

MINUTES
BORREGO SPRINGS WATERMASTER BOARD MEETING
Conducted Virtually via GoToMeeting
Wednesday, June 18, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

The following individuals were present at the meeting:

Directors Present	Chair Dave Duncan – Borrego Water District (BWD)
	Vice Chair Tyler Bilyk – Agricultural Sector
	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
	Lauren Gordon, Staff Geologist, West Yost
Others Present	Bri Fordem
	Cathy Milkey, representing Rams Hill
	David Garmon
	Diane Johnson, BWD Board Member
	Ethan Steiner, County of San Diego
	George Peraza, DWR
	Gina Moran, BWD Board Member
	Jim Dax, Board Alternate - Community Representative
	Kate Harper
	Rich Pinel, Board Alternate - Recreational Sector
	Steph DiPalma
	Steve Anderson, BB&K, representing BWD
	Tammy Baker, BWD Board Member

Please visit the [Watermaster's Website](https://borregospringswatermaster.com/past-watermaster-meetings/)¹ to access the Agenda Packet, recording, and presentation for the June 18, 2025 Meeting.

I. Opening Procedures

- A. Chair Duncan called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM at which time the meeting recording was started.
- B. Chair Duncan 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 Jorgensen, seconded by Vice Chair Bilyk to approve the Agenda. *Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (5-0-0).*

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

II. Public Correspondence

- A. Correspondence Received. No correspondence was received.
- B. Public Comments. Chair Duncan called for public comments. Public comment was made by David Garmon, Kate Harper, Jim Dax, Bri Fordhem, and Steph DiPalma.
 - Members of the public requested that the Board respond more urgently to the results of the Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE) study performed by the University of California Irvine (UCI).

III. Consent Calendar. Chair Duncan called for any discussion on the Consent Calendar items included in the June 18, 2025 agenda package. Board discussion included:

- Director Smith highlighted that the pending reimbursements from DWR now total \$1,200,000.

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

IV. Items for Board Consideration and Possible Action

- A. *Status Update on BVHM Groundwater Pumping Projections.* Andy Malone presented a summary of the memo included in the agenda package. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Duncan opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. Public comment was made by Jim Dax, David Garmon, and Rich Pinel.

Public questions and comments, including Board and staff response if any, included:

- What is the purpose of changing the pumping simulation?
 - Shifting future pumping to other parts of the Basin, like the North Management Area, may help stabilize groundwater levels in the Central and South management areas.
- Revised pumping projections could be of importance to the GDE topic, as the mesquite bosque are located in the Central and South Management Areas.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- Some Board members expressed frustration that staff utilized pumping projections that over-estimated BWD demands.
- The importance of simulating future water rights transfers in the way that reflects how pumpers intend to transfer water to comply with the Rampdown.
- Options for updated model projections: 1) simulation of water rights held by Parties at present (*i.e.* does not simulate transfers of water rights), and 2) simulation with transfers of water rights.
- All pumping projections, by Party, should be published for review and be discussed openly.
- Long-term projections are standard industry practice given that groundwater conditions change slowly. This is not done with the assumption that planning information won't change, but it provides an understanding of what the future might look like under known conditions. The BVHM simulations are through 2070 to simulate Basin conditions and assess for sustainability at and beyond 2040. This is a standard practice exercised by other Basins complying with SGMA and is expected by DWR.
- The preliminary model results highlight areas of potential concern and enable the Watermaster to work towards managing the Basin on a more granular level (by Management Area) to avoid Undesirable Results.

- Discussion on the costs to perform additional model simulations.
- The Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) envisioned that additional pumping from the North Management Area may be needed to supplement demands in the Central and South Management Areas, which is the purpose of the inter-Basin transfer PMA in the GMP.
- The purpose of performing model runs of the future is to identify the potential for Undesirable Results to occur. We can't know what the potential outcomes are under any given pumping plan until the model is run and the results analyzed. Based on the outcomes, pumping projections can be revised to test how to minimize or eliminate the potential for Undesirable Results to occur, if identified. It is an iterative process over time.
- Director Smith made a four-step recommendation as a next step:
 1. Complete an additional model run with revised pumping locations and volumes per the information provided by BWD. This simulation should be run with the same pumping assumptions for all other pumpers.
 2. If the model run indicates there is a potential for Undesirable Results, a second simulation should be run that only simulates water rights currently owned by Pumpers (*i.e.*, no transfers of water rights)
 3. Disclose all pumping projections to the Board and notify Pumpers that their data will be published and shared publicly. If requested, Pumpers may modify their pumping projections prior to them going public.
 4. If results of the simulations conducted in Steps #1 or 2 are materially different than the existing results, DWR should be notified and the prior results be replaced for the record

Motion: Motioned by Director Bennett, seconded by Vice Chair Bilyk, to perform Step #1 of Director Smith's recommendation,. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

- B. Consideration of Approval to Amend West Yost Statement of Work to Perform Additional Services to Advance to the 5-Year Assessment and Address DWR Comments on GMP. ED Adams described the proposed amendment to the West Yost Statement of Work as described in the agenda package. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Duncan opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. There were no public comments.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- Suggestion to request that DWR give the Watermaster more time to respond to the Recommended Corrective Actions (RCAs) since the DWR provided comments late (*i.e.* respond to a certain number of RCAs each year).
- Suggestion to meet with the DWR team to discuss schedule and responses to RCAs. ED Adams suggested the Board develop a list of questions during the Workshop portion of the Board meetings to ask DWR.
- DWR has offered to meet with the Watermaster to address questions and provide feedback.
- Concern that if RCA responses are not robust, DWR may revoke approval of the Alternative Plan during the next 5-year assessment.
- Concern that a mistake will be made if the Watermaster is rushed to respond to the RCAs by the June 2026 deadline.

Motion: Motioned by Director Smith, seconded by Director Jorgensen, to approve the scope of work and to amend the West Yost Statement of Work to perform additional services to advance the 5-Year Assessment and address DWR comments on the GMP. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

C. *Consideration of Approval of the WY 2026 Budget.* ED Adams summarized the draft final WY 2026 budget included in the Agenda package. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Duncan opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. Public comment was made by Tammy Baker and David Garmon.

Public questions and comments, including Board and staff response if any, included:

- The BWD Board needs to prioritize their staff time to complete increasing regulatory work, which is why BWD can no longer support performing official meter reads as a service to Watermaster.
- Request to consider including the scope and budget for performing the second phase of the GDE scope in WY 2026 instead of WY 2027.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- The budgetary impact of performing more of the GDE scope of work in WY 2026, as requested by the public.
- The purpose of including both the TAC and EWG in the review of the GDE study, specifically, how the TAC can provide hydrogeologic expertise relative to the study's conceptualization of the Basin, such as water levels.
- Vice Chair Bilyk and Director Smith volunteered to participate in the staff-recommended Subcommittee to identify strategies to reduce operating costs.
- When notifying Pumpers of the budget, the Pumpers should be informed that the Watermaster Board is unable to reimburse them for the higher Pumping Assessments issued in WY 2023.
- Recommendation against adding more complexity to the BVHM (such as the update of the hydrogeologic conceptual model) unless the modification is likely to help better manage the Basin. Otherwise, the primary focus should be on reviewing groundwater-level trends.
- At the next Board meeting, the Watermaster Board should discuss:
 - The scope, schedule, and budget for performing the GDE scope of work
 - The appointment of 2 Board members to a Subcommittee to work with the ED to identify cost savings.

Motion: Motioned by Director Smith, seconded by Director Jorgensen, to approve the WY 2026 budget and recommendations as presented by staff, except for the creation of a Budget Subcommittee. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

D. *Spring 2025 Semi-Annual Monitoring Report.* Lauren Salberg provided a summary of the Spring 2025 Semi-Annual Monitoring Event, which was detailed in a report included in the Agenda package. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Duncan opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. There were no public comments.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- Request to add a footnote to Table 2 of the Semi-Annual Monitoring Report documenting the issues discovered with Minimum Thresholds and Measurable Objectives (similar to the text in the body of the report).
- Groundwater levels at MW-1 have increased compared to fall 2019. This is a deep well and the increase in groundwater levels may be a response to reductions in pumping.
- The average lifespan of a transducer is approximately 5 years.
- The benefit of collecting groundwater-level measurements from transducers is to collect high-frequency to identify groundwater-level responses to different climates (*i.e.* dry vs. wet periods) and be used to calibrate the groundwater flow model.

No Board action was taken.

E. *WORKSHOP: Addressing DWR Comments on Judgment/GMP – Considerations for Updating the GMP.* ED Adams led the Board in a guided discussion on considerations for updating the GMP. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Duncan opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. Public comment was made by Steve Anderson.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- Other Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), including those in critically overdrafted Basins, have developed criteria to consider when evaluating for Undesirable Results related to De Minimis Pumpers.

The key points of discussion by the Board included:

- A discussion on if the changes to the GMP will constitute a formal “amendment”, the legal process associated with an amendment, advantages/disadvantages associated with a formal amendment, alternatives to a formal amendment, and what other Basins are doing.
- The Board posed a specific question for DWR: Does the amendment have to be made by June 2026 to meet the DWR deadline? Or, could the GMP evaluation assessment be made in June 2026 and the formal amendment follow?
- ED Adams and Mr. Markman will work together to create a schedule for developing questions for DWR, running the questions by the attorneys and the Board, and submitting questions to DWR.
- Hesitation to request feedback from DWR since their responses are so delayed.
- Per Mr. Markman, because the GMP is an exhibit to the Judgment, it may be appropriate to include the amended GMP as a new exhibit to the Judgment, which would require Court approval.
- A management agency can change their GMP at any point; however, a GMP assessment is required every five years.

- Mr. Markman reminded of the complexity of the Court’s role in approving amendments that may be needed to satisfy DWR.
- Recommendations for addressing RCA #2 related to De Minimis Pumpers:
 - Address the issue immediately and spend money to find a solution, instead of spending money to study the problem.
 - Consider strategies similar to those proposed in other Groundwater Sustainability Plans.
 - Allocate a portion of the Watermaster reserves to fund mitigation of domestic wells that go dry.
- All seven RCAs are planned to be discussed at future Board meetings as part of the “Workshop” portion of the agenda.
- Direction to Watermaster staff to provide more structure around the workshops moving forward, such as providing the Board with materials ahead of time so that the Board can come prepared with feedback.

No Board action was taken.

V. **Reports.**

- A. Legal Counsel Report. NONE
- B. Technical Consultant Report. Mr. Malone reported on the items listed in the agenda package memo (see slide 42 of the [Board presentation slides](#)). There were no additional topics discussed.

Board questions and comments included:

- The EWG will meet in August 2025 to develop recommendations for alternative fallowing standards on the results of the Land IQ and UCI studies, which will be presented to the Watermaster Board.
 - Director Jorgensen praised the UCI student team who prepared and gave the presentation to the EWG.
- C. Executive Director Reports. ED Adams reported on the items listed in the agenda package memo (see slides 43 through 44 of the [Board presentation slides](#)). There were no additional topics discussed. There were no Board questions and comments. Public comment was made by Rich Pinel to confirm the dollar amount of pending reimbursements
 - D. Chairperson’s Report. Chair Duncan announced he will step down from the position on the Watermaster Board, effective at the conclusion of the June meeting. The BWD Board has nominated and approved Gina Moran to serve the primary BWD representative on the Watermaster Board. Other Board members expressed support and thanks for all of Chair Duncan’s hard work.

VI. **Approval of Agenda Items for July 16, 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 July 16, 2025 Board meeting agenda, in addition to items listed in the Agenda package. Discussion included:

- The need to include an agenda item to discuss the reorganization of the Board and their roles following Chair Duncan’s resignation.

- A suggestion to seek out another consultant to perform the GDE scope to determine if the UCI study is best available science, including direction to staff to identify potential firms and cost estimates. The goal would be to escalate the work and potentially reduce costs.
- ED Adams updated the proposed Agenda for the July 16, 2025 meeting on the meeting screen based on discussion, noting it now includes the following items:
 - WY 2025 3rd Quarterly Budget Status Review
 - Consideration of approval of TAC and EWG agenda
 - Workshop: RCA 7 - Judgment vs. GMP
 - Board Officer Election
 - GDE scope and schedule (options to expedite for consideration (e.g. Peer Review))
 - Appointing a budget subcommittee

Motion: Motioned by Director Jorgensen seconded by Vice Chair Bilyk, to approve the July 16, 2025 agenda presented. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*


VII. Board Member Comments. Chair Duncan called for comments.

- The Board thanked Chair Duncan for his service and role as Chair. They also expressed excitement to work with Ms. Moran.
- Director Smith made the following comments:
 - He thanked the BWD for providing meter read services and expressed interest in finding alternative options in Borrego Springs to perform meter read services.
 - He clarified that his earlier statements related to future water rights transfers were intended to ensure the Basin is operated within the rules of the Judgment.
 - He echoed Director Bennett's recommendation to monitor groundwater level data and trends instead of developing a perfect model.
- Chair Duncan advised the Board to focus on addressing the GDE study findings.

VIII. Next Meetings of the Borrego Springs Watermaster. Chair Duncan reviewed the meetings listed in the agenda package.

IX. Adjournment

- A. Chair Duncan adjourned the meeting at 6:32 PM.


 Recorded by:
 Lauren Salberg, Staff Geologist, West Yost


 Attest:
 Shannon Smith, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board