Southeast Water Coalition
A joint powers authority to protect the Central Groundwater Basin

MINUTES OF THE SOUTHEAST WATER COALITION
REGULAR MEETING OF THE POLICY BOARD
THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Southeast Water Coalition Joint Powers Authority was held on Thursday, August 7, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Norwalk Arts & Sports Complex, Sproul Room, 13000 Clarkdale Avenue, Norwalk CA 90650. Chair Ana Valencia called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. At the time the meeting was called to order, a quorum of members was present.

Ms. Madeline Gallagher took attendance, and the following Board of Directors members were present:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jennifer Hong	City of Cerritos
Horacio Ortiz	City of Downey
Todd Rogers	City of Lakewood
Ana Valencia	City of Norwalk
Isabel Aguayo	City of Paramount
Andrew Lara	City of Pico Rivera
Joe Angel Zamora	City of Santa Fe Springs
Maria del Pilar Avalos	City of South Gate
Octavio Martinez	City of Whittier

STAFF AND GUESTS ON SIGN-IN SHEET:

Alvin Papa	City of Cerritos – AE
Dan Mueller	City of Downey – AE
Derek Nguyen	City of Lakewood – AE
Michelle Tse	City of Paramount – AE
Derwin Dy	City of South Gate – AE
Ray Cordero	City of Whittier – AE
Glen Kau	AE Chair, City of Norwalk
Jacque Koontz	City of Norwalk Staff
Michael Jea	City of Norwalk Staff
Madeline Gallagher	SEWC Staff

Nicholas Ghirelli	Richards Watson & Gershon
Jody Fortunato	Cossich Law (virtual)

ITEM 2 – PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ITEM 3 - CONSENT CALENDAR

Director Rogers moved to approve the consent calendar.

The motion was seconded by Director Avalos and was approved by the following voice vote:

AYES:	**Hong, Ortiz, Rogers, Valencia, Aguayo, Lara, Zamora, Avalos.**
NOES:	**None.**
ABSTAIN:	**None.**

ITEM 4 - PRESENTATION ON PFAS LITIGATION

Mr. Glen Kau provided a general summary regarding PFAS litigation and its impact on water systems and introduced Mr. Fortunato from the law firm of Cossich Law. He stated that Cossich Law currently representing several SEWC cities in the lawsuit and will provide an update.

Mr. Fortunato reported that the first payments from the 3M settlement have already been distributed, with the second round of payments set to begin. These initial two payments are expected to cover approximately 65% of the total settlement amount. Following the second payment, subsequent annual payments will be made each summer until 2033. For the DuPont settlement, an initial payment is anticipated by the end of this year or early 2026. He also noted that payments from Tyco and BASF are also expected by the end of the year, as their claims are currently being assessed.

Mr. Fortunato also mentioned that a special needs fund has been established for public entities to cover costs associated with dealing with PFAS contamination. He noted that the fund is discretionary and does not have a formal allocation procedure. A supplemental fund has also been created for entities involved in the Phase 1 action fund. This fund allows claimants to file additional claims before 2030 for wells or water sources that initially tested below 4 parts per trillion (ppt) but later test at or above that level. Fortunato urged members to be proactive in submitting these claims, as the fund has a finite amount of money.

Fortunato also provided updates on other legal actions, including new personal injury claims with a trial set in October. He also discussed ongoing "dirt cases," which involve identifying PFAS contamination at airports and fire training centers.

During the meeting's Q&A session, Director Lara asked about the supplemental claims until 2030 and what would happen if a city drilled in a well and it came back with PFAS. Fortunato clarified that to file a supplemental claim, a new well must be attached to a system that was part of the original Phase 1 claim. However, costs for a new well drilled due to PFAS contamination could potentially be covered under a special needs claim.

Discussion also took place regarding potential plans in the event there were roll backs to the regulatory benchmarks within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and what would happen to the lawsuits and payments as a result. Mr. Fortunato assured SEWC members that the settlement agreements are legally binding contracts between the defendants and claimants. Therefore, any potential changes to regulatory benchmarks by the EPA would not affect the terms of the settlement, and payments would continue as agreed.

There were no further questions.

ITEM 5 - GENERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Kau introduced Mr. Ghirelli of RWG to provide a general legislative update regarding three bills SEWC has been tracking related to PFAS.

Mr. Ghirelli began with Assembly Bill 794 ("AB-794") which would authorize the State Water Board to issue emergency regulations setting maximum contaminant levels ("MCL") for primary and secondary drinking water standards and require the State Water Board to adopt an emergency regulation and initiate a primary drinking water standard for PFAS by December 31, 2026. He noted that since the bill was introduced, the EPA noted they were going to extend the compliance deadline for a couple of years. So, in response to that, there was an amendment to the bill that stated any emergency regulation couldn't be earlier than EPA's compliance deadline. He also confirmed that this bill is still in the Assembly but noted that this bill did not pass out of the Assembly prior to the legislative deadline and is now inactive. It was largely opposed by public water systems, but this does not mean that the state water board does not have the ability to adopt an MCL through the regular process.

He then reported on Senate Bill 454 ("SB-454") which would create the PFAS Mitigation Fund ("Fund"), to be managed by the State Water Resources Control Board. The Fund's contents would be used to assist local public entities like water

suppliers and wastewater operators in covering the costs of treating PFAS contaminated water to remove the forever chemicals. Mr. Ghirelli stated that this bill unanimously passed in the Senate and is now pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee's suspense file, awaiting to see if it will progress in this legislative session. He also noted that this bill has limited effectiveness because it has no funding source. Mr. Ghirelli confirmed that there would be no impact on taxes.

Mr. Ghirelli concluded his report with House of Representatives Bill 1267 ("HR-1267") which proposes the "Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act," to exempt certain entities from liability for release of PFAS substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act ("CERCLA"). Mr. Ghirelli noted that this bill is still pending in Congress with no action being taken to date by the House of Representatives. He stated that there will likely be more action from EPA.

There were no further questions.

Director Octavio Martinez entered the meeting at 7:28 PM.

ITEM 6 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING GENERAL COUNSEL PROPOSED FEE AMENDMENT

Mr. Kau introduced Richards Watson & Gershon's (RWG) proposal to increase the fee for General Counsel services. He noted that RWG's no-term contract agreement has billing rates set at $170 per hour, which have not been adjusted since 2006. The proposal requests a gradual increase in billing rates to be phased in over the next four years. Director Avalos thanked Mr. Ghirelli and the RWG team for their generosity and noted that the increase is reasonable and the gradual increase is appreciated.

Director Zamora moved to approve the following:

a) Approve the requested billing rate fee proposal from Richards Watson & Gershon.

The motion was seconded by Director Aguayo and was approved by the following voice vote:

AYES:	**Hong, Ortiz, Rogers, Valencia, Aguayo, Lara, Zamora, Avalos, Martinez.**
NOES:	**None.**
ABSTAIN:	**None.**

ITEM 7 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERSHIP OF SEWC

Mr. Kau initiated a discussion regarding the formalization of a written process for admitting new members into SEWC and creation of a member benefits one-pager and a map of SEWC cities surrounding cities.

Director Martinez noted that while the potential expansion of SEWC members makes sense, he would also like to see more involvement from current SEWC members.

Board members agreed that AE members should draft a letter introducing SEWC and what membership entails. The letter should include the cost of membership and member benefits and should be sent out with a copy of the updated Strategic Plan, member benefits one-pager, and new membership process one-pager.

Board members also requested to see a final version of the SEWC map in color at the next Board meeting along with a recommendation by the AE of which additional cities could be invited to join SEWC.

ITEM 8 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

Mr. Kau provided a general update regarding the Strategic Plan which was discussed at past meetings. He reported that there was general consensus at the last AE meeting to bring the more recent Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 2017, to the Board for direction. Mr. Kau provided a couple of minor suggestions from the AE and opened it up for a discussion.

Board members pointed out that the names of Board and AE members need to be updated, but that overall, there were no major changes needed at this time. Mr. Ghirelli also confirmed that per the JPA, new SEWC members can be any entity that is otherwise concerned about water and within the LA region.

ITEM 9 – BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Director Valencia and Director Avalos welcomed everyone back to school.

ITEM 10 – ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY CHAIR/LEAD AGENCY COMMENTS

Mr. Kau noted that Board Members had previously expressed interest in attending the MWD Pure Water Tour and that surveys were sent out. He stated that a tour was scheduled for Tuesday, August 12th at 10:00 am, but at least 10 attendees were needed for the tour.

Mr. Kau also made an announcement for Board Members to please fill out the forms for stipends if they haven't already.

ITEM 11 - ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

The next regular Southeast Water Coalition Board Meeting will be on October 2, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Norwalk Arts & Sports Complex, Sproul Room, 13000 Clarkdale Avenue, Norwalk CA 90650.

Ana Valencia

Ana Valencia, Chair

12/4/25

Date