

January 29, 2009



Dear Watershed Member,

Four times in recent years, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority has completed an Integrated Watershed Plan. The plans have all looked at the Santa Ana River Watershed as a single region. With each iteration, the process was broadened and the voices of more stakeholders were added. We've learned how the water resources in the Watershed are linked, and how our success depends on careful planning that properly values water. Working as a region, we can maintain our quality of life for a growing population, protect our remarkable natural resources, and ensure safe, reliable water for all residents.

Contained here is a draft document that serves as the beginning of the next phase of the Integrated Watershed Planning process. The One Water One Watershed (OWOW) program is a departure from our previous planning efforts. In this phase, the planning was driven from the ground up. The stakeholders were asked to roll up their sleeves and identify the resources, problems and opportunities in this region. They described the watershed as a whole system, and collaborated across boundaries, geographic, functional, and political. They suspended old assumptions and balanced advocacy and inquiry to foster a new collective understanding of the watershed.

This planning is guided by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from general government, water agencies, and the business and environmental communities. This group enlisted the aid of ten volunteer pillar leaders, local experts on a particular aspect of water. The pillar leaders organized group meetings, led discussions and produced reports that begin to lay the groundwork of our regional water future. The pillar leaders have developed strategies to reach those common goals identified in the process.

The process is not complete. All good plans require constant refinement and this one is no different. Next, we will create an improved water future. This is more than mere problem solving, making what you don't want go away new partnerships and ways of doing business need to be developed. Creating involves bringing something new about. We must not leap to superficial quick fixes or to advocating for our favorite projects. We will guard against falling into the familiar trap of optimizing our own piece of the puzzle rather than building a shared understanding and a larger vision. We continue to invite people representing diverse views to join us and we ask all to listen to one another in new ways. Whether or not you chose to participate in the development of this plan, we invite you to read the draft document and provide written comments to comments@sawpa.org by February 26, 2009. We have extended the comment period to March 16, 2009 to invite greater participation. The document is posted on the SAWPA website (www.sawpa.org). It is formatted for electronic posting and reading, so we may revise, update and improve our work. Please provide up to five pages of written comments in a readily readable format (e.g. MS word).

Over the years, the SAWPA Integrated Watershed Plan has provided a unique 30,000 foot elevation view of our Watershed, so we may better see how the more detailed plans, programs and projects link together. The past watershed plans have been extraordinarily successful in establishing a template for Statewide integrated water resource management planning, as well as resulting in over \$275 M in funding in this watershed. We begin the process of seeking projects that continue the goal of a sustainable water future in 2009. We expect to expand on this success. The needs of the region are great, but interest in the process is great as evidenced by the nearly 1,000 stakeholders that attended our first ever One Water One Watershed conference. We are bound together by our deep recognition of the importance of water, our spirit and trust in the collaborative process, and the stakeholders' excellent planning work to build upon; we have the necessary tools to meet our regional water challenges. This watershed is our life boat; if it leaks, we all go down together. When it holds, we will establish a new water ethic for the 21st Century.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Celeste Cantú".

Celeste Cantú
SAWPA

Download the Plan
(79.9 Megs)