Santa Ana Watershed Ambassador Program

Randy Record
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History of Conflict

- The Santa Ana River faced years of legal disputes over water rights, over 4,000 litigants.
- To bring the lawsuits to an end, on April 17, 1969, it was decided that rights to the Santa Ana River would be managed by four representative parties.
Creation of SAWPA

• SAWPA, formed as a planning agency in 1968 to deal with water quality issues.

• The federal Clean Water Act was signed into law in 1972. Leaders wanted to get ahead on implementation.

• SAWPA’s founders started with water quality, and moved to broad watershed management.

"New Santa Ana watershed agency to study river pollution problem"

By DON NAPFFRESON
Daily Enterprise Staff Writer

The newly created Santa Ana Water Quality Planning Agency yesterday went to work as rapidly as possible to apply for a federal grant to study pollution problems of the Santa Ana River.

At its first meeting — held in Riverside for several months — the three-county agency agreed to invite officials of the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration (FWPCA) to meet next month in Santa Ana to help prepare the grant application.

"The agency hopes to be in operation by 1970. To make a study of water quality problems of an entire river system in the area, we will ask William Scherer of San Francisco, FWPCA chief for California, and one of his associates, Richard O’Connell, project director, to come to Santa Ana to coordinate," said Scherer.

Answering those expressed in Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange County, USFPC is reported to have already begun negotiations with them to take the initiative and establish a program before the federal agency moves in and does it for us.

There has been widespread criticism of the agency’s creation for failure to control water quality for the Colorado River and for the San Bernardino, San Jacinto, and Coachella Valleys.

"The New Agency is the creation of the Western Municipal Water District, the Coachella Valley Authority, and the San Bernardino County and the Orange County Water Districts. The plan was prepared by Western," said the agency’s chairman, Edward F. Johnson, who was not present at the meeting.

"We hope to have the final report by the end of this year, and the agency will begin operating in January," he said.

"We are dealing with the problems," he said. "We are dealing with the problems of the agency, and we are dealing with the problems of the district."

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SAWPA and its Service Area

- SAWPA (JPA) by the numbers:
  - Five member agencies (below).
  - 2,840 square mile Santa Ana River Watershed
  - 70 retail water agencies
  - 10 wholesale water agencies
  - 4 flood control districts
  - 60 cities and approximately
  - 6 million people.
Early Days of SAWPA

- SAWPA's initial task: develop water quality management plan
- The Plan was completed in 1972 and included 12 major projects to improve water quality by:
  - Exporting salt and pollutants (projects like Stringfellow Superfund site);
  - Reducing salt coming into water from agriculture;
  - Keeping salty groundwater out of the Santa Ana River to improve the Orange County Groundwater Basin.
Water Quality Solution

- Brineline was a major success
- 93-mile-long brineline
- 30 million gallons per day capacity
Benefit of Brineline to EMWD

- Brineline Supports EMWD Desalination Program Goals:
  - Provide reliable local water supply for up to 30,000 households from an otherwise unusable brackish water source.
  - Export up to 50,000 tons of salt per year accumulated from imported water sources in the watershed
  - Protect adjacent high-quality, lower salinity groundwater sources thorough strategically located pumping
  - Increases sustainability of EMWD’s recycled water program
SAWPA and Integrated Regional Water Management

- Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) finds win-win solutions for watershed.
  - Multi-agency task forces;
  - Funding; and
  - Long term regional water planning – One Water One Watershed.

Full taskforce list: sawpa.org/task-forces
Focus of OWOW:
- Remove agency silos;
- Encourage a team approach; and
- Think regionally.
OWOW – Project Implementation

- Planning → funding
- State grant funding is available for IRWM: Proposition 13, 50, 84 and 1.
- Projects are multi-benefits and cover larger areas of the watershed.
  - Examples:
    - regional water banking;
    - watershed-wide conservation programs;
    - integrated stormwater capture programs.

San Jacinto Basin Groundwater Well
- Part of the Santa Ana River Conservation and Conjunctive Use Program -
Resolving Today’s Conflicts

- SAWPA’s early days, fight over water rights,
- Today, the conflicts are over local control vs. State-wide regulations,
- SAWPA leverages partnerships and funding.