

MINUTES
BORREGO SPRINGS WATERMASTER BOARD MEETING
Conducted Virtually via GoToMeeting
Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

The following individuals were present at the meeting:

Directors Present	Chair Tyler Bilyk – Agricultural Sector
	Vice Chair Jim Bennett – County of San Diego
	Secretary and Treasurer Shannon Smith – Recreational Sector
	Gina Moran – Borrego Water District (BWD)
	Mark Jorgensen – Community Representative
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
	Ethan Steiner, County of San Diego
	Geoff Poole, BWD General Manager
	George Peraza, DWR
	JC
	Jessica Clabaugh, BWD Finance Office
	Jim Dax, Board Alternate - Community Representative
	Rich Pinel, Board Alternate - Recreational Sector
	Steve Anderson, BB&K, representing BWD
	Travis Huxman, UCI
	Trey Driscoll, Intera, TAC Member representing BWD

Please visit the [Watermaster’s Website](#)¹ to access the Agenda Packet, recording, and presentation for the September 17, 2025 Meeting.

I. Opening Procedures

- A. Chair Bilyk called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM at which time the meeting recording was started.
- B. 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 Jorgensen, seconded by 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. Chair Bilyk referenced the correspondence included in the agenda package. There were no public or Board comments.
- B. Public Comments. Chair Bilyk called for public comments. Public comment was made by Jim Dax and Trey Driscoll.
- Jim Dax voiced support for the letter from David Garmon included as Public Correspondence in the agenda package.
 - Trey Driscoll, representing the Borrego Water District (BWD), requested that the Board consider adding the BWD's monitoring wells at the Rams Hill Wastewater Treatment Plant to the Watermaster's Groundwater Monitoring Program noting that these wells are shallow and near the Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE) study area. BWD is performing the monitoring, the data can be transmitted to Watermaster.

- III. **Consent Calendar.** Chair Bilyk called for any discussion on the Consent Calendar items included in the September 17, 2025 agenda package. There were no public or Board comments.

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

IV. Items for Board Consideration and Possible Action

- A. *Overview of Anticipated WY 2026 Calendar of Activities and Approval of WY 2026 Board Meeting Dates.* ED Adams summarized the proposed meeting dates for WY 2026. At the conclusion of the presentation, 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:

- Recommendation to move the Board meeting topic "Contracting for Staff and Legal services for WY 2027 and beyond" from July 2026 to March 2026.

Motion: Motioned by Director Moran, seconded by Director Smith, to approve the WY 2026 Board meeting dates on the condition that item to discuss "Contracting for Staff and Legal services for WY 2027 and beyond" be moved from July to March 2026. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

- B. *Watermaster Meter Reading Program – Recommended Revisions for Potential Cost Savings.* ED Adams provided a summary of proposed cost savings for the meter read program documented in the agenda package. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Bilyk opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. Public comment was made by Rich Pinel and David Garmon.

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

- Appreciations for identifying cost savings.

- Timing of official meter reads: halfway through the water year and at the end of the water year.
- Request to identify cost savings for the scope of work to the review the GDE Study Report.

The following is a summary of the points of discussion by the Board:

- Director Smith, a member of the subcommittee, summarized the topics discussed at the meeting and explained why he felt comfortable recommending the modified the scope of the meter read program.
- The TAC was not consulted on the change in frequency of official meter reads.
- Watermaster Staff does not anticipate any changes in the quality or accuracy of the meter read data by reducing the number of official meter reads.
- Director Moran reported that BWD feels that the revisions to the meter read program are a good solution and enable BWD to remain in the role of performing the official meter reads; it keeps funding in Borrego Springs and allows BWD staff to continue reading the meters while still meeting their operational needs.

Motion: Motioned by Director Moran, seconded by Director Jorgensen, to approve Resolution 25-01. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

- C. *Considerations for Running an Additional BVHM Pumping Projection.* ED Adams provided a summary of the memo included in the agenda package regarding running an additional projection scenario using the Borrego Valley Hydrologic Model (BVHM). At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Bilyk opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. Public comment was made by David Garmon and Geoff Poole.

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

- Would running an additional scenario with revised pumping projections resolve the model discrepancies in the South Management Area (SMA)?
 - Running an additional projection scenario with revised pumping would not resolve the model discrepancy in the SMA – resolution of the issue still requires review and potential update to the HCM.
- What is the purpose of running additional model scenarios knowing there is a discrepancy in the model?
 - There is confidence in the ability of the calibrated BVHM to simulate groundwater levels in the North and Central Management Areas (NMA and CMA) and staff believes it can provide decision-grade information to the Board.
- Does the BVHM simulate the consumptive use of GDEs? The GDE Study Report estimates that GDEs consume 500 - 600 acre-feet per year (afy) of groundwater in the CMA and SMA.
 - The BVHM simulates approximately 480 afy of evapotranspiration – this amount and the location have not been updated based on the GDE study.

The following is a summary of the points of discussion by the Board:

- Director Smith recommended that the Board also consider using the BVHM to analyze a new baseline scenario that simulates pumping in the amounts and locations afforded by BPA, as defined in the Judgment (i.e. in accordance with the Rampdown and with no water rights transfers assumed). This is needed to understand the sustainability of the Judgment pumping plan and help the Board determine whether future transfers of BPA and Carryover may cause or contribute to potential Undesirable Results relative to the baseline. The current model projections reflect the future plans of pumpers, not the Court-approved management plan. It would be prudent to understand and report the sustainability of the Court-approved management plan so this can serve as a basis for Board decision making, especially given that transfers will need to be approved for the upcoming Water Rights Accounting process.
- Scenario 1C may be premature and not cost-effective. Anomalies by management area should not distract from overall progress.
- The rationale for proposing 450 afy and 900 afy as additional pumping volumes to shift to the NMA. An additional shift of 900 afy to the NMA (e.g. a total of 1,820 af) is a reasonable approximation of the transfers assumed between Rams Hill and BWD.
- The Basin as a whole is currently ahead of the Rampdown schedule, but the challenge remains to understand where pumping can occur to avoid Undesirable Results.
- Given that the model shows an imbalance of recharge and discharge, this can be thought of as a “plumbing” issue in the Basin – how to pump in the ideal locations and move the water to users. Additional model runs should explore achieving a balance of recharge and discharge across the Basin (e.g. additional northward shift of pumping).
- Funding of additional model runs. Suggestions included explicitly budgeting additional model work to occur in WY 2027 and using the as-needed technical services budget so that the work could be performed sooner and used to inform the 5-Year GMP Assessment Report and other Board decisions.
- Motivations for performing additional model simulations, such as: i) refining where future pumping could occur in the Basin and achieve sustainability in all three Management Areas, ii) understanding groundwater elevations near GDEs, and iii) providing the Board with information to help inform the approval of water rights transfers.
- Acknowledgement that the BWD cannot reduce their demands, so the reality may be building infrastructure to pump more water in the NMA. It will be a multi-year process to develop and plan-for a solution.
- When asked if future model runs would reduce pumping in the SMA, Mr. Malone responded that it would depend on what assumptions are used. Assumptions will be developed with BWD and T2.
- When asked by the Board, Geoff Poole (speaking his personal opinion), commented:

- It is reasonable to continue modeling future scenarios.
- Simulating an additional shift of 450 afy to the NMA is reasonable but acknowledged that a total of about 1,700 afy may need to shift north when accounting for lost SMA production and addressing projected groundwater elevation declines at wells in the CMA.
- The areas with projected declines in groundwater elevation are also near the GDE study area, so running additional projection scenarios could assist in addressing GDE concerns.
- In the future, BWD's system may become the mechanism for physically conveying water between management areas.
- How the BVHM currently accounts for groundwater use by GDEs and concern that the GDEs are not being addressed as urgently as they should be.
- When asked, Mr. Malone recommended simulating a shift of 900 afy of pumping to the NMA to bracket results and define the plausible range of model results.

Motion: Motioned by Vice Chair Bennett, seconded by Director Smith, to proceed with the development of an additional model projection scenario that simulates an additional shift of 900 afy of pumping to the North Management Area and use the WY 2026 As-Needed Technical Services Budget to fund the work. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

Following the discussion, ED Adams reminded of the need to approve Carryover transfers in the upcoming Water Rights Accounting process and in light of the preceding discussion recommended that the Board will need to discuss the approach to approving future water rights transfers considering the model results to date.

D. Consideration of Approval of Agenda for Next TAC Meeting. Mr. Malone summarized the proposed agenda for the next TAC meeting. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Bilyk opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. There were no public comments.

The following is a summary of the points of discussion by the Board:

- The agenda item to discuss the BVHM pumping projections would not be to share the results of an additional model run, it would be a status update on the Board-approved scope and the next steps to perform the work.

Motion: Motioned by Director Jorgensen seconded by Chair Bilyk, to approve the TAC meeting agenda. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

E. Workshop: Sustainable Management Criteria Updates for Degraded Water Quality. Mr. Malone led a discussion on the proposed updates to Sustainable Management Criteria (SMCs) for groundwater quality. At the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Bilyk opened the floor to public comment, followed by Board discussion. Public comment was made by Rich Pinel and Jim Dax.

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

- BWD provides the Watermaster with groundwater quality results for their wells and the data are included in the Watermaster’s database, analyzed, and included in annual reports to the DWR.
- Is a change in the Rampdown schedule an adaptive management strategy?
 - Mr. Markman responded that changing the Rampdown schedule is an option, but would need to be presented to the Court.

The following is a summary of the points of discussion by the Board:

- The presentation did not acknowledge that arsenic exceedances have been historically observed in the SMA, at wells IDI-1 and IDI-2.
- No groundwater quality modeling and/or particle tracking analysis has been performed to support the response to DWR RCAs.
- A “sub-area” of the Basin refers to an area within the Basin that is smaller than a Management Area.
- With regard to the proposed definition of Undesirable Result (see slide 43 of the [Board presentation slides](#)), the statement: *“Significant and unreasonable degradation of groundwater quality occurs when the magnitude of degradation in any Management Area or subarea of the Basin precludes the use of groundwater for current and/or potential future beneficial uses, if:....The cause of the degradation is demonstrated to be related to implementation of the Judgment/GMP”* could be revised to link causation to implementing a PMA. Legal Counsel disagreed with changing the statement, stating that the cause of degradation could be related to a Watermaster action (allowed in the Judgment), not necessarily caused by a specific PMA.
- Groundwater quality SMC may need to consider the depth at which pumping is occurring, since there are differences in water quality with depth.
- If it is financially feasible to treat a water quality problem, it should not be considered an Undesirable Result.
- BWD uses Title 22 standards for potable water. This is important to consider as the Watermaster investigates shifting more pumping to the NMA for potable water and could potentially lead to changes in how BWD treats its current water supply.
- The TAC’s review and comments on this topic will be reported to the Board.
- The Judgment addresses Watermaster’s authority to approve the location of new and replacement wells.

No Board action was taken.

V. Reports.

- A. Legal Counsel Report. Mr. Markman reported that the August 21, 2025 Status Conference was very short, and the Judge had no questions or concerns. The next Status Conference is scheduled for February 2026.
- B. Technical Consultant Report. Mr. Malone reported on the items listed in the agenda package memo (see slide 50 of the [Board presentation slides](#)). There were no additional topics discussed. There were no public comments.

The following is a summary of the points of discussion by the Board:

- A Professional Service Agreement template was sent to the potential candidates to perform the peer review of the GDE Study Report.
- C. Executive Director Reports. ED Adams reported on the items listed in the agenda package memo (see slides 51 through 54 of the [Board presentation slides](#)). There were no additional topics discussed. There were no public comments.

The following is a summary of the points of discussion by the Board:

- Is there a way to verify if the last BPA Party out of compliance is a De Minimis Pumper?
 - ED Adams reported if a Party isn't metered, staff is unable to confirm how much they pump. Mr. Dax noted that he believes the Party likely pumps their full BPA based on past visits to the property.
 - Director Jorgensen requested that a second signatory be added to Watermaster's bank account since the Board is down to one approved signatory.
- D. Chairperson's Report.
 - Chair Bilyk advertised that a panel discussion on Borrego Springs will be held during the Western Groundwater Conference. The panel will be moderated by Trey Driscoll and include Watermaster Board members, Staff, and others.
 - Mr. Driscoll provided additional detail on the panel and noted that they are looking for additional community members to participate in the panel.
 - Since the conference is not open to the public for free, ED Adams and Mr. Driscoll will provide a report-out from the conference to share at the next Board meeting.

VI. Approval of Agenda Items for October 15, 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 October 15, 2025 Board meeting agenda, in addition to items listed in the Agenda package. Discussion included:

- Request for staff to clarify timing of the October Open House. An email will be sent out with the timing of the In-Person Open House and Board meeting.
- Adding an item to address approval of water rights transfers for WY 2025.

ED Adams updated the proposed Agenda for the October 15, 2025 meeting on the meeting screen based on discussion, noting it now includes the following items:

- Election of Board Officers for WY 2026
- Review and Selection of Peer Reviewer for GDE Study
- Draft WY 2025 Water Rights Accounting
- Process and schedule to complete WY 2025 Annual Report
- Consideration of Approval of November 2025 TAC Meeting Agenda
- Workshop: Overview of Public Comments in Sustainable Management Criteria
- Water Rights Transfers of Carryover – Sustainability, Pumping Projections

Motion: Motioned by Director Moran seconded by Director Smith, to approve the October 15, 2025 agenda presented. *Motion carried unanimously by roll-call vote (5-0-0).*

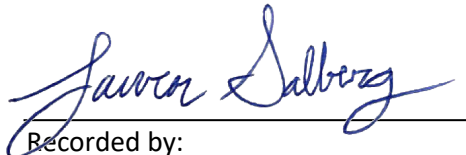
VII. **Board Member Comments.** Chair Bilyk called for comments.

- Director Smith applauded the Watermaster’s efforts on addressing difficult topics. He also voiced that he believes additional work needs to be performed to evaluate the sustainability of the GMP and help the Board inform its decisions on the approval of water rights transfers.

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

IX. **Adjournment**

A. Chair Bilyk adjourned the meeting at 6:17 PM.



Recorded by:
Lauren Salberg, Staff Geologist, West Yost



Attest:
Shannon Smith, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board