

**SAN GORGONIO PASS WATER AGENCY
1210 Beaumont Avenue, Beaumont, California 92223**

**Official Minutes
Board of Directors Regular Meeting
January 27, 2025**

THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON,
WITH PUBLIC AVAILABILITY PROVIDED VIA ZOOM.

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, and Invocation

The San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency Board of Directors meeting was called to order by President Valdivia at 6:00 p.m., Monday, January 27, 2025, at the office of the Agency. Secretary Walton provided the invocation, and Director Ball led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

President Valdivia requested a roll call.

Board Present: Mickey Valdivia, President
Chander Letulle, Vice-President
Kevin Walton, Secretary
Blair M Ball, Director
Sarah Wargo, Director
Larry Smith, Director

Absent: Robert Ybarra, Treasurer

Staff Present: Lance Eckhart, General Manager
Thomas Todd, Jr., Chief Financial Officer
Maricela Cabral, Exec. Asst. /Clerk of the Board
Emmett Campbell, Sr. Water Resources Planner
Matt Howard, Operations Manager

Consultant Present: Holland Stewart, Legal Counsel

A quorum was present.

3. Adoption and Adjustment of Agenda

President Valdivia announced that a request had been submitted to add an item to the agenda. Counsel Stewart provided a review of the Brown Act regulations governing the addition of items to the agenda after the 72-hour notice period. Director Smith stated there is an immediate need for action that was discovered following the posting of the agenda, to add an item directing staff to draft a resolution in support of the President of the United States' recent executive order demanding more water from the northern to the southern part of the state.

A motion was made by Director Smith to add an item to the agenda directing staff to draft a resolution in support of the President of the United States' executive order. The motion was seconded by Secretary Walton and unanimously approved with a vote of 6-0, and the item was added to the agenda as 8.B.

4. Public Comment

Julie Hutchinson addressed the board, expressing her gratitude to both the board and staff for their support over the years as she announced her retirement. She highlighted the agency's positive impact on the Banning Heights community and conveyed her hope for continued collaboration and support for the heli-hydrant project. Board President Valdivia, along with other board members, acknowledged Julie's contributions and expressed their sincere appreciation for her dedication and service.

Joyce McIntyre, Yucaipa Valley Water District board member announced she has been assigned liaison to the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency. By appointing an official to this role, Yucaipa Valley Water District demonstrates its commitment to regional cooperation and long-term planning and water resource management.

5. Consent Calendar

- A. Approve Minutes of the January 6, 2025, Regular Meeting of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency Board of Directors
- B. Approval of the Finance and Budget Committee Meeting Report, for December 2024

Director Ball requested Item 5.B be pulled to discuss itemized invoices.

On a motion by Director Smith, seconded by President Valdivia, the board approved Item. 5A on the Consent Calendar.

Approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Smith, Walton, Wargo, Letulle, Ball, Valdivia

Noes: None

Absent: Ybarra

Motion passed 6-0.

Item Pulled for Discussion

- 5.B Approval of the Finance and Budget Committee Meeting Report, for December 2024

Director Ball asked for an explanation of new vendor invoices. Chief Financial Officer Thomas Todd, Jr. provided background on the invoices.

On a motion by Vice President Letulle, seconded by President Valdivia, the board approved Item. 5.B, Approval of the Finance and Budget Committee Meeting Report, for December 2024.

Approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Smith, Walton, Wargo, Letulle, Ball, Valdivia

Noes: None

Absent: Ybarra
Motion passed 6-0.

6. Reports

A. General Manager's Report

General Manager, Lance Eckhart reported on the following:

- i. January 14, 2025, Regional General Manager meeting
- ii. January 21, 2025, AVEK Tour of Eastside Water Bank
- iii. Update on the Metropolitan Water District Memorandum of Understanding
- iv. January 29, 2025, Pass Area Heli-Hydrants, Water Supply Discussion with Juan Perez, Riverside County Chief Operating Officer

B. Legal Counsel's Report

Counsel, Holland Stewart had no report.

7. Informational Presentations and Updates:

A. 2025 Prospective

General Manager Lance Eckhart presented the 2025 Prospective, outlining the agency's strategic focus areas for the year, including operational enhancements, agency initiatives, community engagement, and collaborative partnerships. Key projects include the recruitment of a new operations professional, the revision of the board handbook, addition of an agenda management system and the digitization of agency records. Mr. Eckhart emphasized the significance of the regional Urban Water Management Plan and ongoing efforts to support small water systems. The board was also briefed on potential collaborations with agricultural stakeholders and the importance of improving water management practices.

B. Water Conditions Report

Operations Manager Matt Howard provided an overview of the January water conditions report, detailing 2024 water deliveries and carryover from the previous year. Total deliveries for 2024 reached 18,220 acre-feet, with a carryover of just over 1,200 acre-feet. The report highlighted the Pass Agency's recharge efforts, which resulted in over 38,000 acre-feet being recharged into the service area over the past two years. Deliveries were distributed between the Brookside East recharge facility (43%) and Beaumont Cherry Valley recharge facilities (57%).

Mr. Howard also discussed current conditions in the Northern Sierras, noting that January experienced relatively dry weather. Reservoir levels at Lake Oroville and San Luis stand at 75% of total capacity, with Lake Oroville exceeding the historical average by 27%. Forecasted hydrologic conditions indicate precipitation of 1 to 2 inches in Northern California and 0.1 to 0.25 inches in Southern California over the next week. The snowpack is currently at 65% of the water year average, with a short video from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) illustrating snow survey results. The survey reported a snow depth of 24 inches and 9 inches of water content, equating to 91% of the January 2 average and 37% of the April 1 average.

Mr. Howard explained the rationale behind water allocation decisions, considering storage conditions, forecasted hydrology, and demand for the State Water Project. Allocations are reviewed and adjusted monthly based on real-time operations, given that the State Water Project operates as a real-time system. Reviewing historical allocations, he noted that the highest allocation year was 100% in 2023, while the lowest was 5% in 2021 and 2022. The current allocation stands at 15%, including our Table A, Ventura A, and Nickel Water with a carryover of 1,200 acre-feet, bringing our current water portfolio to just above 7,000 acre-feet.

In terms of maintenance activities, January efforts included ripping ponds to remove algae and debris, inspecting and servicing valves, and upgrading servers and pump stations. The pond maintenance is expected to be completed later in the week.

Dan Jaggers, Beaumont Cherry Valley Water District General Manager commented that early operational challenges with algae accumulation before the implementation of EarthTec. Initially, mechanical removal was necessary, but since adopting EarthTec—aligned with the Pass Agency's procedures—algae mats have not developed, reducing maintenance efforts. He also referenced a soil washing project in Colton, comparing it to gold separation processes, where materials are washed to remove fines before being reused as a filter bed. While this method is not currently needed, he suggested it could be a future consideration. He emphasized the agency's ongoing efforts to refine processes and improve recharge efficiency.

C. State Water Project Fundamentals

Sr. Water Resources Planner Emmett Campbell provided an overview of the State Water Project (SWP) water supply contract, which enables the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency to be a state water contractor. Originally executed in 1962 and amended 20 times since, the contract outlines participation terms, proportional facility use, prescribed water allocations, financial obligations, and regulations for transfers and exchanges.

The agency holds approximately 0.4% of the total SWP supply, equating to 17,300 acre-feet annually, with additional short- and long-term transfer agreements, including a 20-year, 10,000-acre-foot agreement with the City of Ventura. As the agency is located at the end of the SWP infrastructure, it incurs higher costs for water delivery across 500 miles of infrastructure.

Mr. Campbell highlighted key commitments under the contract, including funding SWP construction, operations, and maintenance, with no guarantee of water supply. Agency choices include determining water delivery amounts, engaging in transfers and exchanges, selecting delivery points, funding mechanisms (primarily through ad valorem taxes), and implementing local projects.

8. New Business – Discussion and Possible Action:

A. Review and Approve 2025 Board Committee Assignments

President Valdivia reviewed the 2025 board committee assignment listing.

On a motion by President Valdivia, seconded by Vice President Letulle, the board approved the 2025 Board Committee Assignments.

Approved by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Smith, Walton, Wargo, Letulle, Ball, Valdivia

Noes: None

Absent: Ybarra

Motion passed 6-0.

B. Discussion to direct staff to draft a resolution in support of the President of the United States' recent executive order demanding more water from the northern to the southern part of the state

Director Smith opened the discussion, distributing a copy of the executive order to the board and public. General Manager Lance Eckhart provided an overview of the recent executive order focused on maximizing water deliveries to Southern California. He highlighted the 15-day deadline for agencies to report back to the executive branch, emphasizing the urgency of the initiative. He clarified the distinction between the federally managed Central Valley Project (CVP), overseen by the Bureau of Reclamation, and the state-run State Water Project (SWP), managed by California's Department of Water Resources (DWR). While the projects share joint facilities, the order directs the Bureau of Reclamation to ensure state agencies do not interfere with federal operations aimed at increasing water deliveries.

Mr. Eckhart stressed that environmental regulations, particularly the Endangered Species Act, remain the biggest obstacle to water transfers, rather than issues related to conveyance, subsidence, or hydrology. The order directs the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce to assess water supply and storage projects impacted by these regulations and to identify, suspend, revise, or rescind regulations that unduly burden such projects. Additionally, within 30 days, agencies must evaluate land management practices to promote a reliable water supply nationwide.

The discussion also touched on disaster management, including flooding concerns and FEMA's role. Mr. Eckhart noted that while the executive order aims to improve coordination between state and federal water systems, details regarding implementation remain unclear. The overarching goal is to facilitate water movement from Northern to Southern California while reducing regulatory inefficiencies and promoting inter-agency collaboration. Further updates will follow pending the 15-day report to the executive branch.

Director Smith read into the record a letter from Friant Water Authority in support of the executive order, and asked the board to consider drafting a resolution and subsequent press releases in support of Trump's administration executive order dated January 25, 2025, demanding the release of additional state water project water to the Southern California region, supporting all provisions related to water

use, conveyance and storage. Resolution to be brought forward at the next board meeting for consideration and approval.

The Board engaged in a thorough discussion regarding the content of the resolution and the recipients to whom it would be directed. President Valdivia opened the floor for public comment.

Julie Hutchinson stressed the urgency of expediting federal water projects, citing Banning Heights' ongoing water crisis since 2020. Ms. Hutchinson urged the Board to consider federal accountability in any resolution, as bureaucratic delays, particularly NEPA regulations, are hindering progress on the flume reconstruction project. She emphasized that the executive order is a call to action for federal agencies to streamline processes and allocate funding for critical water infrastructure.

Dan Jaggers, General Manager of Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District emphasized the importance of supporting California's water projects, noting that the region has invested over \$1 billion in the State Water Project, Sites Reservoir, and DCP for a 50% water supply. He stressed that while moving water down the State Water Project is essential, local water extraction efforts are equally impacted by regulations, such as the Chromium-6 restrictions in groundwater wells. Mr. Jaggers encouraged a broad and pragmatic approach in drafting the resolution to address both water recharge and extraction challenges, as well as operational constraints caused by excessive legislation. He highlighted the need for realistic solutions in water management policies and urged continued advocacy for holistic programs that ensure reliable water access, particularly in emergency situations.

Daniel Slawson, President, and Andy Ramirez, Secretary, of the Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District expressed their support for the item.

Following further Board discussion, Director Ball moved, and Director Smith seconded, a motion directing staff and counsel to draft a resolution addressing water usage, storage, and conveyance in support of the President's executive order. The resolution will be included on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Approved by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Smith, Walton, Wargo, Letulle, Ball, Valdivia

Noes: None

Absent: Ybarra

Motion passed 6-0.

9. Reports - Directors and Committee Report

Directors reported attending the following meetings:

- January 10, 2025, Beaumont Chamber Breakfast (Valdivia)
- January 13, 2025, Banning Heights Mutual Water Company Board Meeting (Wargo)
- January 14, 2025, Banning City Council Meeting (Valdivia)

- January 14, 2025, Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD) Know Your Water Outreach at Hoffer Elementary (Wargo)
- January 14, 2025, Calimesa Chamber Breakfast (Valdivia)
- January 15, 2025, High Valleys Water District Board Meeting (Wargo, Valdivia)
- January 17, 2025, South Mesa Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the consolidation of the Hillcrest Mobile Home Park (Smith, Walton, Wargo, Ball & Valdivia)
- January 21, 2025, Beaumont City Council Meeting (Valdivia)
- January 21, 2025, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District Board Meeting (Wargo)
- January 22, 2025, Cherry Valley Mutual Water Companies Annual Shareholder Meeting (Ball)
- January 23, 2025, Heli-Hydrant Coordination meeting (Walton, Valdivia)
- January 23, 2025, Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District Board Meeting (Ball)

Director Smith suggested the addition of a standing line item on the agenda for presentations and recognitions.

Vice President Letulle had no comments.

Director Ball announced the Board Handbook Committee will convene Thursday, January 29, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

President Valdivia requested that Counsel Stewart provide a report on AB2302 at the next board meeting.

10. Topics for Future Agendas

Director Ball requested regular updates to the Board on relevant developments within the new administration, suggesting a periodic legislative update to highlight key issues as they arise.

Secretary Walton requested that a future agenda item be added to discuss the appointment of a Deputy Secretary of the Board to handle administrative and routine tasks. He noted this approach aligns with practices in other agencies, such as the Valley Water District, which appointed its General Manager as Secretary. While acknowledging the district's history, Walton emphasized that having an elected Board Secretary alongside a Deputy Secretary managing day-to-day responsibilities would be beneficial to the agency.

Director Smith suggested a restructuring of titles to establish a clear succession plan, suggesting a hierarchy that includes positions such as Vice President, Second Vice President, and similar roles.

President Valdivia emphasized the need to incorporate infrastructure improvements into upcoming budget discussions, citing handicap parking restriping as an example of minor projects to consider.

11. Announcements

President Valdivia reviewed the following announcements:

- A. Regular Board Meeting, February 3, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.
- B. Water Conservation & Education Committee Meeting, February 11, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.
- C. Office closed February 17, 2025, in observance of Presidents' Day
- D. February 17, 2025, Regular Board Meeting rescheduled to February 24, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, President Valdivia adjourned the meeting at 8:22 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, February 3, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

Kevin Walton, Secretary of the Board
mvc