

MINUTES
BORREGO SPRINGS WATERMASTER BOARD MEETING
Conducted Virtually via GoToMeeting
Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

The following individuals were present at the meeting:

Directors Present	Vice Chair Tyler Bilyk – Agricultural Sector
	Kathy Dice, Board Alternate – Borrego Water District (BWD)
	Secretary and Treasurer Shannon Smith – Recreational Sector
	Mark Jorgensen – Community Representative
	Jim Bennett – County of San Diego
Watermaster Staff Present	James M. Markman, Legal Counsel
	Samantha Adams, Executive Director, West Yost
	Andrew Malone, Lead Technical Consultant, West Yost
	Lauren Salberg, Staff Geologist, West Yost
Others Present	David Garmon
	Diane Johnson, BWD Board Member
	Geoff Poole, BWD General Manager
	Jessica Clabaugh, BWD Finance Office
	Jim Dax, Board Alternate – Community Representative
	Laurel Brigham, University of California Irvine (UCI)
	Leanne Crow, Board Alternate – County of San Diego
	Nikki Fiore, University of California Irvine (UCI)
	Travis Brooks, Land IQ
	Steve Anderson, BB&K, representing BWD

Please visit the [Watermaster's Website](https://borregospringswatermaster.com/past-watermaster-meetings/)¹ to access the Agenda Packet, recording, and presentation for the January 15, 2025 Meeting.

I. Opening Procedures

- A. Vice Chair Bilyk called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM at which time the meeting recording was started.
- B. Vice Chair Bilyk led the meeting participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- C. Samantha Adams, Executive Director (ED) called roll and confirmed that a quorum of all members of the Board were present.
- D. Approval of Agenda.

Motion: Motioned by Director Smith, seconded by Director Jorgensen to approve the Agenda.
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (5-0-0).

II. Public Correspondence

- A. Correspondence Received. No correspondence was received.
- B. Public Comments. Vice Chair Bilyk called for public comments. There were no public comments.

¹ <https://borregospringswatermaster.com/past-watermaster-meetings/>

- III. **Consent Calendar.** Vice Chair Bilyk called for any discussion on the Consent Calendar items included in the January 15, 2025 agenda package.

Motion: Motioned by Director Bennett, seconded by Director Jorgensen to approve the Consent Calendar. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

IV. **PRESENTATION ON GROUNDWATER DEPENDENT ECOSYSTEMS PROJECT BY UCI**

Nikki Fiore (UCI) provided a status update on the Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDE) project. Following the presentation, Vice Chair Bilyk opened the floor to comments and questions from the public and Board.

Public questions and comments included:

- How do you differentiate between perched water and the regional aquifer system? UCI investigated the presence of perched water using results of isotopic analysis, review of DWR's Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) survey, consideration of aerial extent of the mesquite, and review of well completion reports. UCI has not observed evidence of perched water but acknowledged that the presence of perched water remains an uncertainty in the study.
- How will Minimum Thresholds be recommended? Sustainable management criteria will be recommended based on Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGMA) guidelines. SGMA guidelines provide recommendations on how to establish Minimum Thresholds. For GDE management, a Minimum Threshold could be set at a certain groundwater elevation that would support the GDE.

Board questions and comments included:

- UCI confirmed they will share the water quality data with the Watermaster.
- Evapotranspiration (ET) sensors have been installed since May 2024 and have collected approximately 6-months of data. A full water year of data is ideal for evaluating the data.
- OpenET was used to provide ET estimates. UCI is evaluating the limitations in using OpenET data.
- What are the next steps for the Board to consider the results of the GDE study and the application of best available science? ED Adams reminded the Board that the scope of work to redetermine the 2030 Sustainable Yield includes a task to review and consider the results of the GDE study.

- V. **Closed Session.** The Board of Directors entered at Closed Session at 3:44 PM. The public meeting was reconvened at 5:05 PM. During the Closed Session, the Board made the following motion:

Motion: Motioned by Director Smith, seconded by Vice Chair Bilyk, to approve an increase of \$30,000 to the Land IQ budget for the Biological Restoration of fallowed lands project, subject to the following conditions: (i) Land IQ must request to utilize the cost savings on Tasks 1, 2, 4, and 5 to cover overages on Task 3 and (ii) accept the condition that Watermaster will not make any further payments, nor will Land IQ accrue interest on past-due payments, until demonstration of successful completion of the project by March 31, 2025. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

VI. Items for Board Consideration and Possible Action

- A. *Status Report on the Biological Restoration of Fallowed Lands Project.* This Agenda Item was not discussed.
- B. *Consideration of Approval of Amendment to the WY 2025 Budget and the Impacted Professional Services Agreements with Consultants.* ED Adams summarized the proposed amendment to the WY 2025 budget and Professional Services Agreements as described in the Agenda package. At the conclusion of the presentation, Vice Chair Bilyk opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. There were no public comments.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- Watermaster staff is aware of the work required to be completed to satisfy grant requirements and will not perform any work that would not be completed beyond the grant expiration date (March 31, 2025).
- The budget amendment does not increase expenditures, so therefore, there is no increase in the pumping assessments. The interest increases are incurred because of additional work that will be performed in WY 2025 instead of WY 2024, as planned. The Watermaster Board will rely on cash reserves to cover these increased costs.

Motion: Motioned by Director Smith, seconded by Vice Chair Bilyk, to approve the amendment to the WY 2025 budget as reflected on slide 46 of [Board presentation slides](#). *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

- C. *Consideration of Approval of Next EWG and TAC Meeting Agendas.* Mr. Malone described the proposed Agendas for the upcoming Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Environmental Working Group (EWG) meetings. At the conclusion of the presentation, Vice Chair Bilyk opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. There were no public comments.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- In response to a suggestion to push the EWG meeting out until more of Task 3 is completed, Mr. Malone recommended that the EWG meet in January so that the EWG can provide feedback on the Task 4 and Task 5 deliverables prior to being presented to the Board during its February 2025 Regular Board meeting.

Motion: Motioned by Director Jorgensen, seconded by Director Bennett, to approve the TAC and EWG meeting Agendas included in the Board package. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

VII. Reports.

- A. *Legal Counsel Report.* Mr. Markman reported on the following items:
- A hearing is scheduled for February 13, 2025 at 2pm to take action on the three pending motions of Party intervention to the Judgment. To date, no oppositions have been filed against the motions to intervene.

- A Status Conference is scheduled for February 20, 2025, key items to report include the Board actions taken to meet the January 1, 2025 deadlines in the Judgment.
- B. Technical Consultant Report. Mr. Malone reported on the items listed in the agenda package memo (see slides 54 through 55 of the [Board presentation slides](#)). There were no additional topics discussed.

Public questions and comments included:

- Has the DWR indicated when they will provide comments on the GMP? The DWR has not provided any formal communication on when they will provide comments on the GMP.

Board questions and comments included:

- In the absence of comments from DWR, Watermaster staff is working on all report sections except for the section dedicated to describing how DWR Corrective Actions are being addressed (because none have been received). Staff is drafting the GMP Assessment Report in a manner that it can be completed as efficiently as possible upon receipt of DWR comments and any additional data/information received prior to the report deadline.
- C. Executive Director Reports. ED Adams reported on the items listed in the agenda package memo (see slides 56 through 58 of the [Board presentation slides](#)). There were no additional topics discussed. There were no Board questions or comments.

Public questions and comments included:

- The three Parties intervening to the Judgment have all acquired BPA through the purchase of BPA parcels.

D. Chairperson's Report. NONE

VIII. Approval of Agenda Items for February 19, 2025 Board Meeting. ED Adams reviewed the potential agenda items for the next Board meetings listed in the agenda package. The Board discussed items to be included on the February 19, 2025 Board meeting agenda, in addition to items listed in the Agenda package. Discussion included:

- Director Jorgensen requested that the Borrego Valley Stewardship Council present a white paper on their Prop 68 grant funding to the Board for their feedback.
- ED Adams updated the proposed Agenda for the February 19, 2025 meeting on the meeting screen based on discussion, noting it now includes the following items:
 - Land IQ presentation on the Biological Restoration of Fallowed Lands project
 - Hearing to review the 2024 draft Annual Report to the DWR
 - 1st Quarter WY 2025 Budget Status Review
 - Fall 2024 Semi-Annual Monitoring Report

- Status Report on the 5-year Assessment of the GMP
- DWR Review of the 2020 GMP (if available)
- Borrego Valley Stewardship Council White Paper Presentation and Feedback

Motion: Motioned by Director Jorgensen seconded by Vice Chair Bilyk, to approve the February 19, 2025 Agenda as presented on slide 62 of the [Board presentation slides](#). *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

IX. **Board Member Comments.** Vice Chair Bilyk called for comments.


- Director Dice thanked Vice Chair Bilyk for running the Board meeting.

X. **Next Meetings of the Borrego Springs Watermaster.** Vice Chair Bilyk reviewed the meetings listed in the agenda package.

XI. **Adjournment**

A. Vice Chair Bilyk adjourned the meeting at 5:49 PM.

Recorded by:
Lauren Salberg, Staff Geologist, West Yost



Attest:
Shannon Smith, Secretary and Treasurer of the
Board