

Santa Ana River Flood Protection Agency

Executive Director

Penny K. Lew

SARFPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes for January 22, 2026

Members

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City of Cypress
City of Fountain Valley
City of Fullerton
City of Garden Grove
City of Huntington Beach
City of Irvine
City of Newport Beach
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County of Orange
Costa Mesa Sanitary District
O C Sanitation District
O C Flood Control District
O C Water District

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 4048
Santa Ana, CA 92702-4048

Email Address:

Penny.Lew2@ocpw.ocgov.com
pennyroshann@gmail.com

Phone

(714) 647-3938
(949) 351-6586

Location

601 N. Ross Street
Santa Ana CA 92701

Website

www.ocflood.com/sarp/sarfpa

Attendance/Attendees:

Pat Burns, SARFPA Chairman, Director, Orange County Sanitation District
Cathy Green, SARFPA Vice Chairman, Director, Orange County Water District
Art Perry, Director, Costa Mesa Sanitary District
James Tyler, Engineering Manager, Orange County Public Works, Alternate to Supervisor Foley
Keith Linker, City Engineer, City of Anaheim
Penny Lew, Executive Director, Santa Ana River Flood Protection Agency

1. Call to Order – Chairman Pat Burns

Chairman Pat Burns, Director, Orange County Sanitation District, called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Pat Burns

Chairman Pat Burns Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approve Minutes of November 22, 2025 – Chairman Pat Burns

The Minutes were unanimously approved on Motion by Art Perry, Director, Costa Mesa Sanitary District and Second by Pat Burns, Director, Orange County Sanitation District.

4. Santa Ana River Mainstem Project Status - James Tyler

- a. James began by providing an overview of the Santa Ana River (SAR) Mainstem Project and updates since the last meeting. There is currently work on the Lower Santa Ana River and Prado Dam.
- b. James noted awarding of the spillway contract for Prado Dam is expected to be next fiscal year, October 2027.
- c. Santiago Creek- the Corps is requesting additional funding to move the creek design forward while minimizing impacts to the trees and for funding for the basin design that is with the Change Control Board (USACE HQ) scheduled for May 2026. Clarification was received from the Corps that BBA (Bipartisan Budget Act) cannot be used for full funding if construction is to move forward. Therefore, project will need to go to Congress to get appropriations for construction which means further delays.
- d. Levee Height Correction – along part of SAR Reach 5, the West Levee Project continues to move forward. Originally the plan was to increase the existing levee to its required height. The design completion is expected in March for what is now a floodwall alternative to correct the deficient levee height between I-5 Fwy and SR-22.
- e. James reported that the Prado Dam Spillway Project continues in design phase and scheduled for construction start in FY 2027. Recent completion of work includes Prado Dam acquisitions table where right-of-way certification was

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- completed in July 2025 and is awaiting Corp's review of all information included in certification. Award of contract is anticipated in approximately 1½ to 2 years.
- f. The Utility Relocations Summary Table was modified- James noted that utility certification was completed in December 2025. The Acquisitions and Utilities Relocations were the last two requirements needed from the local sponsor for the Prado Dam project.
 - g. Two dikes need to be turned over to the County for O&M before Prado is constructed. The target is Spring 2026 for Alcoa Dike to be taken over and similarly with Norco Bluffs where construction is completed.
 - h. Prado Dam Spillway Construction- James presented the schedule (PowerPoint photos were updated to Jan '26) and noted that work with the contractor (started in Apr '25) continues in finalizing the design. Pat Burns asked whether the plan is to take out the entire existing spillway. James responded that the width of existing spillway is wider than new spillway, based on the designed labyrinth (jagged [alignment]). The new spillway doesn't need as much space to get the same effect for volume of flow, so the idea is to demolish the portion of exist spillway but not use any of it. The footprint will be similar but not as wide as the existing. It was determined the existing spillway invert had voids underneath and discovered that after the Oroville Dam issue where the spillway delaminated and similarly it is something that could happen at Prado where the new spillway will be higher to accommodate the increased reservoir size.

5. Westminster East Garden Grove (WEGG) Project Status - James Tyler

- a. James provided background info about the project including Westminster East Garden Grove Project (WEGG), having the second largest watershed in Orange County, as well as the affected congressional districts and cities. Flood Insurance data as of May '25 was presented. The plan is to construct the project up to I-405 Fwy to remove homes and businesses from the FEMA floodplain. Once improvements are completed from downstream to upstream up to the I-405 freeway, flooding will be alleviated, and mandatory flood insurance would be eliminated for the related properties. James stated that current flood insurance data is not available due to newer privacy concerns. He also noted that data for each city may be more aggregate for each jurisdiction where data does not detail which parts of the cities have the policies.
- b. Project costs with the current project layout would be the local share at \$940M and federal share at \$325M. The typical agreement would be the local share is less than federal share, but current cost distribution has to do with the Corps' determination of the National Economic Development Plan (NED). Basically, the level of protection Corps wants to provide is less than a 100-yr flood. But as the local sponsor, County seeks 100-year flood protection resulting in removing the floodplain, not merely reducing it.
- c. County is drafting language for 2026 WRDA that would allow Corps to take another look at the project and for the Corp's reconsideration of the larger cost share. The larger federal cost share would help the local sponsor with the State of CA (Department of Water Resources) who will only reimburse 70 percent of the local share based on the NED. If County does not have these things in place,

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it would be difficult for the County to fund the project and would take decades to complete the project. James noted some of the construction activity planned, still occurring, or pushed back. Updates for Construction of reaches are: Warner Bridge at Huntington Harbor in FY 26-27, and Tidegates to upstream of Graham in 27-28 that would be the first project that Corps would be partnering with County. Once the Corps participates financially for construction, then eligibility begins with the State for reimbursements for local costs as well as federal participation in the project. County is working on a design Agreement with the Corps for the first piece. Cathy Green asked how likely it is to get approval for the WRDA proposal. James responded that County proposed similar language in WRDA 2024 but did not get the support, so it may be something we want to get SARFPA behind. He added that Penny, James and Herb Nakasone will be meeting with the County's legislative group on 1/23/26 to discuss.

6. Executive Director's Report – Penny Lew

Penny reported the following:

- a. Met with OCPW Director Kevin Onuma and former SARFPA Executive Director Herb Nakasone on 12/9/25 on possible legislative strategy for WEGG project funding and overall, how County should continue the WEGG project assuming current cost share distribution. A meet and greet is scheduled for Herb Nakasone, Penny Lew, and James Tyler on 1/23/26 to provide updates on SAR and WEGG projects to County of Orange Legislative staff.
- b. OCPW staff contacted US Army Corps of Engineers for scheduling a field trip and is waiting to hear back from USACE staff. There has been movement of Corps staff, however, efforts will continue to set a date.
- c. Penny is working with OCPW and consultant auditors for the 24-25 audit. It should be a routine audit.
- d. Penny will work with James and OCPW to update the SARFPA webpage.

7. Public and Representative Comments: No Public Comments were received

8. Adjournment: Chairman Pat Burns adjourned the Meeting at 4:35 pm.

Prepared by Penny Lew, Executive Director, Santa Ana River Flood Protection Agency