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**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK  
JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY  
Minutes of April 3, 2026**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Jill MacDonald – Chair  
Chris Khoury – Vice Chair  
Brian Elliott (Alt)  
Consuelo Martinez  
Jenny Maeda  
Terry Gaasterland  
Andrew Hayes (Alt)  
Dustin Fuller

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Terra Lawson-Remer  
Marni von Wilpert

**VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT**

Shawna Anderson  
Dewanda Vandermost  
Nathan Lacy  
Jason Lopez  
Dave Hekel  
Wayne Brechtel  
Lizzy Bendrick  
Udo Wahn  
Jeff Carmel  
Candy Bowman  
Paul Bernstein  
PJ Lynch  
Kevin Kidd  
Orelia DeBaal

**REPRESENTING**

City of Solana Beach  
Citizens Advisory Committee  
City of San Diego District 1  
City of Escondido  
City of Poway  
City of Del Mar  
County of San Diego Dist. 2  
22nd Agricultural District, Ex Officio

**REPRESENTING**

County of San Diego Dist. 3  
City of San Diego Dist. 5

**REPRESENTING**

San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA  
San Dieguito River Park JPA, General Counsel  
County Parks & Recreation Department  
City of Del Mar Lagoon Committee  
Friends of San Dieguito River Valley  
Friends of San Dieguito River Valley  
San Pasqual Property Owner  
Lake Hodges Resident  
Del Dios Town Council  
City of Solana Beach

**Introduction and Announcements:**

Chair MacDonald called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. at the City of Solana Beach City Council Chambers. A quorum of seven Board members was present. Executive Director Anderson introduced staff in attendance: Jason Lopez, Trails and Resource Manager, and David Hekel, Senior Supervising Ranger.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Approval of the Minutes of January 16, 2026**

No corrections or additions were noted for the January 16, 2026 minutes. Board Member Gaasterland moved to approve the minutes and Board Member Alternate Hayes seconded the motion.

All in favor.

Yes votes: MacDonald, Elliott, Maeda, Martinez, Khoury, Gaasterland, Hayes

No votes: None

Absent: Lawson-Remer, Von Wilpert

Abstain: None

**Executive Director's Report** –

Executive Director Anderson provided an update on recent activities and upcoming events. Rangers attended the Park Rangers Association Conference in San Diego and later shared key takeaways with staff during an all-hands meeting.

She reported increased programming and utilization at Sikes Adobe, including events hosted by the San Diego Master Gardeners and the Poway Garden Club. Upcoming activities include multiple Earth Day events (notably Escondido Earth Day), a BioBlitz, volunteer training, numerous field trips, and staff and interpretive ranger programs.

In May, volunteer enrichment activities will include an educational visit to the Tijuana Estuary, followed by reciprocal park tours. The Volunteer Appreciation Event is scheduled for May 31, with awards presented to outstanding volunteers; Board member attendance was encouraged.

Executive Director Anderson announced receipt of a Del Mar Foundation grant to install a new Kumeyaay Heritage educational panel at the Grand Avenue Overlook, initiated by Del Mar resident Carol Carridge. The panel content has been developed in collaboration with the Kumeyaay Heritage Commission and is currently in final design. A commemorative event will be scheduled following installation. In addition, the existing lagoon restoration interpretive panel will be updated to reflect more recent restoration efforts, including the W-19 Lagoon, South Overflow Lot, and agricultural district restoration projects.

Executive Director Anderson reported that a new-to-the-fleet 2024 Ford F-150 Lightning has been added to the SDRP vehicle fleet, marking the park's first electric ranger truck. Appreciation was expressed to Vice Chair Khoury for his generous \$20,000 contribution toward the purchase.

Finally, Executive Director Anderson reported on recent updates from SANDAG regarding the W-19 endowment. The endowment is anticipated to be included in SANDAG's environmental mitigation planning package after July 2026, pending Board approval, with funds projected for transfer in FY 2028–29. Related property transfers and long-range management planning efforts will continue to be reported as they progress.

**CAC Chair's Report** – Vice Chair Khoury reported that the CAC met on February 6. Primary discussion focused on Lake Hodges water levels.

He reported that the CAC received a presentation from the Ramona Trails Association, including discussion of a potential trail connection between the Ramona Grasslands and Coast to Crest Trail.

He also informed the CAC about the JPA's appointed Executive Director Recruitment Committee.

Alternate Board Member Hayes acknowledged the contributions of longtime Ramona trail advocate John Degenfelder.

**Public Comment** – None

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**DISCUSSION/ACTION**

**1. Proposed FY26-27 JPA Operating Budget**

**Recommendation: Approve proposed FY26-27 Operating Budget based on recommendation for approval by Ad-hoc Budget Committee.**

Chair MacDonald introduced the proposed FY26-27 operating budget and noted that the Budget Subcommittee had reviewed the proposal.

Executive Director Anderson presented the budget and reported that the Budget Subcommittee comprised of Chair MacDonald and Board Members Martinez and Gaasterland, met in February and unanimously recommended the budget for Board approval.

The proposed FY26-27 operating budget totals \$1.964 million in revenues, with approximately 72.5% from member agency contributions and 27.5% from non-member revenues. Expenditures primarily support staffing, wages and benefits, park operations, open space management, trail programs, and administrative functions.

Key highlights included:

- Capital project budgets are managed separately and leverage grants, donations, and limited labor reimbursement.
- Operating reserves total approximately \$498,000 (about 25% of annual revenues), with capital and equipment reserves totaling approximately \$96,000.
- Non-member revenues are projected to decline slightly due to completion or reduction of certain reimbursable grants, including the W-19 project.
- Endowments and SCE Coast Trail funding continue to offset ranger labor.
- The proposed budget includes staff wage increases, prioritizing junior positions.
- A 5% increase in member agency contributions is proposed to support staffing retention and operational needs.

Executive Director Anderson reviewed the member agency contribution table, noting contributions are calculated pursuant to the JEPA formula based on population and planning area. Board discussion included clarification regarding the presentation of operating versus Coast Trail revenues and expenses. Chair MacDonald stated that the proposed increase is modest and reasonable given inflation and operational demands.

On motion by Board Member Gaasterland, seconded by Board Member Martinez, the Board approved the FY26-27 JPA Operating Budget as presented, unanimously.

**Public Comment** – None

Yes votes: MacDonald, Elliott, Maeda, Martinez, Khoury, Gaasterland, Hayes

No votes: None

Absent: Lawson-Remer, Von Wilpert

Abstain: None

**2. CAC Recommendation Regarding Lake Hodges Water Level**

**Recommendation: Consider CAC's recommendation regarding the level of Hodges Reservoir and provide staff direction.**

Chair MacDonald introduced the item and noted that speaker slips had been received.

Alternate Board Member Elliott recused himself from this item due to the proposed action involving correspondence to the City of San Diego and temporarily stepped out of the meeting. A quorum remained present.

Executive Director Anderson reported that at its February 6, 2026 meeting, the JPA's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) adopted a motion recommending that the JPA Board urge the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department to take action regarding the low water level at Hodges Reservoir.

Executive Director Anderson summarized the CAC's recommendation, which requests that the City:

1. Pursue an interim operating level of approximately 295 feet at Lake Hodges (approximately 40 percent capacity), subject to review, monitoring, and any appropriate mitigation measures by the State Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD).
2. Engage DSOD using a holistic, risk-balanced approach that evaluates seismic safety, wildfire risk, environmental impacts, water security, and community protection.
3. Recognize that maintaining the reservoir at extremely low levels introduces escalating and foreseeable risks, including increased wildfire risk and ecological degradation.
4. Proceed transparently and collaboratively with regional agencies, environmental organizations, fire authorities, and affected communities in evaluating this interim operating approach.

Executive Director Anderson provided background on the City of San Diego's ownership and operation of Hodges Reservoir and the current operating restriction of approximately 280 feet due to dam safety requirements. She noted the significant increase in estimated dam replacement costs and that the City is preparing an alternatives analysis, anticipated to be completed in spring 2027.

She further reported that CAC members and community stakeholders have expressed ongoing concerns related to wildfire risk, environmental impacts, and public safety associated with prolonged low reservoir levels. Related correspondence from regional and state entities was included in the Board packet.

Executive Director Anderson outlined the Board's options, including supporting the CAC recommendation and directing staff to prepare correspondence to the City of San Diego, modifying the recommendation, or providing alternative direction. She stated that, in her professional judgment, the CAC's concerns and request are reasonable.

### **Public Comment-**

Paul Bernstein, representing Raise Lake Hodges and a CAC alternate, spoke in support of the CAC recommendation. He described community and organizational efforts to raise awareness of wildfire and ecological risks resulting from low water levels and emphasized the need for a broader risk assessment that considers upstream impacts, including wildfire exposure, habitat loss, and public safety.

Kevin Kidd, President of the Del Dios Town Council, addressed the Board regarding wildfire risks associated with increased fuel loads around the reservoir. He described the potential long-term impacts of high-intensity wildfires on habitat, water quality, and park resources, and emphasized the importance of fire buffer zones and reservoir water levels as risk-reduction tools.

PJ Lynch, representing Raise Lake Hodges, spoke in support of the CAC recommendation and described outreach efforts with local, state, and regional agencies. He emphasized the need for interim action to reduce wildfire risk while longer-term dam safety solutions are evaluated and requested Board support in urging further analysis and engagement by DSOD and the City of San Diego.

The Board considered the CAC's recommendation regarding the low water level at Hodges Reservoir. On motion by Board Member Martinez, seconded by Alternate Board Member Hayes, the Board directed staff to prepare a letter to the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department incorporating the CAC recommendations, as amended, to (1) request evaluation of the feasibility of an interim reservoir level of approximately 295 feet, (2) emphasize wildfire risk and other upstream impacts, and (3) request justification and supporting data if such an interim level cannot be achieved. Chair MacDonald, Gaasterland, and Maeda were appointed to review and approve the final letter prior to transmittal.

Yes votes: MacDonald, Maeda, Martinez, Khoury, Gaasterland, Hayes

No votes: None

Absent: Lawson-Remer, Von Wilpert

Abstain: None

Recused: Elliott (Alt)

## INFORMATION

### 3. Project Status Updates

- a) **Osuna Segment of Coast to Crest Trail** – Director Anderson reported that design work is ongoing. She is pursuing grant timeline extensions and has scheduled a pre-proposal meeting with the Wildlife Conservation Board to discuss potential grant funding for the construction funding shortfall.
- b) **Reach the Beach Fairgrounds Trail** – Staff continues to coordinate with the City of Del Mar on budget development for the Reach the Beach project, including integration of the trail segment with Living Levee project, while retaining the SDRP Western Gateway design and construction components at a new location. JPA staff plans to submit a comment letter on the City of Del Mar's Living Levee Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration later this month.
- c) **San Dieguito Lagoon Phase II Restoration (aka W-19)** – No report
- d) **CTC Trail – East San Pasqual and Sutherland Gaps Project** – No report
- e) **CTC Trail at Rio Run (Surf Cup)** - Construction activities were substantially completed in January prior to the nesting bird season, including drainage improvements, culvert replacement, trail grading, and fencing installation. Remaining work is currently paused and is expected to resume in mid-September, with activities including native planting, invasive species control, biological monitoring, drainage adjustments, and installation of fencing, gates, and signage. Long-term habitat restoration and plant establishment will continue over subsequent years.

### 5. Coordination Reports (oral)

- a. **San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy** – No report
- b. **Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley** – Jeff Carmel reported ongoing concerns regarding restricted public access near Surf Sports fields off El Camino Real, with clarification pending from the 22nd District Agricultural Association. He noted that the Sierra Club has filed litigation challenging the City of San Diego's termination of use restrictions on Fairbanks Ranch mitigation lands, with allegations of increased activity and public exclusion; proceedings are pending completion of the administrative record. He also reported a lack of response from the City regarding permitting and safety for a school operating in trailers on Surf-leased property. As a positive update, recent enforcement activity near the Grand Avenue Bridge resulted in deterrence of illegal fishing.
- c. **Volcan Mountain Foundation** – No report
- d. **San Dieguito Lagoon Committee** - No report

### 6. Jurisdictional Status Reports –

Board Member Martinez invited the Board and public to attend Escondido Earth Day, April 4th at Washington Park. She highlighted the event's focus on community engagement, particularly in

underserved areas, and noted participation by approximately 30 exhibitors as well as related Arts and Culture Month activities.

7. **Correspondence** – None

8. **Closed session with Legal Counsel:**

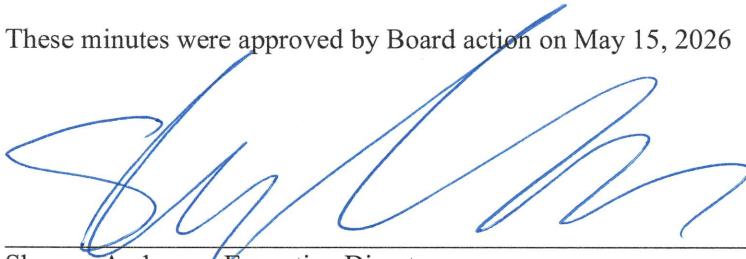
- a) Closed session with legal counsel pursuant to California Government Code Sec. 54956.9(d)(2) to discuss exposure to litigation.
- b) Closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b)(1) - Executive Director Recruitment.

Legal Counsel Brechtel reported that the Board convened in closed session on the items previously disclosed. No reportable action was taken.

The Board confirmed that the April 17 meeting is cancelled. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 15, to be held at the Solana Beach City Council Chambers, unless a special meeting is deemed necessary prior to that date.

Chair MacDonald adjourned the meeting at 1:01p.m.

These minutes were approved by Board action on May 15, 2026



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Shawna Anderson, Executive Director