participants noted that regulatory language in public notices can be alarming, even when delivered water quality remains below the MCL due to system blending. Examples were given of customers requesting in-home treatment systems or initiating formal information requests, placing additional administrative burdens on agencies.

Participants emphasized that the issue remains complex and evolving, requiring careful coordination between technical feasibility, financial capacity, regulatory compliance, and public communication.

Discussion – Senate Bill 1001 (Emergency Responder Identification)

Amber Duff alerted the group to Senate Bill 1001, which proposes creation of a statewide identification program intended to allow water agency personnel and other essential workers to access restricted areas during emergencies. She noted that while the concept appears beneficial, the bill raises concerns regarding unclear program administration, unknown costs, and potential administrative burden on agencies required to register all employees, particularly given workforce turnover.

Ms. Duff emphasized that agencies already possess identification credentials under existing government code provisions, which have generally been effective in granting access during emergencies, citing recent experiences where most personnel were able to pass through checkpoints without issue. She indicated the bill originated from a specific incident in another region and may not reflect broader statewide needs. She also noted that, despite concerns from some regions, the proposal is advancing with support from organizations such as ACWA.

Jagers and others acknowledged the intent of improving emergency access but expressed skepticism, characterizing the proposal as potentially creating additional bureaucracy and costs

without clear added benefit, given that existing systems have functioned adequately during past emergency events.

6. Suggested Presentations and Topics for Future Meetings

- a. Funding for the Regional Cabazon/Banning Backbone Project
- b. PFAS
- c. Lead and Copper Rule
- d. Preparation of 2025-2026 Urban Water Management Plans
- e. Update on Chromium 6 court case (Fresno Superior court)
- f. History and current status of Chromium VI issue (Lance Eckhart offered)

7. Future Meeting Dates

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

- 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 6:12 p.m.