



San Dieguito River Park  
 Joint Powers Authority  
 18372 Sycamore Creek Road  
 Escondido, CA 92025  
 (858) 674-2270 Fax (858) 674-2280  
 www.sdrp.org

**JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY  
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Chair Jill MacDonald  
 Solana Beach City Council

Vice-Chair Chris Khoury  
 Citizens Advisory Committee

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 San Diego City Council

Marni von Wilpert  
 San Diego City Council

Joel Anderson  
 Supervisor, County of San Diego

Terra Lawson-Remer  
 Supervisor, County of San Diego

Terry Gaasterland  
 Del Mar City Council

Consuelo Martinez  
 Escondido City Council

Jenny Maeda  
 Poway City Council

Dustin Fuller, Ex Officio  
 22<sup>nd</sup> District Agricultural  
 Association

Shawna Anderson  
 Executive Director

**AGENDA**

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PARK  
 CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Friday – February 6, 2026

10:30 a.m.

**Location:** San Rafael Parish Pastoral Center, Rooms D & E  
 (The Pastoral Center building is located on the south side of the parking lot)  
 17252 Bernardo Center Drive, Rancho Bernardo (north of Rancho Bernardo Dr.)

**The Chair cannot start the meeting until a quorum is present. PLEASE ARRIVE BY 10:25 A.M.** The CAC may take action on any item listed on the Consent or Discussion/Action agenda, but only when a quorum is present. If a quorum is temporarily lost during the meeting, no further discussion will take place until the quorum is regained. If the quorum is not regained, the meeting will be adjourned. **Please advise the Chair at the beginning of the meeting if you must leave before 12:15 p.m.**

NOTICE: Agenda packets are available on the [sdrp.org website](http://sdrp.org). If you do not have the ability to access or print an agenda, please contact the office at 858-674-2270 to make alternative arrangements.

Roll Call and Introductions Chair

*Late arrivals should speak to staff to make sure their attendance is noted.*

Approval of 12/5/25 Minutes

Chair’s Report Chair

Executive Director’s Report Staff

Public Comment Public

## DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. Update - Lake Hodges Dam and Lake Level (Pages 7-15)
2. CAC Member Presentation - Ramona Trails Association (Oral)
3. Progress Update – CTC Trail at Rio Run (aka Soccer Fields) (Oral)
4. Status on Closing CTC Trail Gaps (Oral)

### 5. Committee Reports

Project Review Committee

Trails Committee

Interpretation Committee

## INFORMATION

Correspondence

Adjournment

Chair

The next meeting is scheduled for March 6, 2026.

If you have any questions, please call Dewanda Vandermost, Office Manager (858) 674-2270 x10

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK  
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Minutes of December 5, 2025**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Chris Khoury  
Rich Risner  
Bob Byrnes  
Candice Bowman  
Kelly Clemshaw  
Udo Wahn  
Liz Gabrych  
Dorothy McLin  
Victoria Touchstone  
Jeremy Blakespear  
Jennifer Dissler  
Peter Shapiro  
Pam Heatherington  
Bob Dudley  
Bill Adelson

**REPRESENTING**

CAC, Chair  
American Society of Architects  
California Native Plant Society  
Carmel Valley Planning Board  
Del Dios Town Council  
Del Mar Lagoon Committee  
League of Women Voters  
Lomas Serenas Property Owners  
Rancho Bernardo Planning Board  
San Diego Bicycle Coalition  
San Diego Mountain Biking Assoc.  
San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy  
Sierra Club  
San Pasqual Property Owner  
Eastern Property Owner

**VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT**

Shawna Anderson  
Dewanda Vandermost  
Nathan Lacy  
Paul Bernstein  
Kevin Kidd

San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Pasqual Property Owner, Alt  
President of the Del Dios Town Council

**Roll Call and Introductions**

Chair Khoury called the meeting to order at 10:33 AM. A roll call was taken with 15 committee members present to begin the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes – 11-7-25**

No amendments or changes were needed for the draft minutes. Pam Heatherington made the motion to approve the minutes and Vicki Touchstone seconded the motion.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

**Chair's Report** – Chair Khoury thanked members for attending and emphasized the importance of not only preserving nature but also experiencing it firsthand, paraphrasing Edward Abbey: “It is important not only to preserve nature, but while doing so, to get out and enjoy it.” Members were encouraged to take opportunities to do so.

**Executive Director’s Report –**

Executive Director Anderson welcomed attendees and highlighted upcoming and recent events. She promoted the Red Nose Run/Walk on Saturday, December 13, at Del Mar Powerhouse Park, a 3K and 5K beach walk/run benefiting the San Dieguito River Park and Semper Fi America’s Fund. The River Park has been a beneficiary for four years, receiving several thousand dollars annually for trail related work. Anderson and three rangers will attend, and the Park will host a table.

Anderson reported that the Harvest Tea at Sikes Adobe was well attended and modeled after the successful Valentine’s Tea. Revenue figures are being finalized to determine if it will be repeated. She also encouraged attendance at the Artisan Fair at Sikes Adobe on Sunday, December 7, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., featuring over 20 artist booths. This is the first Artisan Fair, with hopes of making it an annual event.

Finally, Anderson announced plans to retire next year, likely in June. At the upcoming JPA Board meeting, a recruitment committee will be appointed to begin the process of hiring a new Executive Director. Anderson expressed mixed feelings about retiring, citing a desire to spend more time with family, travel, and complete key projects such as the Osuna Trail before departure. She emphasized her deep appreciation for the River Park and the rewarding experience of serving as Executive Director.

**Public Comment –**

CAC members Bob Dudley and Paul Bernstein, representing San Pasqual Property Owners, updated the committee on efforts to raise Lake Hodges’ water level, citing broad community support, ecological and fire safety concerns, and economic impacts from reliance on costly desalinated water. They requested a renewed letter of support from the JPA to elected officials. Executive Director Anderson clarified that the CAC cannot act independently; and that the item is not on today’s agenda and would need to be placed on a future agenda to discuss and make a recommendation for JPA Board review and approval. Anderson suggested waiting for the City’s alternatives analysis before taking a position. Chair Khoury will report this discussion at the next JPA meeting and add it as an agenda item for the next CAC meeting. He commended Bob and Paul for their advocacy.

**DISCUSSION/ACTION**

**1. Election of 2026 Officers for Chair and Vice Chair**

Chair Khoury noted that the current two-year terms for Chair and Vice Chair will conclude at the end of 2025. He expressed willingness to serve one final two-year term as Chair, consistent with the six-year maximum outlined in the bylaws.

Chair Khoury reported that Vice Chair Barnouw, who was unable to attend, declined renomination and supports nominating Jeremy Blakespear as Vice Chair. Mr. Blakespear stated that he would accept the nomination.

Chair Khoury invited additional nominations; none were offered.

Motion: Bob Dudley moved to elect Chair Khoury and Jeremy Blakespear as nominated.

Second: Peter Shapiro.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Abstain: None.

Following the vote, Jeremy Blakespear provided a brief introduction, sharing his background in conservation and cycling and describing his role representing the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition.

**2. Polo Fields Trail (Oral report)**

Environmental Planner Nathan Lacy reported that Surf Cup Sports, with Recon Environmental as their contractor and project manager, plans to complete the Coast to Crest Trail segment by the end of 2026, ahead of the June 2027 deadline. Initial site preparation, invasive species removal, and silt fencing installation have begun to prevent sediment from entering the river during clearing. Lacy reported that he attended a pre-construction meeting on November 18 where the project team and City inspector identified grading and drainage revisions. Revised plans are under review, and Surf Cup will provide bi-weekly updates to JPA staff. Native revegetation plans remain unchanged, and sensitive species monitoring will occur throughout construction.

CAC members raised access concerns regarding locked gates on the Surf Cup site; Anderson confirmed this will be followed up, noting Surf Cup could provide pedestrian access without parking. No new buildings or lighting are planned, and construction is limited to the trail corridor south of the soccer fields.

**3. Committee Reports**

**Project Review Committee** – Vicki Touchstone member of the PRC reported that they will monitor the Surf Cup trail construction and review the proposed Silvergate development in Rancho Santa Fe, which is in the JPA’s Focused Planning Area and still in early planning stages. The committee is also working with JPA staff on reviewing and updating the Concept Plan development guidelines which will be presented to the CAC for recommendation to the JPA Board in the near future. These updates will strengthen standards that have not been revised since initially drafted.

**Trails Committee** – Candy Bowman of the Trails Committee reported that she will send the survey results for presentation at a future JPA Board meeting

**Interpretation Committee** – The Interpretation Committee did not meet and there was no report.

At the conclusion of the meeting, members briefly discussed fire management within the focus planning area, specifically the potential use of goats for vegetation control. Executive Director Anderson noted that goats have been utilized by others in the past for targeted invasive species but not common practice at a large scale. Anderson further clarified that the JPA’s responsibilities are limited to maintaining fire breaks and removing invasive species on JPA-owned or managed properties. Individual property owners remain responsible for managing fire risk on their respective lands.

**INFORMATION**

**Horsepark Trail Repairs (oral report)** - No report

**Osuna Trail Segment of CTC Trail (oral report)** - No report

**Correspondence** – None

An announcement was made that the January 2, 2026 CAC meeting would be canceled due to the holiday.

Chair Khoury adjourned the meeting at 11:59 AM.

DRAFT

**Agenda Item 1**  
**February 6, 2026**

**TO:** CAC

**FROM:** Staff

**SUBJECT:** Updates – Lake Hodges Dam

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At the CAC’s December meeting, CAC member alternate Paul Berstein (San Pasqual property owner) shared information under Public Comment about their organization, Raise Lake Hodges, and that letters from several organizations were recently submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board and San Diego County Water Authority raising concerns about the reservoir’s low water level (Attachment 1). A letter from Councilmember and JPA board member Marni von Wilpert was also submitted to the California Natural Resources Agency requesting analysis on potential wildfire risk from the low lake level (Attachment 2). Paul requested that the subject of the Hodges Dam be placed on the next CAC meeting agenda to consider new information and updates with the objective of recommending further action from the JPA Board.

JPA staff recently received an update from San Diego Public Utilities on the dam replacement project with the following statement (relayed at the May 2025 CAC meeting, with added timeline):

“Hodges Dam remains a priority within the City’s Dam Safety Program, and our focus continues to be maintaining public safety and regulatory compliance while being responsible stewards of ratepayer dollars. The San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) informed the City in February of last year that it no longer believes it has a financial obligation for the full replacement of Hodges Dam, despite prior planning assumptions that replacement costs would be shared among SDCWA, the City, and regional partners under existing agreements.

During a similar time, at the end of 2024, the 10 percent design study for full replacement identified a substantially higher cost estimate—now ranging from approximately \$474 to \$697 million, compared to earlier projections of \$275 million.

Given these changes, the City is actively pursuing a formal alternatives analysis to evaluate a range of potential options beyond full replacement that continue to meet dam safety requirements and protect downstream communities while ensuring ratepayer funds are used effectively. That technical alternatives analysis is currently underway and is expected to be completed in spring of 2027. As that work progresses, staff will continue to coordinate with regulators and regional partners, and we will return to the City Council and the public with additional information as it becomes available.”

**Agenda Item 1**  
**February 6, 2026**

JPA staff asked for a project scope and list of alternatives but has not yet received a response. It is JPA staff's intent to review the City's technical alternatives report when completed and provide feedback and comments with input from the PRC, CAC and JPA Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawna Anderson  
Executive Director

Attachment 1: Letters regarding lake level

Attachment 2: Letter from San Diego Councilmember Marni von Wilpert July 2025



## Rancho Bernardo Community Council

“Your Voice in the Community”

Established in 1971

12463 Rancho Bernardo Road, #523

San Diego, CA, 92128

September 4, 2025

Mr. Nick Serrano, Chair  
Board of Directors  
San Diego County Water Authority  
4677 Overland Ave.  
San Diego, CA 92123

Subject: Support of Restoring Lake Hodges Dam

Dear Mr. Serrano,

The Rancho Bernardo Community Council (RBCC), representing over 45,000 residents, strongly supports restoring Lake Hodges Dam. Maintaining the lake at 293 feet and rebuilding the dam would save ratepayers \$9.1M–\$10.0M per billion gallons compared to Carlsbad desalination, and \$3.88M–\$4.50M versus Pure Water San Diego. In the last four years, releasing 12 billion gallons due to low mandated levels lost potential savings of \$109M–\$120M (vs. desal) or \$46.6M–\$54.0M (vs. Pure)—funds that could have offset much of the replacement cost. Two points to highlight our endorsement:

1. Support for restoring Lake Hodges to a safer, higher operating level (293 feet) to reduce wildfire risk; and
2. Request for agencies to evaluate near-term potable use of Lake Hodges water where feasible by raising the dam to 293 and using the existing pumps to the Olivenhain reservoir, given the billion gallons (BG) savings above.

Raising Lake Hodges would reduce costs, produce renewable energy, protect homes, and conserve ecosystems. Acting now can prevent future regret after potential disasters.

This recommendation was approved by a vote during the Rancho Bernardo Community Council’s September 4, 2025 meeting.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Robin Kaufman  
President, Rancho Bernardo Community Council

Cc:

Assemblymember Dr. Darshana R. Patel  
Senator Brian W. Jones  
U.S. Representative Scott Peters  
San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority Board  
Juan Guerreiro City of San Diego Public Utilities Department  
Division Manager, California Division of Safety of Dams  
Honorable San Diego City Councilmembers  
Mayor Todd Gloria, City of San Diego  
Governor Gavin Newsom



## Rancho Santa Fe Association

P.O. Box A, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067-0359

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October 28, 2025

Mr. Eric Oppenheimer  
Executive Director  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Subject: Restoring Lake Hodges Dam to a Water Level of 293 Feet

Dear Mr. Oppenheimer:

The Rancho Santa Fe Board of Directors, representing over 4,000 community residents and 1,800 homes, supports restoring Lake Hodges Dam to a water level of 293 feet. Maintaining the lake at its current level increases wildfire risk to the entire region by needlessly adding over 500 acres of flammable brush to an existing high fire area. Increasing the water level to 293 feet does not require additional funds nor additional infrastructure.

We respectfully ask that the State Water Resources Control Board:

1. Coordinate with the California Division of Safety of Dams, CAL FIRE, City of San Diego, and the San Diego County Water Authority to adopt a balanced, science-based management plan that restores the water Lake Hodges water level to 293 feet.
2. If the State Water Resources Control Board is in opposition to raising the Lake Hodges water level to 293 feet, we respectfully request that you provide detailed data and analysis as to why the water level cannot be raised and how the current water level improves wildfire safety for the community.

The community of Rancho Santa Fe and the Rancho Santa Fe Association Board of Directors look forward to your response.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and continued commitment to a more resilient California. We look forward to a safe solution that benefits both people and the environment.

Sincerely,

David Gamboa  
President, Board of Directors  
Rancho Santa Fe Association

CC:

Hon. Joe LaCava, Chair  
San Diego City Council / San Dieguito River Park JPA Board  
5666 La Jolla Blvd. La Jolla, CA 92037

Hon. Todd Gloria  
Mayor of San Diego  
202 C Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Diego, CA 92101

Hon. Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Erik Malvick, Ph.D.  
California Division of Safety of Dams  
2720 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95833

Assemblymember Dr. Darshana Patel  
California State Assembly, District 76  
12396 World Trade Drive Suite 118  
San Diego, CA 92128

Senator Brian W. Jones  
California State Senate, District 40  
10650 Treena St. #110  
San Diego, CA 92131

Mr. Juan Guerreiro, Director  
Public Utilities Department  
City of San Diego  
9192 Topaz Way, San Diego, CA 92123

Secretary Wade Crowfoot  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Nick Serrano, Chair  
Board of Directors  
San Diego County Water Authority  
4677 Overland Avenue  
San Diego, CA 92123

**Tierrasanta Community Council**  
4985 La Cuenta Drive  
San Diego, CA 92124

October 16, 2025

**Mr. Eric Oppenheimer**  
Executive Director  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

**Subject: Support for Raising Lake Hodges to 293 Feet to Restore Drinking Water Supply, Reduce Wildfire Risk, and Protect Endangered Species**

Dear Mr. Oppenheimer,

On behalf of the Tierrasanta Community Council, representing more than 30,000 residents in central San Diego, we respectfully urge the State Water Resources Control Board to support restoring Lake Hodges to its safe operational level of approximately 293 feet — San Diego County’s largest natural watershed and a vital source of affordable local drinking water.

For over a century, Lake Hodges has provided San Diego with reliable and cost-effective drinking water. However, since the dam’s drawdown, this critical resource has remained off-line, forcing the region to rely on far more expensive alternatives such as desalination and imported water. According to regional analyses, Hodges water costs roughly **\$9–\$10 million less per billion gallons** than Carlsbad desalination water — savings that could help offset the proposed **60% water rate increases** now facing communities like Tierrasanta.

The current restrictions have also created a **severe fire hazard**. The exposed brushland and dried lakebed that now occupy more than 500 acres of former reservoir floor have turned what was once a natural firebreak into a **tinderbox 500 times more likely** to ignite than the chance of a downstream dam failure. As Councilmember Marni von Wilpert has noted, Hodges is also a vital source for aerial firefighting operations. The reduced water level now compromises the ability of firefighting aircraft to defend our region during the next Santa Ana wind event.

Moreover, the Tierrasanta Community Council aligns with the **Sierra Club’s position** urging restoration of the reservoir’s ecological balance. The current low-water conditions threaten the habitat of **26 endangered species** within the San Dieguito River Valley, jeopardizing decades of conservation progress.

Finally, with the proposed **30% increase in the California FAIR Plan** already straining homeowners’ budgets, restoring Hodges to 293 feet would also help keep insurance affordable by reducing wildfire risk — a clear win for both public safety and economic resilience.

We therefore request that the State Water Resources Control Board:



# THE SAN DIEGUITO PLANNING GROUP SDPG

P.O. Box 2789, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067

November 12, 2025

Mr. Eric Oppenheimer  
Executive Director  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Subject: Restoring Lake Hodges Dam to the 293 Feet Water Level

Dear Mr. Oppenheimer,

The San Dieguito Planning Group (SDPG), representing the unincorporated communities of Rancho Santa Fe, Fairbanks Ranch, Sun Valley, Del Dios, Eden Valley, Harmony Grove, Elfin Forest and surrounding contiguous unincorporated areas, strongly supports raising Lake Hodges to a safer operational level to 293 feet. Our planning group communities includes the San Dieguito River Park, all of which depends on Lake Hodges for fire protection, environmental stability, and water security. Maintaining the lake at its current level increases wildfire risk to the entire region by needlessly adding over 500 acres of flammable brush to an existing high fire area. Increasing the water level to 293 feet does not require additional funds nor additional infrastructure.

We respectfully ask the State Water Resources Control Board:

- 1.) Coordinate with the California Division of Safety of Dams, CAL FIRE, City of San Diego, and the San Diego County Water Authority to adopt a balanced, science-based management plan that restores the water Lake Hodges water level to 293 feet.
- 2.) If the State Water Resources Control Board is in opposition to raising the Lake Hodges water level to 293 feet, we respectfully request that you provide detailed data and analysis as to why the water level cannot be raised and how the current water level improves wildfire safety for the community.

The members of the San Dieguito Planning Group look forward to your response.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and continued commitment to a more resilient California.  
We look forward to a safe solution that benefits both people and the environment.

Sincerely,

Douglas Dill  
Chair, Seat #11  
San Dieguito Planning Group

cc:

Mr. Nick Serrano, Chair, San Diego County Water Authority  
Hon. Joe LaCava, Chair, San Diego City Council / San Dieguito River Park JPA Board  
Hon. Todd Gloria, Mayor of San Diego  
Hon. Gavin Newsom, Governor of California  
Mr. Erik Malvick, Ph.D., California Division of Safety of Dams  
Assembly Member Dr. Darshana Patel, California State Assembly, District 76  
Senator Brian W. Jones, California State Senate, District 40  
Mr. Juan Guerreiro, Director, Public Utilities Department  
Secretary Wade Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Agency



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**MARNI VON WILPERT**  
COUNCILMEMBER • FIFTH DISTRICT

July 28, 2025

Secretary Wade Crowfoot  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Water Level Restriction at Hodges Reservoir and Fire Safety Concerns

I am writing to bring to the attention of this office the potential fire risk that the current water level restrictions at Hodges Reservoir are creating. I respectfully urge the California Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) to coordinate closely with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) in reevaluating these restrictions—specifically considering the increased wildfire risk to life, property, and natural resources in the surrounding region.

Hodges reservoir is a critical asset to the City of San Diego. In addition to serving as a key component of our drinking water storage system, it is also an essential environmental, recreational, and public safety resource—particularly in the context of wildfire mitigation and response.

The reservoir functions not only as a natural firebreak but also as an active resource for aerial firefighting operations. Both helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft have historically utilized Hodges Reservoir for water drops during wildfire events; however, the efficacy of this function is directly dependent on maintaining sufficient water levels.

I am aware of the Oroville dam crisis of 2017, and I applaud the DSOD for its work to keep our dams maintained and California residents safe. At the same time, the DSOD's decision to maintain a reduced water level at Lake Hodges has resulted in prolonged periods of low water elevation that expose formerly submerged land, allowing the proliferation of grass, brush, and invasive plant species. These materials significantly increase the fuel load and exacerbate wildfire risk in the surrounding wildland-urban interface.



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**MARNI VON WILPERT**  
COUNCILMEMBER • FIFTH DISTRICT

I acknowledge and commend DSOD's mission to ensure dam integrity and protect public safety through rigorous oversight and inspection protocols. However, I believe a more holistic approach to reservoir management is warranted—one that incorporates wildfire prevention and community protection as core considerations. I respectfully request that DSOD adopt a balanced, multidisciplinary approach that incorporates wildfire risk and the broader public safety implications of prolonged water level restrictions.

I encourage the DSOD to engage with CAL FIRE, the City of San Diego, and all relevant stakeholders to expedite the reevaluation of the current restrictions in light of the wildfire risk being created by DSOD's decision. A thoughtful, collaborative approach can ensure both the structural integrity of the reservoir and the protection of the communities that rely upon it.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued commitment to public safety across the State of California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marni von Wilpert".

Marni von Wilpert  
Councilmember, District 5  
City of San Diego

cc: Karla Nemeth, Director of California Department of Water Resources  
Laura Hollender, Deputy Director, Flood Management and Dam Safety