

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



**FROM:** Supervisor Ashley

**SUBMITTAL DATE:** November 24, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Water policy for report from San Gorgonio Pass Water Alliance

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive and file progress report from San Gorgonio Pass Water Alliance (Alliance) as well as copy of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by all members of the Alliance; and,
2. Continue to support the cooperative work among representatives in the San Gorgonio Pass area to identify challenges in water supply and water quality for the region, to develop mutually beneficial solutions that include coordinating plans and infrastructure development that ultimately delivers clean, reliable and affordable water supplies for the citizens of the San Gorgonio Pass area for the foreseeable future.

**BACKGROUND:**

In an era of limited public funding for vital water infrastructure sustaining a strong economy and healthy environment, the citizens of Riverside County benefit when agencies cooperate with each other by integrating land use planning and water resource development in ways that deliver multiple benefits in addition to securing a safe, reliable water supply.

Responsible leaders in the San Gorgonio Pass Area recognize a growing need to address changes in water quality and water supply conditions that are occurring in the San Gorgonio Pass area. These changes are expected to accelerate, and in the absence of cooperative action among water resource agencies and land use planning authorities, could negatively impact the quality of life for the residents and businesses of this vitally important region of Riverside County.

(Continued on page 2)

Marion Ashley, Supervisor  
Fifth District

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AGENDA NO.

3-8

**BACKGROUND:** (Continued)

In order to address these concerns and to accomplish the shared mission of all water agencies and land use authorities in the San Gorgonio Pass Area, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors unanimously supported the initiative of Supervisor Marion Ashley to convene a panel of representatives from every agency involved with water resources within the San Gorgonio Pass, in order to open the dialogue and explore the best options available to efficiently deliver clean, reliable supplies for water throughout the Pass Area for the foreseeable future.

The San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Task Force was convened as a result of this action, and has grown into a working group of professional water resource managers and water policy leaders committed to forging a new future for the Pass. The San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Task Force eventually adopted a shorter name – the San Gorgonio Water Alliance – and its members unanimously endorsed an historic Memorandum of Understanding to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes for the region and members of the Alliance.

# **San Gorgonio Pass Water Alliance**

## **Water Policy Progress Report to Riverside County Board of Supervisors**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2014

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors, at the request of 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor Marion Ashley, convened the San Gorgonio Pass regional Water Task Force in an effort to initiate interagency cooperation to integrate land use planning and water resource development in ways that secure a safe, reliable water supply.

The need for this regional Water Task Force became apparent at a Water Panel discussion at the 5<sup>th</sup> District Water, Transportation and Economic Development Summit, when all of the panelists agreed that water quality and supply reliability needed to improve through closer working relations among the water leaders in the Pass.

Additionally, water leaders in the San Gorgonio Pass recognized the need to address the quality of groundwater in some areas of the Pass. Groundwater quality has been and continues to be a matter of scrutiny by the Regional Water Quality Control Board responsible for ensuring nitrate levels do not exceed standards of the Clean Water Act. Elsewhere, water supply abundance in some areas of the Pass cannot be shared efficiently with drier areas due to insufficient infrastructure or in some cases a lack of mutually beneficial planning and agreement between agencies.

As a result, planning and investment that may otherwise deliver new supplies of secure, affordable water for the Pass area failed to move forward in several key instances. The leaders comprising the Alliance agree that this is not in the best interests of those who live, work and visit the Pass Area, particularly future generations who will benefit most from successful cooperation to achieve peace and prosperity in water policy matters throughout the Pass Area.

The Riverside County Supervisors charged this Water Task Force with:

- Identifying challenges in water supply and water quality for the region;
- Developing mutually beneficial solutions that include coordinating plans and infrastructure development;
- Ultimately delivering clean, reliable and affordable water supplies for the citizens of the San Gorgonio Pass area for the foreseeable future.

While Riverside County initiated the discussion, and County staff has helped facilitate progress, the outcomes are being developed by the local representatives from the water providers.

At the inception, convening the Water Task Force was challenging in that no centralized database of the watershed leadership existed and there was no precedent for the 13 agencies to gather with their representatives to address issues of regional water concern

Representatives of the 13 entities managing water resources in the San Gorgonio Pass began meeting monthly since the inception of the Regional Water Task Force in late 2012.

Consensus on priorities was quickly established with assistance from the Riverside County Economic Development Agency. A survey of the members was conducted to determine priorities for working together to ensure progress in meeting the founding objectives of the Task Force. Officers were appointed by the Task Force, a working budget and regular meeting schedule were adopted.

The survey identified "Interagency cooperation" as the highest priority for the representatives serving on the Task Force, followed by development of water resources, balancing supply/demand, recycled water development, improved storm water management, and regionally coordinated water use efficiency/conservation.

In the first several meetings, the Water Task Force members agreed to work together to identify the water quality and supply issues facing the Pass communities; and to develop consensus on a strategy for resolving these water issues locally, with minimal intervention or influence from regulators outside the community.

As the Task Force began to orient itself toward a regional focus, much discussion focused initially on the "real" purpose of the Task Force. Some members shared suspicions that the Task Force was being orchestrated as a means to control water outcomes in the Pass. To their credit, the members of the Task Force wrestled with this dilemma: How to convene a collective force of members without trampling the rights of the individual water agencies. Their solution was to redefine the purpose and mission of the Task Force through a historic Memorandum of Understanding (attached) and to create a new cooperative organization called the San Gorgonio Pass Water Alliance.

The Task Force eventually developed a Technical Committee comprised of the managers of the member agencies, for the purpose of advising the Task Force and sharing information/implementing mutually beneficial solutions as needed or directed by the Task Force. The Technical Committee has developed three working Committees

that meet monthly to focus on three areas requiring pragmatic actions to advance the interests of the Task Force. Those working groups are:

- **Recycled Water Committee**
  - The decision to create Recycled Water subCommittee of the TAC has required courage on the part of the TAC members. While recycled water holds promise to help resolve water resource management issues in the Pass, it is also an area where considerable disagreement remains. The commitment to meet and discuss these issues speaks well of the committee members and the leadership.
  - One example of the challenges facing recycled water development is presented in the community of Calimesa: City of Calimesa access to irrigation water from a recycled water line immediately adjacent to the a city park is not available due to a lack of agreement between the city and the water agency. As a result, citizens of Calimesa must pay for more expensive drinking water from scarce sources to be used to irrigate the park rather than using relatively less expensive and more reliable recycled water.
  
- **Outreach and Communications Committee**
  - Members of the public living in Pass Area communities have demonstrated a keen interest in the business of the Alliance.
  - Alliance members committed early to maintain complete transparency in governance and administration. All documents available to Directors of the Alliance are also readily distributed to the members of the public and members of the public are also welcome to attend any and all meetings of the Alliance.
  - The Outreach Committee has also taken on the task of establishing and maintaining a website for the Alliance that can provide stakeholder awareness and access to all activities, decision, and background data concerning the Alliance.
  
- **Conservation and Water Use Efficiency Committee**
  - Given the severity of the drought and the cutbacks of imported water from the State Water Project earlier in the year, Alliance members identified Water Use Efficiency and Conservation as an area where greater cooperation could benefit the entire region.
  - A survey comprised by the Water Resources Institute based at Cal State University San Bernardino was re-tooled by the subcommittee for the purpose of determining what, if any, Best Management Practices in water use efficiency are currently adopted among the Alliance members.
  - One of the outcomes of Alliance discussion of securing state grants from water bonds is that members now understand compliance with standard BMPs of water use efficiency is prerequisite to application for most categories of funding. Some Alliance members are more advanced than others in efficiency measures and conservation, so the Alliance survey is

intended to identify areas where mutual aid can strengthen both water savings and grant eligibility.

The monthly meetings of the Alliance allow for reports from the TAC as well as water expert presentations on topics and issues vital for understanding and adapting to the changing environment of water in California. Every agenda also provides time for a presentation by one of the member entities of the Alliance, in order for the broader membership and the community to better understand who they are, what they do, and their priorities for the future.

On occasion, the Alliance has determined they will venture out as a group to tour the agencies and facilities, projects and programs that help sustain water resources for the region. A bus tour to accomplish this purpose was attended by representatives from every Alliance member agency, establishing a more thorough and unified understanding of the shared infrastructure and the unique relationships underpinning water resources in the Pass.

In the course of regular monthly interaction, Alliance members have found there are additional areas of benefit derived from mutual aid.

- Coalition building to defend historic water rights
  - A federal agency announced that a water flume on National forest property would need to be removed even though it conveys historic water rights for a small mutual water company as well as the second largest city in the Pass.
  - The Alliance members rose up and responded in defense of the threatened water resources, and the federal agency backed away, temporarily. Alliance members quickly realized that a strong, united coalition is not an abstract feel-good exercise. In some instances, as when the sole source of water may be arbitrarily cut off, a well-coordinated local coalition is absolutely necessary for survival.
- Expansion of mutual aid network for emergency response
  - A wildfire damaged facilities and destroyed equipment used by a small independent water agency serving citizens in the San Jacinto Mountain foothills. Arrangements for supplies and equipment loan were quickly and efficiently arranged among members of the Alliance eager to help their neighbors.
  - Members of the Alliance that were formerly isolated in terms of emergency response are now connected to regional and state resources through the Emergency Response Network of the Inland Empire (ERNIE). Through this mutual aid assistance agreement, Alliance members now look forward giving and receiving assistance in response to incidents that require resources beyond the capability of the local utility.

These latter two examples of the value of cooperation, more than the lofty discussions of integrated regional watershed planning, have driven home the value of this Alliance to several of the smaller water entities who are members. Perhaps this is why some of the smallest members of the Alliance with the least amount of cash flow were among the first to pay the \$1500 membership dues for the Alliance after signing the MOU.

The Alliance members also understand that a cooperative working group is valuable for more than emergency response and water right defense – it is now indispensable when applying for state grant funding through water bonds. The largest pots of money in recent water bonds are dedicated to expenditure in watersheds where water entities plan and implement projects cooperatively under Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plans. In many cases, the most successful efforts are pursued and administered under a formal joint powers structure. While the Alliance has not taken the steps necessary to form a JPA, the leaders are weighing this option in light of the massive water bond that passed on November 4

Next steps for the Alliance are to continue refining the structures and processes for governance and planning. Enormous infrastructure needs are facing this region as water leaders are recognizing that partnerships are in many cases not merely a means to a financial strategy, in some significant instances they ARE the financial strategy.

Respectfully submitted by:

**Debbie Franklin, Chairwoman**

On behalf of the 13 member agencies of the San Geronio Pass Water Alliance

Memorandum of Understanding  
San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance  
A Coordination of Regional Water Providers and Local Government

**1. Background**

The San Gorgonio Pass Area local governments and water districts understand that regular coordination, collaboration, and communication will result in improved management of water resources at local and regional levels. On May 2013, County Supervisor Marion Ashley appointed, with the approval of the entire County Board of Supervisors, a Pass Water Policy Panel. The Panel is comprised of representatives in the San Gorgonio Pass Area. The Panel, known as the San Gorgonio Pass Regional Water Alliance (SGPRWA) is to identify challenges in water supply and water quality for the region, to develop mutually beneficial solutions that include coordination plans and infrastructure development that ultimately delivers clean, reliable, and affordable water supplies for the citizens of the San Gorgonio Pass area for the foreseeable future.

**2. Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to establish the mutual understandings of San Gorgonio Regional Water Alliance (SGRWA) with respect to certain voluntary joint efforts toward regional coordination, collaboration, and communication of water resource projects and programs.

**3. Goals**

The Goals of the SGRWA are:

**3.1** To improve coordination, collaboration, and communication among local government water purveyors in the San Gorgonio regional area, to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering water supplies. Services are local control.

**3.2** To develop and promote common water strategies that will, when implemented, fulfil the water demands of the regional area for the foreseeable future.

**4. Definitions**

**4.1 San Gorgonio Regional Water Alliance.** Participating county, local governments, and water purveyors in the San Gorgonio Regional area.

**4.2 Signatories.** The parties signing this MOU (Signatories) constitute the current participants.

**5. Mutual Understandings**

**5.1 Participation.** Participation is strictly voluntary and may be terminated at any time without recourse. San Gorgonio local governments and water purveyors will be invited to be Signatories.



**5.2 Activities.** Efforts pursued under this agreement will remain consistent with and will not exceed the current authority for any individual participating local government and water purveyor. Efforts will include information dissemination and sharing between local governments, water purveyors, public outreach, and education and other activities as mutually agreed upon from time to time among the Signatories.

**5.2.1** It is anticipated that the Signatories will meet at least monthly with subcommittee meetings happening in between full Alliance meetings.

**5.3 Funding.** Individual Signatories are not required to commit funding to any other Signatory of the Alliance. Recognizing this is a voluntary, non-binding agreement, Signatories agree to commit such resources as are required to implement actions agreed upon per Section 5.4 herein within their individual service areas, subject to approval and direction of the governing bodies of each Signatory.

**5.4 Decision Making.** Consensus will be sought when the need for decisions arises. Decisions lacking consensus may be implemented by such individual Signatories that choose to do so, but said decisions may not be considered activities of the Alliance.

**5.5 Non-Binding Nature.** This document and participation under this MOU are non-binding, and in no way suggest that a local municipal government or water purveyor may not continue its own activities as each government and purveyor is expected to continue its own policies and procedures, and undertake efforts to secure project funding from any source. A local government or purveyor may withdraw from participation at any time.

**5.6 Termination.** Signatories may terminate their involvement at any time with no recourse.

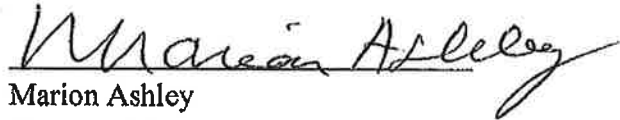
## **6. Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding**

We, the undersigned representatives of our respective governing bodies, acknowledge the above as our understanding of how the San Gorgonio Regional Water Alliance Coordination, Collaboration, and Communication MOU will be implemented.

This MOU will be revisited annually.

**[SIGNATURES ON NEXT PAGE]**

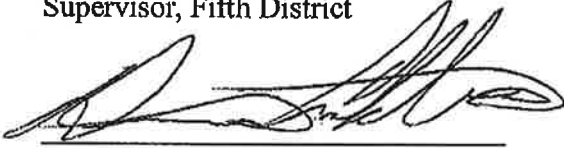
Dated this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2014



Marion Ashley  
County of Riverside  
Supervisor, Fifth District



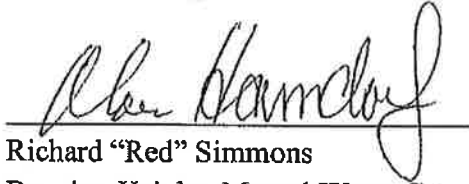
Deborah Franklin  
City of Banning  
Mayor



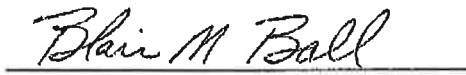
David Castaldo  
City of Beaumont  
Councilmember



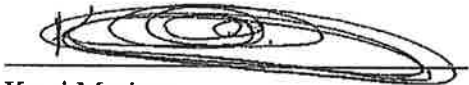
Jeff Hewitt  
City of Calimesa  
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Richard "Red" Simmons  
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Blair Ball  
Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water Dist.  
Director, Division 5



Kerri Mariner  
Cabazon Water District  
Director



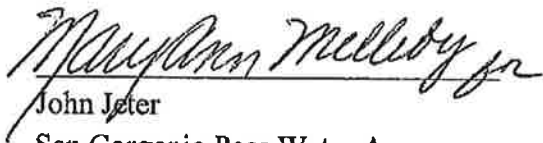
Ernest Wright  
High Valleys Water district  
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Russ Martin  
Mission Springs Water District  
Chairman



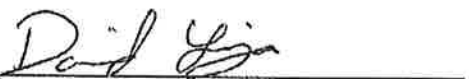
Robert Martin      Tom Linton  
Morongo Band of Mission Indians  
Tribal Council Member



John Jeter  
San Geronio Pass Water Agency  
President



George Jorritsma  
South Mesa Mutual Water Company  
President



David Leja  
Yucaipa Valley Water District  
Director