



**LESJWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
REGULAR MEETING  
August 21, 2025**

**DIRECTORS PRESENT**

Robert Magee, Chair, City of Lake Elsinore  
Andy Morris, Vice Chair, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District  
Jeremy Smith, City of Canyon Lake  
Karen Spiegel, County of Riverside

**DIRECTORS ABSENT**

Brenda Dennstedt, Secretary-Treasurer, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

**ALTERNATE DIRECTORS PRESENT; NON-VOTING**

Mike Gardner, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

**STAFF PRESENT**

Rick Whetsel, Karen Williams, Zyanya Ramirez

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Parag Kalaria, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District; Jasmin A. Hall, Inland Empire Utilities Agency; Gil Botello, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Fred Jung, Orange County Water District;

The Regular Board of Directors meeting of the Lake Elsinore & San Jacinto Watersheds Authority (LESJWA) was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman Magee on behalf of the Lake Elsinore & San Jacinto Watersheds Authority, at 31315 Chaney Street, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Robert Magee, Chair)**

**2. ROLL CALL**

An oral roll call was noted and recorded by the Clerk of the Board.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no other public comments.

**4. ITEMS TO BE ADDED OR DELETED**

There were no items to be added or deleted.

**5. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: APRIL 17, 2025**

**Recommendation:** Approve as posted.

**B. TREASURER'S REPORT: JANUARY – MAY 2025**

**Recommendation:** Approve as posted.

**MOVED**, to approve the Consent Calendar as posted.

**Result:** Adopted by Roll Call Vote

**Motion/Second:** Spiegel, Morris

**Ayes:** Magee, Morris, Smith, Spiegel

**Nays:** None

**Abstentions:** None

**Absent:** Dennstedt

**6. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

**A. 2025 CANYON LAKE FISH KILL – UPDATE (LES#2025.8)**

John Rudolph and Chris Stransky of GEI Consultants provided the Board with an overview of the 2025 Canyon Lake fish kill event, summarizing the sequence of observations, investigative actions, and preliminary conclusions regarding the cause of the incident. They reported that the first dead fish—primarily adult largemouth bass—were observed in the East Arm over the weekend of April 19–20, 2025, and that by mid-May the impacts had spread across the main body of the lake, affecting multiple species throughout the system.

In coordination with Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD) staff, GEI conducted a lake survey on April 21 that included water-quality sampling, algal speciation, and analysis of fish tissue to address public concerns about potential links to the alum application conducted March 24–28, 2025. Additional sampling events were completed in May, June, and July to assess water quality parameters such as dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, conductivity, ammonia, sulfides, and aluminum, as well as to conduct toxicity testing. Slides from the presentation illustrated the progression of water discoloration and sampling results collected over several months.

GEI reported that dissolved oxygen remained high in the upper water column throughout the event, and that ammonia, sulfides, and aluminum concentrations were all below acute toxicity thresholds. The dominant abnormality detected was the presence of golden algae—a harmful algal species not previously documented in Canyon Lake—with cell counts reaching nearly 30,000 cells/mL in some samples. GEI explained that filtration tests reduced or removed observed toxicity, supporting the conclusion that golden algae toxins were the most likely cause of the fish kill rather than alum or other water-quality stressors.

Staff noted strong community interest following the incident, including significant attendance at the June 3, 2025, Canyon Lake Property Owners Association meeting where LESJWA, GEI, and partner agencies addressed resident questions. LESJWA continues to work collaboratively with EVMWD, the City of Canyon Lake, the POA, and GEI to evaluate short-term mitigation actions and advance development of a long-term management strategy. GEI also outlined current efforts underway, including updates to EVMWD's Aquatic Pesticide Application Plan, evaluation of chelated copper treatment costs, and development of a Golden Algae Treatment & Monitoring Plan.

**B. LAKE ELSINORE AND CANYON LAKE TMDL TASK FORCE UPDATE (LES#2025.9)**

Rick Whetsel, Interim LESJWA Administrator, presented an update on the activities of the Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Task Force. He reported that on July 25, 2025, the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted a resolution approving the draft Basin Plan amendment to incorporate revised nutrient TMDLs for both lakes. The amendment will next proceed through the approval process with the State Water Resources Control Board, the Office of Administrative Law, and ultimately the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a sequence expected to take approximately one year.

Mr. Whetsel provided background on the origins and purpose of the Task Force, noting that nutrient TMDLs for the lakes were first adopted in 2004 and became effective following EPA approval in 2005. He explained that the Task Force—comprised of MS4 permittees, wastewater agencies, agricultural and dairy operators, state and federal agencies, and other dischargers—was formed in 2005 to jointly implement the TMDL requirements and share associated costs. The Task Force continues to support regular watershed and in-lake

monitoring, alum applications in Canyon Lake, fishery studies, regulatory coordination, and annual reporting.

Mr. Whetsel summarized current nutrient-related water-quality issues affecting both lakes, including algal blooms, fish kills, and dissolved oxygen depletion exacerbated by nutrient loading from storm events. He described the general approach embedded in the revised TMDLs, which express key numeric targets—such as chlorophyll a, dissolved oxygen, and ammonia—through cumulative distribution frequencies (CDFs). The revised TMDLs also base nutrient load and waste-load allocations on achieving “reference condition” levels of total nitrogen and total phosphorus originating from the upper watershed.

An overview of the long-term implementation framework, outlining the progression of tasks within Phase 2 (Years 1–20) and Phase 3 (Years 21–30) was presented. These include evaluating existing in-lake water-quality controls, implementing preferred management options, conducting special studies, assessing the cyanobacteria community and fisheries, and determining any additional nutrient load reductions needed to meet final TMDL targets. He affirmed that LESJWA staff will continue coordinating Task Force activities and will keep the Board informed as the Basin Plan amendment advances.

**C. 2024 LAKE ELSINORE AERATION AND MIXING SYSTEM (LEAMS) EXCESS NUTRIENT OFFSET CREDIT ACCOUNTING REPORT (LES#2025.10)**

Rick Whetsel, Interim LESJWA Administrator, presented a summary of the 2024 Excess Nutrient Offset Credit Accounting Report for the Lake Elsinore Aeration and Mixing System (LEAMS). He began with an overview of LEAMS, noting that it was designed and constructed by LESJWA with Proposition 13 funding and completed in 2006, after which ownership transferred to Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, the City of Lake Elsinore, and Riverside County, collectively identified as the Operators. LEAMS consists of an aeration system operated by EVMWD and a mixing system operated by the City of Lake Elsinore; when functioning together, the system improves lake water quality by increasing dissolved oxygen levels throughout the water column.

As of 2021 the axial flow pumps of the mixing system have not been in service due to aging infrastructure, and the Operators are evaluating the condition and future of both the aeration and mixing components. He then reviewed the LEAMS Agreement to License Excess Offset Credits, adopted in 2016, which provides a mechanism for Operators to market surplus nutrient offset credits generated by LEAMS to stakeholders with TMDL compliance obligations. Revenue from the sale of these credits is used to offset LEAMS annual operations and maintenance costs.

The annual accounting report for calendar year 2024 summarizes the total credits generated, credits allocated to Operators, credits licensed to other TMDL stakeholders, unit costs, fees collected, and associated administrative and marketing expenses. Mr. Whetsel presented tables detailing LEAMS operations and maintenance costs, reserve fund balances, credit generation and allocation for fiscal years 2022 through 2024, and net proceeds from the 2024 licensing of excess credits. He noted that the credit hours generated and licensed vary annually based on system operations, available surplus credits, and stakeholder demand.

Mr. Whetsel concluded by reiterating that LEAMS continues to provide a mechanism to support water quality improvements in Lake Elsinore while also offering a cost-sharing opportunity for

regional TMDL permittees. He confirmed that LESJWA staff will continue coordinating with the Operators and will return to the Board with future updates.

**D. LESJWA STRATEGIC PLAN – IMPLEMENT GOAL 1 TASKS (LES#2025.11)**

Rick Whetsel, Interim LESJWA Administrator, provided an overview of the implementation steps associated with Goal 1 of the LESJWA Strategic Plan, which the Board adopted on April 17, 2025. He reiterated that Goal 1 focuses on defining what constitutes “healthy lakes” for Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake and promoting efforts to achieve that condition. Mr. Whetsel summarized the foundational tasks identified under Goal 1, including developing a definition of healthy lakes, identifying beneficial uses from stakeholder perspectives, convening an expert panel to recommend lake health metrics, preparing a comprehensive work plan and schedule, and implementing projects and monitoring programs to support long-term lake management.

He noted that the work plan development is anticipated to span fiscal years 2025–26 and 2026–27, with an estimated cost of up to \$75,000. Mr. Whetsel also highlighted the Strategic Plan’s overarching goals and the role of Goal 1 as a guiding framework for future LESJWA initiatives. Implementation efforts will involve continued coordination among LESJWA staff and partner agencies as work begins on the initial tasks.

**7. ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS**

Mr. Whetsel informed the Board that staff anticipates bringing forward an item at the December meeting to formalize a transition from the current bimonthly schedule to quarterly Board meetings beginning in 2026. He noted that this change would better align meeting frequency with the pace of program work and reporting needs. In response, Board members expressed support for the shift to quarterly meetings and suggested that, as part of the transition, the regular meeting start time be adjusted from 4:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Staff will incorporate these considerations into the forthcoming recommendation.

**8. DIRECTORS’ COMMENTS**

Chair Magee emphasized the importance of full attendance at the December meeting, noting that several action items are anticipated for approval.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business for review, Chairman Robert Magee adjourned the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

**Approved at a Regular Meeting of the Lake Elsinore and San Jacinto Watersheds Authority Board of Directors on Thursday, December 18, 2025.**

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Robert Magee, Chair

Attest:

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Zyanya Ramirez, Serves as Clerk to the Board