



## **SAN ANTONIO BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY**

### **NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the San Antonio Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency ("Agency" or "SABGSA") Board of Directors ("Board") will hold a regularly scheduled **Board Meeting** at **6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, August 19, 2025** at the **Los Alamos Community Services District** located at **82 St. Joseph Street, Los Alamos, CA 93440**. Virtual options are available for public participation.<sup>1</sup>

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83127401605?pwd=WHpIQmZTR2hoY2NWa3J2MDczbnhtUT09>

Meeting ID: 831 2740 1605 Passcode: 203727

Dial: (669) 900 6833

### **SAN ANTONIO BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (SABGSA)**

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA**

**Tuesday, August 19, 2025**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL**

#### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

#### **3. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT APPEARING ON THE AGENDA**

The Board will receive public comments on items not appearing on the agenda and within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Agency. The Board will not enter into a detailed discussion, answer questions, or take any action on any items presented during public comments. At the Board's discretion, any issue raised during Public Comment may be referred to the Executive Director or other staff for administrative action or scheduled on a subsequent agenda for discussion. Persons wishing to speak on specific agenda items should do so at the time specified for those items. The presiding Chair shall limit public comments to no more than three minutes.

#### **4. CONSENT ITEMS**

##### **a. Approve Minutes from July 15, 2025, Regular Meeting**

##### **b. Agency Finances, Budget, and Training**

- i. The Board will receive a report from the accountant regarding finances and expenses for July 2025.
- ii. The Board will receive a report regarding training.

#### **5. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

##### **a. Executive Director Update**

- Update on activities performed by the Executive Director

##### **b. San Antonio Basin Water District Update**

- Update on San Antonio Basin Water District activities

##### **c. Advisory Committee Updates**

- Update on Advisory Committee activities

##### **d. Board Member Updates**

- Board members will provide any updates relevant to SABGSA

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<sup>1</sup> SABGSA will make reasonable efforts to make the meeting accessible virtually; however, if one of the virtual options are unavailable due to technological issues, you are invited to take advantage of the other options, including in-person attendance.

## **6. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

### **a. Review SABGSA Response to Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report**

On June 13, 2025, the 2024-25 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury released a report titled “Water Management in Santa Barbara County Keep Up the Good Work”. Pursuant to California Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Grand Jury requests each entity named in the report to respond to the findings and recommendations within the specified 90-day statutory time limit. The Board will discuss and consider SABGSA’s written response. The Board may take action and/or provide specific direction to SABGSA staff and/or SABGSA’s legal counsel related to this item.

### **b. Informational Presentation from Sam Taylor, Taylor Drilling & Pump, Regarding Best Practices for Flow Meter Selection and Installation**

Sam Taylor, Taylor Drilling & Pump, will provide an informational presentation on industry best practices related to metering, including guidance on selecting appropriate flow meters, ensuring proper installation, and maintaining calibration standards to support operational efficiency. The intent of this presentation is to offer landowners practical information and resources to ensure compliance with SABGSA Ordinance 25-001 requiring well meter Installation and reporting of groundwater extraction. The Board may take action and/or provide specific direction to SABGSA staff related to this item.

## **7. ADJOURN**

**NEXT MEETING: September 16, 2025, at 6pm**



**SAN ANTONIO BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (SABGSA)**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**UNAPPROVED MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, July 15, 2025**

1. **CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL** – The meeting was called to order by Chair Randy Sharer at 6:00pm at the Los Alamos Community Services District, located at 82 St. Joseph Street, Los Alamos, CA. Members of the public had the option to participate virtually or in-person.

**Board of Directors Present:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Directors Absent:** Patrice Mosby

**Alternates present, but not acting on behalf of a Director:** Jim Stollberg

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT APPEARING ON THE AGENDA**

No public comment.

4. **CONSENT ITEMS**

a. **Minutes from June 17, 2025, SABGSA Board Meeting**

**Motion by Director Merrill, second by Director Wrather to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2025 Board meeting, as presented.**

**Ayes:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Nos:** None; **Absent:** Patrice Mosby; **Abstain:** None

b. **Agency Finances, Budgeting, and Training**

**Motion by Director Chabot, second by Director Durant to approve the financial report dated June 30, 2025, as presented.**

**Ayes:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Nos:** None; **Absent:** Patrice Mosby; **Abstain:** None

5. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

a. **SABGSA Executive Director Updates**

- Ordinance 25-001 (Well Metering & Groundwater Extraction Reporting):
  - Since the June 17, 2025 board meeting, the SABGSA did not receive any communications or inquiries from Basin landowners regarding Ordinance 25-001.
  - SABGSA will invite experts to present on meter selection, installation, irrigation efficiency, etc. at future board meetings. The first presentation is set for August 19, 2025.
- The SABGSA submitted a funding request to the SABWD on July 11, 2025 for \$25,872.90 to cover invoices received this month.
- The 2024-25 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report titled "Water Management in Santa

Barbara, Keep Up the Good Work” was released on June 13, 2025. The SABGSA is required to respond to Findings #1 and #2 within 90 days. SABGSA Legal Counsel will present the draft response at the August 19, 2025 board meeting.

**b. San Antonio Basin Water District (SABWD) Update**

Executive Director Donna Glass reported that the San Antonio Basin Water District (SABWD) Board of Directors met on July 15, 2025.

- The SABWD approved a fund request from the SABGSA for \$25,872.90 to cover invoices received this month.
- The SABWD Board reviewed and approved the operating budget for FY 25-26. The total irrigated acres for FY 25-26 is 13,837, an increase of 436.53 irrigated acres.
- The SABWD Board reviewed and approved the Resolution Authorizing Levy and Collection of 2025-26 Assessment at a rate of \$30 per irrigated acre and \$0.30 per non-irrigated acre.
- There are two SABWD Board members with terms expiring at the end of November 2025. Update provided on the timeline and procedures for the two open positions.
- The Board reviewed and approved the Response to the Santa Barbara Grand Jury Report - Water Management in Santa Barbara County, Keep Up the Good Work.

**c. Advisory Committee Updates**

- The Advisory Committee did not meet in July 2025.

**d. Board Member Updates**

- None.

**6. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

**a. Review SABGSA Communication Plan Regarding Implementation of SABGSA’s Metering and Groundwater Extraction Reporting Requirements**

SABGSA staff presented the draft content of mailing #2 to landowners regarding the implementation of SABGSA’s Well Metering and Groundwater Extraction Reporting Program. The contents included the cover letter, program compliance summary, resource list, and well registration information (by APN) on file with the SABGSA. The Board did not propose any revisions and directed SABGSA staff to proceed with the mailing.

**Motion by *Director Merrill*, second by *Director Chabot* to approve the content of mailing #2 to landowners regarding implementation of SABGSA’s Metering and Groundwater Extraction Reporting Requirements, as presented.**

**Ayes:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Nos:** None; **Absent:** Patrice Mosby; **Abstain:** None

**b. Presentation from GSI Water Solutions Regarding the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) Barka Slough Climate Study**

Mike McAlpin, GSI Water Solutions, provided an overview of the key takeaways from USGS’ recent climate study “Simulated Effects of Future Water Availability and Protected Species Habitat” (Study) in the San Antonio Creek Valley Watershed.

- Alignment with GSP Objectives: The concerns and objectives addressed in the USGS Study are consistent with those outlined in the Basin’s approved Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). They align with several Sustainable Management Criteria (SMCs) that SABGSA actively monitors including chronic lowering of groundwater levels, changes in groundwater in storage, and depletion of interconnected surface water (and impacts to Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems – GDEs). These SMCs directly inform GSP implementation strategies and management priorities.

- **Climate Projections:** The Study's climate models do not project major changes in total annual precipitation. However, they do simulate shifts in timing, frequency, and intensity. In the future, this may impact surface runoff and percolation of precipitation with potential implications for managed aquifer recharge strategies (Flood-MAR/AG-MAR)
- **San Antonio Creek Integrated Model (SACIM):** The SACIM, developed as part of the Study, is available to SABGSA and could be utilized to evaluate future water availability scenarios and inform future groundwater management decisions (e.g., recharge projects, pumping scenarios, changes in groundwater in storage, etc.).

**c. Consider a Proposal from GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to Provide On-Call Services for FY 25-26**

The Board reviewed and discussed the proposed scope of work and associated fees for GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to provide on-call hydrogeological services for fiscal year 2025-26.

**Motion by *Director Merrill*, second by *Director Durant* to approve the proposal from GSI Water Solutions, Inc. for On-Call Hydrogeological Services for Fiscal Year 2025-26, dated July 8, 2025, in the amount of \$20,000, as presented.**

**Ayes:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Nos:** None; **Absent:** Patrice Mosby; **Abstain:** None

**d. Consider a Proposal from GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to Provide Planning and Oversight of Vegetation Trimming Along Access Trails to Wells Near Barka Slough**

The Board reviewed and discussed the proposed scope of work and associated fees for GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to provide planning and oversight of vegetation trimming along access trails to wells near Barks Slough that are included in SABGSA's Groundwater Level Monitoring Network.

**Motion by *Director Durant*, second by *Director Chabot* to approve the proposal from GSI Water Solutions, Inc. for Planning and Oversight of Vegetation Trimming Along Access Trails to Wells Near Barka Slough, dated June 26, 2025, in the amount of \$10,000, as presented.**

**Ayes:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Nos:** None; **Absent:** Patrice Mosby; **Abstain:** None

**e. Consider a Proposal from GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to Review SABGSA's Well Registration Data**

The Board reviewed and discussed the proposed scope of work and associated fees for GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to review SABGSA's well registration data to identify additional wells to be included in SABGSA's Groundwater Level Monitoring Network.

**Motion by *Director Merrill*, second by *Director Wrather* to approve the proposal from GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to Review SABGSA's Well Registration Data, dated July 10, 2025, in the amount of \$10,000, as presented.**

**Ayes:** Dan Chabot, Tom Durant, Barbara Landon, Kevin Merrill, Kenny Pata, Randy Sharer, Chris Wrather

**Nos:** None; **Absent:** Patrice Mosby; **Abstain:** None

**f. Q2 2025 Quarterly Groundwater Level Monitoring Report**

Chair Randy Sharer provided an overview of the Q2 2025 Quarterly Groundwater Level Monitoring Report prepared by GSI Water Solutions, Inc. The Q2 2025 report is posted on SABGSA's website.

**7. NEXT MEETING:** August 19, 2025 at 6pm at Los Alamos Community Services District.

**8. ADJOURN** – 7:15pm

**San Antonio Basin GSA**  
**Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual**  
**July 2025**

8% of the year has elapsed	Jul 25	Budget	\$ Over Budget	% of Budget
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>				
<b>Expense</b>				
<b>Administration and Operation</b>				
01Admininstrative Exp/Office Ex	5,439.88	75,900.00	-70,460.12	7.17%
02-Accountant	725.00	9,000.00	-8,275.00	8.06%
03-Comm Eng Grant Wrtnng NonGSP	0.00	25,000.00	-25,000.00	0.0%
04-Monitoring	13,816.95	110,000.00	-96,183.05	12.56%
05-Legal Counsel	122.00	35,000.00	-34,878.00	0.35%
06-Insurance	1,755.00	1,800.00	-45.00	97.5%
07-Audit Fees	0.00	4,000.00	-4,000.00	0.0%
09-GSP Related Costs-Annual Rep	0.00	80,000.00	-80,000.00	0.0%
10-GSP Implementation / PMAs	3,722.71	165,000.00	-161,277.29	2.26%
<b>Total Administration and Operation</b>	<b>25,581.54</b>	<b>505,700.00</b>	<b>-480,118.46</b>	<b>5.06%</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>25,581.54</b>	<b>505,700.00</b>	<b>-480,118.46</b>	<b>5.06%</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-25,581.54</b>	<b>-505,700.00</b>	<b>480,118.46</b>	<b>5.06%</b>
<b>Other Income/Expense</b>				
<b>Other Income</b>				
11 Operating Transfers	25,872.90	550,000.00	-524,127.10	4.7%
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>25,872.90</b>	<b>550,000.00</b>	<b>-524,127.10</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
<b>Other Expense</b>				
Contingency (10%)	0.00	44,300.00	-44,300.00	0.0%
<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>44,300.00</b>	<b>-44,300.00</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>25,872.90</b>	<b>505,700.00</b>	<b>-479,827.10</b>	<b>5.12%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>291.36</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>291.36</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

# San Antonio Basin GSA

## Balance Sheet

As of July 31, 2025

Jul 31, 25

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

##### Checking/Savings

Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	23,245.00
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Total Checking/Savings	23,245.00
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##### Other Current Assets

Prepaid Insurance	1,755.00
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Total Other Current Assets	1,755.00
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Total Current Assets	25,000.00
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TOTAL ASSETS	<u>25,000.00</u>
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### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

#### Equity

Retained Earnings	24,708.64
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Net Income	291.36
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Total Equity	25,000.00
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TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>25,000.00</u>
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# San Antonio Basin GSA

## Expenses by Vendor Detail

### July 2025

	Type	Date	Num	Account	Split	Amount
<b>BERTOUX &amp; COMPANY</b>						
	Check	07/13/2025	3215	01Administrative Exp/Office Ex	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	5,000.00
	Check	07/13/2025	3216	01Administrative Exp/Office Ex	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	239.88
Total BERTOUX & COMPANY						5,239.88
<b>Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck</b>						
	Check	07/13/2025	3217	05-Legal Counsel	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	122.00
Total Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck						122.00
<b>Carrie Troup, C.P.A.</b>						
	Check	07/13/2025	3222	02-Accountant	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	725.00
Total Carrie Troup, C.P.A.						725.00
<b>GOLDEN STATE RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY</b>						
	Check	07/01/2025	3214	06-Insurance	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	1,755.00
Total GOLDEN STATE RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY						1,755.00
<b>GSI WATER SOLUTIONS, INC.</b>						
	Check	07/13/2025	3219	10-GSP Implementation / PMAs	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	2,616.25
	Check	07/13/2025	3220	04-Monitoring	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	13,816.95
Total GSI WATER SOLUTIONS, INC.						16,433.20
<b>Los Alamos CSD</b>						
	Check	07/13/2025	3221	01Administrative Exp/Office Ex	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	200.00
Total Los Alamos CSD						200.00
<b>WALLACE GROUP</b>						
	Check	07/13/2025	3223	10-GSP Implementation / PMAs	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	416.00
	Check	07/13/2025	3224	10-GSP Implementation / PMAs	Community Bank of SM -ACCT 9006	690.46
Total WALLACE GROUP						1,106.46
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>25,581.54</b>

### San Antonio Basin GSA - Board Training

	Required Biannually	Required Annually	Required Annually	Required Biannually
	<u>Anti-Harassment Training</u>	<u>Form 700 - County of SB</u>	<u>Form 700 - FPPC</u>	<u>Public Service Ethics</u>
	Next Due	Next Due	Next Due	Next Due
Dan Chabot	NEED	Filed	Filed	June 26, 2026
Tom Durant	February 12, 2027	Filed	Filed	November 20, 2026
Bart Haycraft	NEED	Filed	Filed	NEED
Richard Kline	NEED	Filed	Filed	NEED
Barbara Landon	July 24, 2025	Filed	Filed	July 24, 2025
Kevin Merrill	March 1, 2026	Filed	Filed	April 3, 2026
Patrice Mosby	February 20, 2026	Filed	Filed	February 20, 2026
Kenny Pata	February 4, 2026	Filed	Filed	February 4, 2026
Randy Sharer	November 28, 2025	Filed	Filed	November 29, 2025
James Stollberg	January 30, 2027	Filed	Filed	February 20, 2026
Brad Vidro	December 20, 2026	Filed	Filed	December 6, 2025
Chris Wrather	NEED	Filed	Filed	NEED

#### ETHICS & HARASSMENT TRAINING

Golden State Risk Management Target Solutions

<http://app.targetedsolutions.com/sanantoniobasingsa>

Username : your email

Password: vector

#### FORM 700 - COUNTY OF SB

County of Santa Barbara

<https://www.southtechhosting.com/SantaBarbaraCounty/eDisclosure/>

Username: your email

\*Password: Each Director has their own password

*\*Contact Stephanie if you need to reset your password*

#### FORM 700 - FPPC

Fair Political Practices Commission

<https://form700.fppc.ca.gov>

Username: your email

\*Password: Emailed to you directly from FPPC

*\*Contact Stephanie if you need to reset your password*



## SAN ANTONIO BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

August 13, 2025

The Honorable Patricia Kelly  
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara County Superior Court  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
[pkelly@sbcourts.org](mailto:pkelly@sbcourts.org)

Santa Barbara County Grand Jury  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
[sbcgj@sbcourts.org](mailto:sbcgj@sbcourts.org)

### **Subject: Response to 2024–2025 Grand Jury Report – “Water Management in Santa Barbara County”**

To Hon. Patricia Kelly and the Members of the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury:

The Santa Barbara County Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SABGSA) has reviewed the 2024–2025 Grand Jury Report titled Water Management in Santa Barbara County: Keep Up the Good Work. In accordance with California Penal Code §§933 and 933.05, we provide the following responses to the relevant findings.

#### **Finding 1: Agree**

SABGSA agrees with Finding 1 that public entities in Santa Barbara County, including SABGSA, have made proactive plans to fortify against future droughts and provide sufficient water to support future housing growth and commerce.

#### **Finding 2: Agree**

SABGSA agrees with Finding 2 that coordination among water management entities in the County has improved.

SABGSA would like to respectfully clarify that SABGSA staff were not interviewed as part of the Grand Jury's investigation.

Please contact me at (805) 451-0841 or [admin@sanantoniobasingsa.org](mailto:admin@sanantoniobasingsa.org) if you have any questions regarding this response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Bertoux".

Stephanie Bertoux, Executive Director  
San Antonio Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

# **WATER MANAGEMENT IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**

## **Keep Up the Good Work**

### **SUMMARY**

Water availability has been a concern in the region of Santa Barbara County since the earliest settlements of the Chumash. The most recent drought, ending in 2023, refocused attention on the need to both conserve water and to seek new sources. Water scarcity is an ongoing fact of life in the County. The unique geography of the South Coast makes it particularly susceptible to drought; however, the entire County faces a scarcity of both ground and surface water.

Historically, groundwater resources have been depleted by both agricultural and urban uses, without regard for sustainability. Seawater intrusion into our aquifers due to overuse of the groundwater is a real threat.

The last three winters have seen heavy precipitation across Santa Barbara County leading to full reservoirs and somewhat replenished aquifers. Nevertheless, complacency is not a luxury County residents can afford. As another drought is inevitable, the 2024-25 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury (Jury) undertook an investigation to determine whether Santa Barbara County as a whole is adequately prepared.

The Jury reviewed ongoing concerns about water availability, particularly in light of state-mandated increases in housing in the County. The Jury considered the recommendations of past Grand Juries regarding the water management situation in the County and found that circumstances have substantially improved since the issuance of these previous reports. The professionalism and commitment of all individuals interviewed as well as the high degree of constructive coordination among the County Water Agency, local water districts, and local groundwater sustainability agencies impressed the Jury.

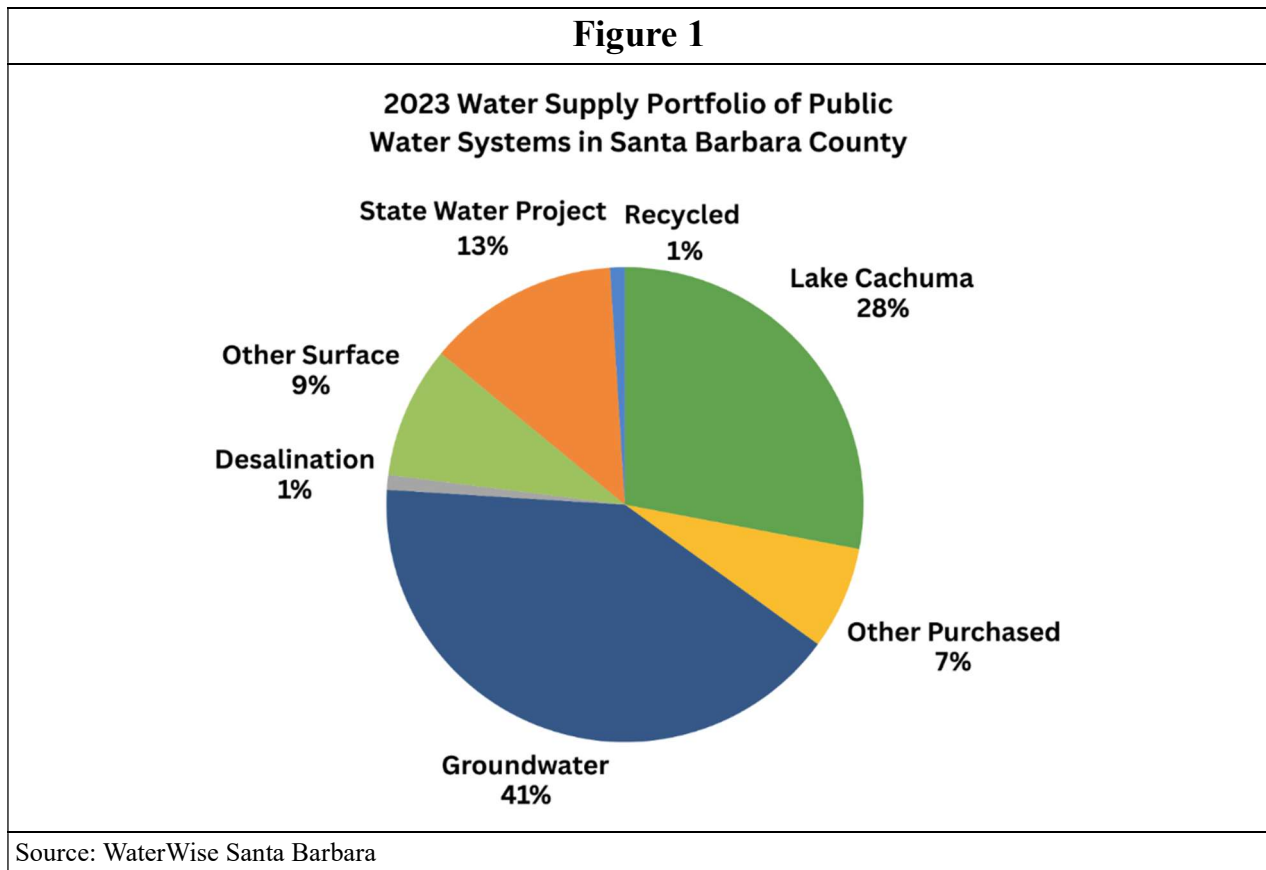
### **BACKGROUND**

Santa Barbara County is not small. Although all of the County must contend with water supply issues, the conditions in different parts of the County can vary greatly. For example, the weather station at Gibraltar Dam records an annual average rainfall of 26.5 inches, Santa Barbara City has an average of 18.5 inches, and Santa Maria records an average of only 13.4 inches. In addition, those averages don't show the extreme variability from year to year in the County's rainfall: of the last 10 years, six have had below average rainfall (only 48 percent of average in 2021) and four have had above average rainfall (203 percent in 2023).

## Water Sources

Because of our mountainous topography, there are several watersheds in the County, each independent of the other. The Cuyama River follows the northern boundary of the County for much of its path and feeds a largely agricultural area until it flows into the reservoir created by Twitchell Dam. Water is released from the dam as needed for the Santa Maria River and to replenish the groundwater used by Santa Maria and other communities in the North County.

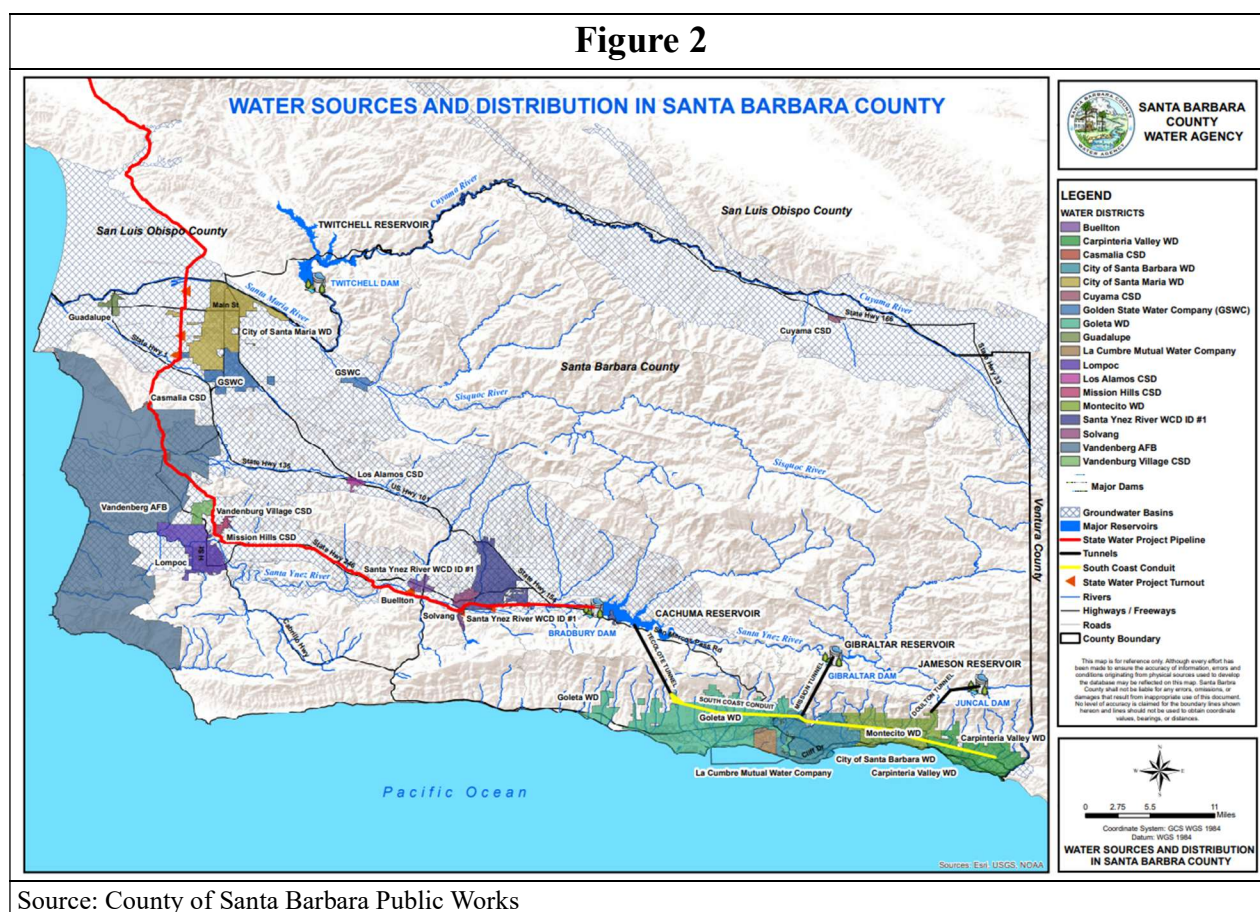
Much of the water for the County comes from the Santa Ynez River. It flows through the center of the County and feeds the groundwater needs for the communities of Solvang, Santa Ynez, Buellton and Lompoc. It also supplies much of the water used by South Coast communities from reservoirs created by dams: the Gibraltar Reservoir was created by the Gibraltar Dam in 1920; the Jameson Reservoir was created by the Juncal Dam in 1930; and Lake Cachuma was created by the Bradbury Dam in 1953. There are tunnels through the mountains from each of these reservoirs that carry water to the South Coast.



Lake Cachuma is the major water source for most of the South Coast water. Up to 65 million gallons can flow through the Tecolote tunnel each day; the Goleta Water District diverts about 5 million gallons daily to its water treatment plant, and the rest goes into a tunnel that feeds Santa Barbara, Montecito and Carpinteria.

The California State Water Project provides water to some County communities. That water flows from Northern California into Lake Cachuma as required. The City of Santa Barbara, the City of Santa Maria, the Montecito Water District, the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1, the City of Buellton, the Goleta Water District, the City of Guadalupe, and the Carpinteria Valley Water District all have contracts with the State that allow access to that water. However, this source is unreliable and much more expensive than other resources; it is used only in times of severe drought.

The many sources of water used in Santa Barbara County are shown above in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows that those sources are widely distributed throughout the County.

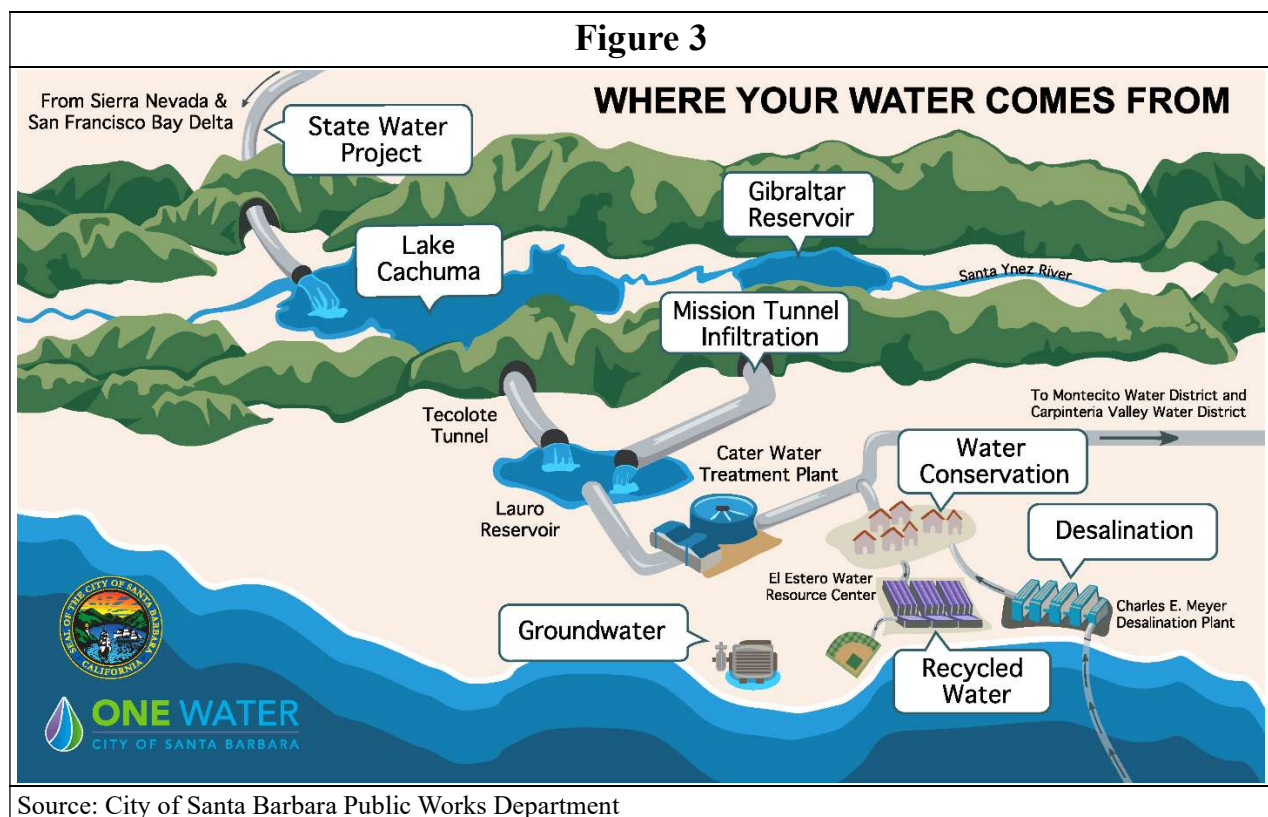


The City of Santa Barbara was one of the first cities in California to incorporate desalinated water into its program in the 1980s. Its first plant was completed in 1992 at a cost of \$34 million, shared with Montecito and Goleta. Because of the abundant rainfall in that and subsequent years, the plant was put into standby mode, and a portion of the reverse osmosis membrane equipment was sold. Not until 2015, in response to exceptional drought conditions, did the City Council vote to modernize and reactivate the plant. In May 2017, at a cost of \$72 million, partially offset by a \$10



million grant from the State Department of Water Resources, the plant began contributing water into the City's water system. The plant can now produce up to three million gallons of water per day, or about 30 percent of the City population's current needs. Plans are underway to expand the existing plant to meet future needs as the City's population grows. The plant's design is modular, so its expansion is cost effective and only limited by the physical space it will occupy.

Several local communities also have successful programs to recycle wastewater to meet the demand for non-potable water. The City of Santa Barbara and the Goleta Water District are particularly successful utilizing this supplemental source. Figure 3 illustrates how the City of Santa Barbara gets its water.



## Water Management

A number of different entities manage the distribution and conservation of water in the County:

- Cities have the responsibility for supplying water to their residents, although they may contract with private companies to provide that service, as Santa Maria does with the Golden State Water Company.
- Water districts are generally charged with the distribution of water to end users and are responsible for water supply, quality, and infrastructure. There are water districts in the Carpinteria Valley, Montecito, Goleta Valley, and the central portion of the Santa Ynez Valley, including the communities of Solvang, Santa Ynez, and Buellton. Similar functions

are performed by community services districts in smaller communities such as Cuyama, Los Alamos, and Vandenberg Village. These are independent special districts governed by elected boards.

- Mandated by the State's 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) are responsible for managing groundwater resources and watershed basins identified as having over-drafted groundwater. Their mandate is to bring basins into balance between pumping and recharge. There are GSAs for the Carpinteria Valley, Montecito, the San Antonio Creek Valley, the Cuyama Valley, and the Santa Ynez Valley. Generally, these agencies have been created by the local water districts and community services districts work closely with them.

The GSAs are required to develop plans to balance extraction with recharge while considering factors like aquifer characteristics and the area's climate. Key aspects of groundwater basin management include:

- Monitoring groundwater levels and collecting data on groundwater usage.
- Creating a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) as required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. These plans provide a roadmap to sustainability by obtaining and assessing data on current water usage and groundwater resources, identifying sustainable groundwater levels, and developing policies and tools to restore groundwater resources.
- Monitoring aquifer recharge.
- Planning and coordinating water use and groundwater replenishment by managing surface and groundwater resources.
- Using data to create water basin computer models.
- Communicating issues of groundwater management and the need for replenishment with residents, farms, and businesses within the basin.
- Monitoring and enforcing compliance with groundwater regulations.

All GSAs in the County now have plans in place that have been approved by the California Department of Water Resources to ensure long-term groundwater sustainability.

The County also has its own Water Agency to monitor water resources and work with other agencies as required, creating such initiatives as "WaterWise Santa Barbara," which seeks to inform, educate, and encourage water conservation. The County Water Agency has the specific responsibility to contract with the State and the federal government for water supplies. It also conducts a cloud seeding program to increase precipitation.

Water districts in all of Santa Barbara County know and understand that the drought cycle is a fact of life. Recognizing that fact, water districts face challenges in providing water for residential, commercial, and agricultural needs as well as meeting state-mandated housing requirements.



## **METHODOLOGY**

The Jury reviewed previous Grand Jury reports and recommendations as well as documents prepared by many of the entities that are involved in the supply and management of water in Santa Barbara County. We interviewed staff of the following:

- Santa Barbara County Water Agency
- Goleta Water District
- Carpinteria Valley Water District
- Carpinteria Groundwater Sustainability Agency
- Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1
- San Antonio Basin Water District
- San Antonio Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
- Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District
- City of Santa Barbara Water Resources Division
- Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

We also addressed water availability and management issues in interviews with elected officials and senior staff of the County and several cities, including Santa Barbara, Goleta, Carpinteria, Solvang, and Buellton.

Additionally, the Jury toured the City of Santa Barbara's desalination plant and the Goleta Water District's water treatment facility.

A planned visit to the Bradbury Dam and review of local water agency involvement in the management of the water resources in Lake Cachuma was cancelled by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, a federal agency that supervises the dam, due to personnel and policy uncertainty.

## **DISCUSSION**

Each local city, district, and agency has its own unique approach to how it sources, processes, and delivers water to consumers due to the varied geography of North and South Santa Barbara County.

The 2016-17 Grand Jury conducted an extensive review of water management and issued a report recommending, among other things, that the Santa Barbara County Water Agency assume a coordinating role for water management. Although this recommendation of coordination through the County Water Agency was not implemented, it is apparent now that staff of the County Water Agency maintains relations with the other agencies and works collaboratively as necessary. The implementation of the State's Groundwater Management Plan and the requirement for sustainability plans are positive developments in the outlook for water in the County.

The Jury also learned that the residents of Santa Barbara County have responded to public campaigns that emphasize the need to conserve water. For example, the average daily per capita water use in the Goleta Valley Water District is now less than 50 gallons, compared with the state average of 85 gallons per person per day. Agriculture has adapted to water shortages by identifying alternative crops that are still profitable but less thirsty.

Each of the water agencies and districts that the Jury investigated has prepared plans to cover expected water use in the future, to plan for infrastructure improvements, and to develop additional water resources as required. The Jury has reviewed each of these plans and confirmed that they take into account forecasted population growth, changes in agriculture use, groundwater replenishment, climate change, and some new technologies to meet demand. Increased use of recycled water is also included in the plans.

The Jury was particularly concerned that the substantial increases in housing mandated by the State for the next six years could compromise future water supplies. To the contrary, each of the agencies and districts the Jury investigated has plans in place to provide needed water. The rural districts stated that an increase in residential use would not add significantly to future water needs, given the already heavy demand by agriculture. All of the cities the Jury investigated have made provisions to secure additional water for residential use, whether from their traditional sources or from innovative sources such as recycled water or the desalination plant in Santa Barbara.

Despite these overall positive findings, those responsible for treating and distributing water in Santa Barbara County should be aware that there are still issues to be addressed in providing water to its residents:

- Some new technologies can provide needed water, but they are very expensive. For example, water from the desalination plant in Santa Barbara is currently around 75 percent more expensive than treated water from the Tecolote tunnel.<sup>1</sup> Experience has shown that in our “wet” years the commitment to maintaining alternative technologies can wane with the result that communities are forced to invest large sums to recover those capabilities at the next drought.
- All of the infrastructure that serves County residents is aging, and much is in need of repair. Capital plans have been created to replace or repair infrastructure, such as upgrading water pipes, but completing the work will incur significant costs. In this time of restricted budgets and multiple needs, it is important that the commitment to these projects continue.
- It has been seen in the past that a few “wet” years lull the residents of Santa Barbara County into complacency, and water use increases again. It is essential that emphasis on water conservation remains central in agencies and districts’ public discussion and outreach about water.

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<sup>1</sup> Treated water from the Tecolote tunnel now costs \$1,982 per acre/foot. Water from the desalination plant currently costs \$3,400 per acre/foot.

## CONCLUSION

Water continues to be a scarce resource in Santa Barbara County, one which must be managed if the needs of the County—residential, commercial, and agricultural—are to be met. The Jury investigated the current status of water management in the County and was pleased to learn that not only are the current, relatively abundant, water resources being well managed, but also that all of the agencies the Jury examined have solid plans in progress or ready for implementation for the next inevitable drought.

Water agencies and districts in Santa Barbara County know and understand that the drought cycle is a fact of life. Recognizing this, water agencies and districts face challenges in providing water for residential, commercial, and agricultural needs as well as meeting state-mandated housing requirements. Nevertheless, each entity the Jury interviewed has plans in place to both meet fluctuating drought pressures as well as future demand due to population growth and development.

Yet the people of Santa Barbara County, and the officials tasked with providing their water, should not be complacent in these good tidings. Appropriately meeting Santa Barbara County's water needs in the future requires the maintenance of existing water treatment and distribution infrastructure and a continued insistence on water conservation.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding 1:** Despite community concerns about water scarcity, all of the public entities the Jury investigated that provide and manage water in Santa Barbara County have made proactive plans to fortify against future droughts and provide sufficient water necessary to support future housing growth and commerce.

**Finding 2:** Despite a 2016-17 Grand Jury finding that limitations existed in coordinating water management, the Jury finds that coordination among different water management entities in the County has improved significantly.

**Finding 3:** The City of Santa Barbara has gone beyond the basic management of water resources for its residents by utilizing desalination to innovatively expand local water availability.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to California Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Grand Jury requests each entity or individual named below to respond to the findings and recommendations within the specified statutory time limit.

Responses to Findings shall be either:

- Agree
- Disagree with an explanation
- Disagree partially with an explanation

Responses to Recommendations shall be one of the following:

- Has been implemented, with a summary of the implementation actions taken
- Will be implemented, with an implementation schedule
- Requires further analysis, with an analysis completion date of fewer than 6 months after the issuance of the report
- It will not be implemented with an explanation of why

**City of Santa Barbara – 90 Days**

Findings 1, 2, 3

**Board of Directors, Santa Barbara County Water Agency – 90 Days**

Findings 1, 2

**Goleta Water District – 90 Days**

Findings 1, 2

**Carpinteria Valley Water District – 90 Days**

Findings 1, 2

**Carpinteria Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency – 90 Days**

Finding 1, 2

**Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District – 90 Days**

Finding 1, 2

**San Antonio Basin Water District – 90 Days**

Finding 1, 2

**San Antonio Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency – 90 Days**

Finding 1, 2

**Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District – 90 Days**

Finding 1, 2

**Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency – 90 Days**

Finding 1, 2