2026 Southeast Water Coalition Strategic Plan

Message from the Board

Welcome to the Southeast Water Coalition's (SEWC) Strategic Plan. This document is a blueprint for how SEWC will respond to current challenges and make the best of future opportunities for the benefit of our customers. It confirms our vision, mission, goals, strategies, and objectives as a Joint Powers Authority dedicated to providing regional water service, supporting the high quality of life and economy of the region.

SEWC was created in July 1991 and is comprised of eleven member cities. The SEWC "region" represents the combined boundaries of the member cities. These agencies formed a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to improve and protect the quantity and quality of their regional water supply. SEWC's water purveyors service a population of approximately 670,000 in a service area of 93+ square miles.

The initial purpose for the formation of the Southeast Water Coalition was to protect the Central Groundwater Basin from contamination migrating from the San Gabriel Valley Groundwater Basin. Over the years, SEWC has worked diligently with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve the monitoring of groundwater contaminants, determine cost-effective remediation to protect the Whittier Narrows and Central Groundwater Basin from the South El Monte plume, and lobby the EPA for early implementation of remediation projects.

The SEWC Policy Board consists of one representative (normally a Councilmember) from each member city. The Administrative Entity carries out the policies of the Policy Board and consists of one representative from each member city. It may include representatives that are employees of Public Utility Commission-regulated private water companies providing retail water service within the SEWC area, ex-officio members, or non-voting advisory members nominated by California Department of Water Resources. The member cities are:

- Commerce
- Cerritos
- Downey

- Lakewood
- Norwalk
- Paramount
- Pico Rivera
- Santa Fe Springs
- South Gate
- Vernon
- Whittier

SEWC's Policy Board is charting a course for continued success in the future through the development and execution of this Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan defines the vision, mission, goals, and future business strategy for SEWC. Our commitments to the communities we serve fall into three areas: Groundwater Protection, Advocacy and Communications, and Funding. These commitments are established as the six goals of the Strategic Plan. Our Board actions will consistently support these commitments and we will track the progress against this plan, revisiting the Strategic Plan regularly to adjust as conditions warrant.

Board Member Frank Aurelio Yokoyama
City of Cerritos

Board Member Kevin Lainez
City of Commerce

Board Member Horacio Ortiz
City of Downey

Board Member Todd Rogers
City of Lakewood

Board Member Ana Valencia
City of Norwalk

Board Member Isabel Aguayo
City of Paramount

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Board Member Andrew Lara
City of Pico Rivera

Board Member Joe Angel Zamora
City of Santa Fe Springs

Board Member Maria del Pilar Avalos
City of South Gate

Board Member Melissa Ybarra
City of Vernon

Board Member Octavio Martinez
City of Whittier

Administrative Entity Members

- Jose Arroyo-Gutierrez – Cerritos
- Alvin Papa - Cerritos
- Jaime Morales – Cerritos
- Andrew Caraveo – Commerce
- Dan Mueller – Downey
- Matt Robertson – Downey
- Derek Nguyen – Lakewood
- Anthony Manzano – Lakewood
- Albert Mendoza – Norwalk
- Adriana Figueroa – Paramount
- Michelle Tse – Paramount
- Michelle Müller - Paramount
- Adrian Rodriguez – Pico Rivera
- Sandra Castro – Pico Rivera
- Frank Sanchez – Santa Fe Springs
- Sarina Morales-Choate – Santa Fe Springs



- Chris Castillo – South Gate
- Derwin Dy – South Gate
- Art Cervantes – South Gate
- Gladis Deras – South Gate
- Joanna Moreno – Vernon
- Ray Cordero – Whittier
- Kyle Cason – Whittier

Consultant Support

- Koa Consulting, Inc.

Introduction

The Strategic Plan was developed under the guidance of the SEWC Board of Directors and Administrative Entity. This team met over an approximate six-month period including multiple Administrative Entity and Board workshops.

The focus of strategic deliberations was the recognition of key issues SEWC will face in the next five-year planning horizon (and beyond). Workshops identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis) that the Strategic Plan should consider. Major challenges for SEWC include actively tracking and synthesizing information for Policy Board consideration related to protecting the Central Basin from contamination, advocating for water policy that is in the interest of the Central Basin, and seeking funding to support SEWC programs and member projects. The Board adopted the original Strategic Plan in April of 2017, and the revised and current version was adopted in December of 2025.

The five-year Strategic Plan will be implemented and tracked through the annual budget process. Strategic Plan activities will be budgeted in later years and subject to Board review and approval. In the future, staff will ensure the proposed budgets reflect the priorities established in the Strategic Plan.

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Vision Statement



"SEWC is a valued advocate for safe and reliable water supplies that support the quality of life and economy of the southeast Los Angeles region"

Mission Statement

SEWC's mission is to advocate for water policies that ensure the availability of reliable, quality, and affordable water.

Values

The Policy Board and Administrative Entity have adopted the following values to guide the internal and external interactions of SEWC:

- Integrity - the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles
- Open communication – we will communicate in an unreserved and objective fashion
- Collaboration – we will work jointly to achieve the Coalition's goals
- Public stewardship of resources – we will carefully and prudently manage the resources that are entrusted to us
- Transparency – our Coalition activities will be visible and information/deliberations accessible

Goals / Strategies / Objectives

The Board developed three goals that represent SEWC's key commitments to the community it serves. SEWC is committed to:

- **Goal 1: Groundwater Protection** – SEWC will provide leadership and collaborate to protect and sustain the Central Basin groundwater supply of the SEWC region
- **Goal 2: Advocacy and Communications** – SEWC will track, develop, coordinate, and communicate input into water policy affecting the SEWC region
- **Goal 3: Funding** – SEWC will seek funding for water resource projects and programs benefiting the SEWC region

Goal 1: Groundwater Protection – SEWC will provide leadership and collaborate to protect and sustain the Central Basin groundwater supply of the SEWC region

Strategy 1.1 – Enhance understanding of area hydrogeology:



Objective 1.1.1 Support tracking of groundwater quality/plume information (including modeling)

Objective 1.1.2 Engage Water Replenishment agencies, to periodically update SEWC on existing contamination plume movement

Strategy 1.2 – Identify and support projects that enhance and protect groundwater in the SEWC region to "shovel-ready" status to take advantage of funding opportunities:

Objective 1.2.1 Develop a SEWC region plan including projects, policies, or programs that protect and enhance water quality within the SEWC region

Objective 1.2.2 Identify and collaborate to develop the conceptual project components required to achieve "shovel-ready" status, including preparation of preliminary studies for regional projects (including groundwater storage)

Objective 1.2.3 Analyze opportunities for developing system interties between member agencies to increase water supply resiliency

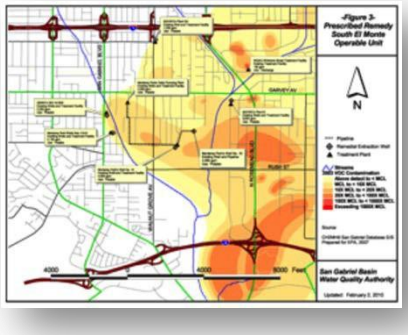
Goal 2: Advocacy and Communications – SEWC will track, develop, coordinate, and communicate input into water policy affecting the SEWC region

Strategy 2.1 – As directed by the Board, monitor and advocate for improvements to State, federal, and regional water policy and regulations:

Objective 2.1.1 Monitor and track State, federal and regional water-related legislation including tracking of Central Basin Water Association legislative reports

Objective 2.1.2 Develop and present water policy positions to the Board for action

Objective 2.1.3 Advocate Board positions



Objective 2.1.4 Support good governance policy changes at regional water agencies

Objective 2.1.5 Actively develop relationships with regulators

Strategy 2.2 – Work in partnership with the Gateway Water Management Authority (GWMA) to implement the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) for the southeast Los Angeles County and lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed:

Objective 2.2.1 Establish SEWC project priorities

Objective 2.2.2 Attend meetings of the GWMA

Objective 2.2.3 Advocate for SEWC priorities

Strategy 2.3 – Represent the regions' interests before local, State and federal agencies:

Objective 2.3.1 Work in partnership with USEPA and other agencies to continue to protect Central Basin drinking water wells from detectable contamination

Objective 2.3.2 Work in partnership with USEPA, State and local agencies to continue to prioritize cleanup of the Omega Chemical Site, to ensure compliance with State and federal drinking water standards



Objective 2.3.3 Work in partnership with DTSC, federal, and local agencies to continue to prioritize cleanup of the Whittier Narrows Operable Unit (WNOU), to ensure compliance with State and federal drinking water standards

Objective 2.3.4 Track the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority (SGBWQA) / South El Monte Operable Unit (SEMOU) barrier project and the long term SEMOU remediation project by USEPA/SGBWQA

Objective 2.3.5 Track the Water Quality Protection Program monitoring results

Strategy 2.4 – Support the development of recycled water:

Objective 2.4.1 Track the Groundwater Reliability Improvement Project (GRIP), now operational as the Albert Robles Center for Water Recycling & Environmental Learning (ARC), including monitoring of costs, benefits, and mitigation of impacts on local agencies

Objective 2.4.2 Track and engage the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County /Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Joint Water Pollution Control Facility recycled water indirect potable reuse project, and other potable reuse projects that affect the SEWC region

Objective 2.4.3 Track other regional recycled water projects (e.g. Central Basin MWD projects)

Strategy 2.5 – Communications: SEWC will inform, engage and respond to the community it serves:

Objective 2.5.1 Prepare coordinated message points for members to ensure uniform factual communications

Strategy 2.6 – Track and participate in area water policy groups:

Objective 2.6.1 Monitor Central Basin Municipal Water District activities

Objective 2.6.2 Monitor WRD activities

Objective 2.6.3 Monitor Central Basin Water Association activities

Objective 2.6.4 Participate in activities of the Central Basin Watermaster

Goal 3: Funding and Effective SEWC Administration – SEWC will seek funding for water resource projects and programs benefiting the SEWC region

Strategy 3.1 – Identify funding opportunities for SEWC priority projects:

Objective 3.1.1 Maintain an updated list of funding resources for SEWC region projects and programs

Objective 3.1.2 Where appropriate, identify, advocate and pursue local, State, and federal commitment to fund projects and programs (including groundwater contamination cleanup) in the SEWC region

Objective 3.1.3 Track funding success

Strategy 3.2 – Identify, advocate and pursue improvements to the State and federal funding process for water, wastewater, and storm water projects and facilities:

Objective 3.2.1 Engage in State and federal funding initiatives to ensure the terms are supportive of SEWC project funding objectives

Strategy 3.3 – Administration of SEWC:

Objective 3.3.1 Schedule and support the activities of the Administrative Entity and the Policy Board

Objective 3.3.2 Develop a staffing strategy/plan that meets the resource needs of SEWC Objective 3.3.3 Create and present annual budgets to the Policy Board for approval Objective 3.3.4 Effectively manage consultants to achieve the directives of the Policy Board

Objective 3.3.5 Develop an "on-boarding" process for new SEWC Administrative Entity and Policy Board members (consider mentoring, communication of JPA, responsibilities, "SEWC 101", etc.)

Objective 3.3.6 Periodically review JPA documents to ensure they are current

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Implementation

The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document that will be reviewed and updated periodically. It will be used in planning and budgeting the activities of SEWC. Implementation will occur through the SEWC management plans, action/implementation plans, programs, and the allocation of resources through the annual budget process.

We will establish clear priorities for implementation of our Strategic Plan in order to use our limited resources as effectively as possible. We will set these priorities using criteria developed by the Policy Board and staff, and will assess them regularly to ensure they reflect changes in our internal and external environments. We will effectively communicate these priorities so that staff can adjust their work program and our customers and ratepayers will understand the basis for our actions.

Glossary

The following key terms are used in this strategic plan:

Goal – SEWC's commitment to the community it serves

Issue – a problem or opportunity facing SEWC

Mission – the primary reason(s) for the existence of the organization

Objective – measurable work activity that, when accomplished, will directly lead to the success of the strategy

Plume – areas of elevated concentrations of groundwater contaminants

Strategy – how an issue is solved to achieve the goal

Strategic Plan – a structured plan to drive SEWC to achieve its goals

SWOT Analysis – description of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to identify areas of focus in the strategic plan

Vision – what effect SEWC aspires to have