



San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District

Helping Nature Store Our Water

BULLETIN NO. 5

2010 to 2022
Milestones and Accomplishments

May 2022



History of Bulletins

The earliest stewards of the Upper Santa Ana River Wash chronicled the history of their tenure in bulletins, dating back even before the establishment of the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District.

Bulletin Nos. 1 to 4 cover the period from 1890 to about 1957, and were focused on area growth and development, the construction of new facilities, and advancements in operations. The practice of departing general managers publishing bulletins fell out of vogue in the 50-year period between 1960 and 2010.

This bulletin, No. 5, resumes that lost tradition, covering the District's history from about 2010 to 2022, with a focus on major organizational changes and a shift in industry practices during that period.

BULLETIN NO. 5

**San Bernardino Valley
Water Conservation District**

**1630 West Redlands Blvd., Suite A
Redlands, California 92373**

**May 2022
Daniel Cozad General Manager 2010–2022**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melody Henriques-McDonald
President

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Robert Stewart



David Cosgrove, District Counsel

A Story of Collaboration



The history of water management in the Upper Santa Ana River Wash has shifted course innumerable times, much like the ever-changing flows that have forever fed water into our valley. In reading local bulletins of the past, I've learned a lot about the transformational challenges, attitudes and motivations that drove the actions of my predecessors. Each period was marked by its own revelations, which were usually inspired by a mix of turmoil, hard work and innovation. I have been privileged

to lead the District during a period when a scrappy spirit of ingenuity and collaboration retook the stage with the commitment of staff and support of the Board.

There is an underlying grit in today's prevailing attitude that great things can happen when you band together with like-minded partners. Major trends during this period were a push for proper policy, cooperation and partnerships, and the expansion of the District's capacity for both recharge and land management. The completion of decades of work on the Wash Plan and approval by Congress of the Land Exchange Act are making better land management possible and securing the future for recharge and the species we share the lands with. I am exceptionally grateful to staff, the Board of Directors and our partner agencies and businesses for making these accomplishments possible.

Prior managers wrote their bulletins marking not only the District's accomplishments but the histories they recalled. As I retire from the District and public service, I have reached out to staff to help recount the milestones and events that were turning points. We are hopeful that readers today and 100 years

from now will read and appreciate today's prevailing values of resourcefulness, collaboration, and respect for relationships, including our most inherent bond: to nature. I'm hoping that those who come after me follow in the tradition of providing some assessment of their time at the District and its history. To the author of Bulletin No. 6: May history help you; don't let it hold you back; turn to those in the region for partnership and exchange ideas. That's the origin of the organization and where future opportunity is found.

— *Daniel B. Cozad, General Manager*



Appreciation for Past, Present, and Future



In 2010, an answered prayer came to our storm-battered and beaten ship. We were taking on water after our battle with LAFCO, and there was still much work to be done.

When Daniel Cozad took the helm that year as general manager, he was quick to set our ship on the right course: He cut our budget drastically and restructured it so every enterprise would stand on its own. Under Daniel's leadership, we took our board from seven

members to five, and though it took an act of the Legislature, we did it in-house. For such a time as this, his name was Daniel — a name meaning, “God is my judge.”

Daniel is good at leading people to common ground. He forged new relationships, mended broken ones, and helped our Board do the same. It was that newfound sense of collaboration that pushed the long-awaited Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan over the finish line. The same holds true for the San Bernardino Basin Groundwater Council, which provides a regional approach to groundwater management using a unique and voluntary equitability allocation model: We all use water, we all should pay our fair share. It's pretty simple.

We've had some very good general managers over the last 30 years. Nick Richardson and Dwight Burnelle Cavender, but Daniel has surpassed them all. It's fitting that he retires as this year's recipient of the Association of California Water Agencies' Excellence in Water Leadership Award – the latest in a long list of District accolades received under his leadership, including the California

Special Districts Association 2020 Innovative Project of the Year for the Groundwater Council, which achieved record recharge through collaboration.

Daniel is well-known throughout the state for the remarkable accomplishments he has made to the industry, including his work in the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) and for his work with the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority. Everything he has touched has left a mark for the better. Daniel is visionary, setting things in place that will live long beyond us all. One of these legacies is the San Bernardino Valley Conservation Trust, which will forever protect and preserve sensitive species and the habitat they need to survive.

Daniel, there is not enough gratitude that can be expressed for you and all the amazing things you have done during your time here with us. You have a grateful Board, a grateful staff, and grateful beneficiaries of your amazing work: the people of this valley, this watershed, and of other regions in this state.

— *Melody McDonald,*

President, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District



Collaboration: An Early Leadership Goal for Success

One of Daniel Cozad's first objectives as a new general manager was to shift the District planning to a Community Strategic Plan to help define the District's impact and role among other agencies and organizations in the region. Refocusing on the core mission of the District, budget reform and the adoption of a much-needed 25% rate increase were clear priorities – but Daniel also saw value in reaching out to others to identify opportunities that might lead to collaboration in the future.

“We can't succeed if we don't support the respective missions of our partners,” he explains. “If you really want to work with others, you need to understand their needs and goals and design that into your strategy.”

Today, that initial olive branch of a plan has rooted itself deeply into the Wash and spread its canopy wide over a growing number of collaborative projects. Annual recharge totals climb with help from partners participating in the Groundwater Council. Joint projects among various agencies have improved water infrastructure and enhanced recharge. The Upper Santa Ana River Wash Plan Habitat Conservation Plan and Plunge Creek Conservation Project succeeded only with the help of partners we now call friends. Thanks to them, our region will enjoy the benefits of increased water storage, a permanent nature preserve, and accompanying social and economic benefits long into the future.



Collaborative public meetings were essential to developing a robustly comprehensive Wash Plan that reflected community needs.

Building Fiscal Stewardship and Resilience

It was sink or swim in the early years of General Manager Daniel Cozad's leadership. With District finances underwater, budget reform was a top priority. Board members adopted an enterprise financial model and a formal reserve policy to ensure funds are used for their provided purpose and that each enterprise is sustainable. The reserves establish an operational safety net, and a zero-based budget by enterprise approach aligned the value of work completed to the cost of work performed.

Pension liabilities were also identified and unfunded liabilities paid off. Reserves were no longer used to support District costs. Higher shares of the health care and CalPERS costs were shifted to employees, an action the State would later mandate. To realize better returns and increase investment options, the District also revised its investment policy and paid off unfunded actuarial liability with CalPERS to reduce nearly \$750,000 plus accumulated interest from future costs.

The changes made were transformational with future funding focused on the enterprise's value. Changes in policy and accounting improvements resulted in year-over-year clean financial audits. Today, the District's fiscal health reflects the same judiciousness applied to water recharge: Save and invest now for when you really need it.



The Wash Plan: A New Model for Land Management

The right land for the right purpose. That was the concept behind the Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan (Wash Plan), which after 20 years in the making was finally approved with the help of more than a dozen task force members and stakeholders under General Manager Daniel Cozad's watch.

The Wash Plan designates specific land uses within the Wash to allow for expanded habitat preservation and restoration, groundwater recharge, aggregate mining, transportation improvements, flood control, agriculture, and trails.

Some benefits of the plan include:

- 1,600 acres of habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species. A permanent funding mechanism was put in place to ensure monitoring and stewardship of the preserve in perpetuity.
- Enhanced capture and storage of water to replenish groundwater storage.
- Mining uses on permitted land areas to support more than \$36 million in local concrete payroll annually.
- An integrated trail system to promote education and appreciation of this natural resource.
- The plan also set the stage for community mitigation and support for future partners who were not part of the original task force.

Wash Plan Task Force members and participating stakeholders in the plan include: San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, City of Highland, City of Redlands, Redlands Municipal Utilities and Engineering Department, East Valley Water District, San Bernardino County Flood Control District, San Bernardino County Planning/Parks, Robertson's Ready Mix, CEMEX, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Highland Community News, Inland Valley Development Agency, and the Endangered Habitats League.



From left to right: Daniel Cozad-SBVWCD, AJ Gerber-San Bernardino County Parks, Scott Fleury-ICF Jones & Stokes, Ruth Villalobos-RBF Consulting, Robert Dalquest-City of Redlands, Janet Cheek-BLM, Brandon Anderson, BLM, Holly Roberts-BLM, David Cosgrove-Rutan & Tucker/SBVWCD, Doug Headrick-SBVMWD, Christine Jones-CEMEX, Christine Goeyvarts-Robertsons, Kevin White-SB County Land Use Services, David Lovell-Flood Control, Jeff Beehler-SBVWCD, Ernie Wong-City of Highland, John Timmer-City of Highland, Jon Harrison-City of Redlands, Ken Corey-USFWS



Groundbreaking Advancements in Habitat and Water Conservation

There is hope for the endangered San Bernardino kangaroo rat and threatened Santa Ana woolly star.

The District's Plunge Creek Conservation Project represents a new and promising "net conservation benefit" approach to habitat conservation and restoration, having received the State of California's very first Safe Harbor Agreement in Southern California.

The 7-year project was finally constructed in 2020 after more than five years of permitting. It will ultimately return degraded lands in the Upper Santa Ana River Wash to ideal habitat for those species. Habitat restoration will happen naturally at the same time as the project increases groundwater recharge. This is important for species that are experiencing the effects of encroachment by the built environment, flood damage minimization, and climate change on their habitat.

The project is already serving as an example of innovative restoration and a framework from which to develop waters, corridors and refugia that will expand a resilient conservation system on a regional scale – and it can be utilized in other regions as well. Many groups statewide talk about the need to better integrate the ecosystem and its services into more traditional water supply projects. The Plunge Creek project was designed and executed using an integrated multi-benefit approach and is fulfilling those ambitious goals more and more each year.

Funded in part by the California Department of Water Resources, through the Integrated Regional Water Management grant program, this habitat is being expanded and restored by reestablishing historic water flows to restore and expand habitat, while increasing groundwater storage for the 650,000 residents that rely on the basin's groundwater.

Early results have been extremely encouraging, with a growing, healthy population of kangaroo rats adjusting well and flourishing in their renewed habitat. The woolly star and other threatened and native species are expanding and thriving, and water recharge totals for the area reflect a significant boost

of 825 AF so far this season – with 11.7 acres of new wetted area established to recharge the aquifer, including 2.3 acres of constructed channels and 9.4 acres of new recharge areas formed by the projects natural braiding of the creek. Additionally, 200 acres of SBKR habitat is being treated for invasive grasses and this excess restoration is a benefit to Wash Plan projects.

Additionally, the protection and stewardship of lands and endowments, including the natural resources, endangered species habitats, open-space, and outdoor recreational areas of the San Bernardino Valley will be financially supported—forever—through the cultivation and growth of the San Bernardino Valley Conservation Trust.





On November 21, 1930, the dedication of a permanent weir and gates was roundly celebrated by the Water Conservation Association. In 1932, the Association became the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District.



These were the first water gates installed by the Water Conservation Association, which was founded in 1909. Even now, simple cost-effective solutions often generate the highest returns.

The District Before 2010

This was a period of great strife for the District. A very real threat of consolidation by the Local Agency Formation Commission was looming. Available financial reserves were dangerously low, and groundwater charge rates did not cover operating costs. These and other dire circumstances were the result of many factors, including economics and the more political and less collaborative leadership style of prior general managers.

- A severe recession resulted in lower property tax, lower economic output and reduced mining royalties
- Financial reserves had been painfully depleted by several years of deficits caused by a mismatch of costs and reduced income
- The District's reputation was damaged by both the consolidation battle and the District's inability to partner authentically in difficult times
- Much-needed rate increases were stalled due to the District's performance and beleaguered reputation



This is one of the earliest spreading grounds created by the Water Conservation Association. Floodwater from the Santa Ana River was spread across the ground where it then percolated to replenish the aquifer and provide a reliable source of well water.

2010 — Tightening the Ship: Reducing Board and Staff Costs

This year marked a turning point for the District. New leadership was brought on board to bring some focus to the organization's staff, budget and scope. As a leaner operation, the District was primed to undergo transformational change.

- Board members bring in Daniel Cozad as a contract general manager, and hire him months later as the new general manager after the Board hastily parts ways with Robert Neufeld. One of Cozad's first priorities is to reverse financial negatives, revising the old "salad bowl" approach to budgeting, with the board adopting a new enterprise financial model that required accounting for expenses, staff time, funding and to follow best practices for fiscal responsibility
- A High Flow Plan is approved for Seven Oaks Dam, testing is completed, and the facility is turned over to local sponsors as a result of improved cooperation for recharge and flood control
- The District kicks off a Community Strategic Plan to develop a more holistic view of the District's impact and role among other agencies and organizations, enhancing the potential for future collaboration among partners
- A Staffing Plan is adopted to identify and align staffing with District goals and best-practices in the industry
- Board members approve a new Reserve Policy to create an operational safety net for unforeseen emergencies and ensure funds generated for one enterprise are reliably used for that purpose.





2011 — Changing Course: Rehabilitation

This was a time of renewal. Having stemmed the tide of threats and vulnerabilities of the past, the District set its sights forward and began a period of progress in both operations and policy.

- The Board approves a foundational template for a reorganized and planned cost based budget, aligning the value of work completed to the cost of work performed
- Gate operators are modernized as one of the first infrastructure improvements completed under Cozad's leadership, improving efficiency, and reducing injuries
- A Personnel Handbook is adopted to clarify human resources policy in compliance with current best-practices in the industry
- The Board approves a 25% groundwater charge increase to support water operations, and gives direction to plan for moderate rate changes in the future to maintain support for operations and limit stress to those paying the charge
- The first in a series of mining and aggregate agreements are renegotiated to align with the anticipated adoption of the Wash Plan
- The District revised its planning documents into a Community Strategic Plan to incorporate shared goals, interests and potential partnerships among area agencies and organizations
- Standardized leases for District-owned property are adopted, and the Board approves management protocol using District staff
- The Board Policy Handbook is updated, adding Appendix C to limit meetings



2012 — Full Sail: Recovery and Rebuilding

Several key partnerships were formed this year, and new staff members were hired – marking the start of a period of renewal for the District. The Board begins setting priority tasks with an eye toward the future

- The Board adopts a budgeting plan with expenses tied to the Consumer Price Index, in compliance with best practices for the industry
- A recommendation is made to reduce the number of Divisions and Board members from seven to five to align with the latest Census Bureau data
- Letters of support from most neighboring agencies prompts LAFCO to approve an expanding sphere of influence for the District during a Municipal Service Review, securing the District's governance over its existing territory
- Field Supervisor Randy Carlisle retires, and Manuel Coalunga is promoted to replace him
- Work starts on the East Branch Extension to the State Water Project on District lands
- Work resumes on the development of the Wash Plan
- The District revises its mission and vision as part of the Community Strategic Plan
- Redlands Plaza is fully leased and management is taken over by District staff
- The District teams up with Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD) for water education and other services
- The District makes its first CalPERS debt reduction payment to reduce future liabilities
- SBVWCD and Valley District negotiate and approve an Enhanced Recharge Collaborative Agreement, expanding recharge and opening the door to collaborative projects in the future
- An initial Operations and Maintenance Manual is prepared by staff and adopted by the Board
- Early plans for the Plunge Creek Conservation Project are established, putting projected costs at \$1.37 million

2013 — A Increased Focus on Land Management

Land is a critical part of the District's work in water recharge and habitat conservation. As such, the District in 2013 hires Land Resources Manager Jeff Beehler to oversee many land-related issues pertaining to major projects, including the Wash Plan and planning for future habitat. Water education programming for youth is also formalized this year.

- Land Resources Manager Jeff Beehler is hired, bringing honed collaboration skills from Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority and strong biology skills to the District
- A Board of Directors Outreach Committee is established, along with a budget for external communications
- Reserves are no longer used to support District health care and CalPERS obligations, with a larger share of costs shifted to employees
- To realize better returns and increase investment options, the District revises its investment policy and adds CalTRUST and CD ladders
- Revised Task Force Agreement documents support and funding to move the Wash Plan forward toward completion
- A formal Memorandum of Understanding is approved with Inland Empire Resource Conservation District for educational programs and conservation efforts
- The District website is redesigned to increase staff efficiency and public transparency
- Longtime Director Clare Henry Day and new Director Robert Glaubig give up their seats so that the District may transition to five divisions. It takes an act by the CA legislature to legally reduce the size of the Board
- Dike D, the largest recharge basin in the Wash, floods with clay by heavy flows during construction of the East Branch Extension and requires complete cleaning so that water can better percolate down into the aquifer
- The District's first new loader/tractor is purchased for field staff with approval by the Board



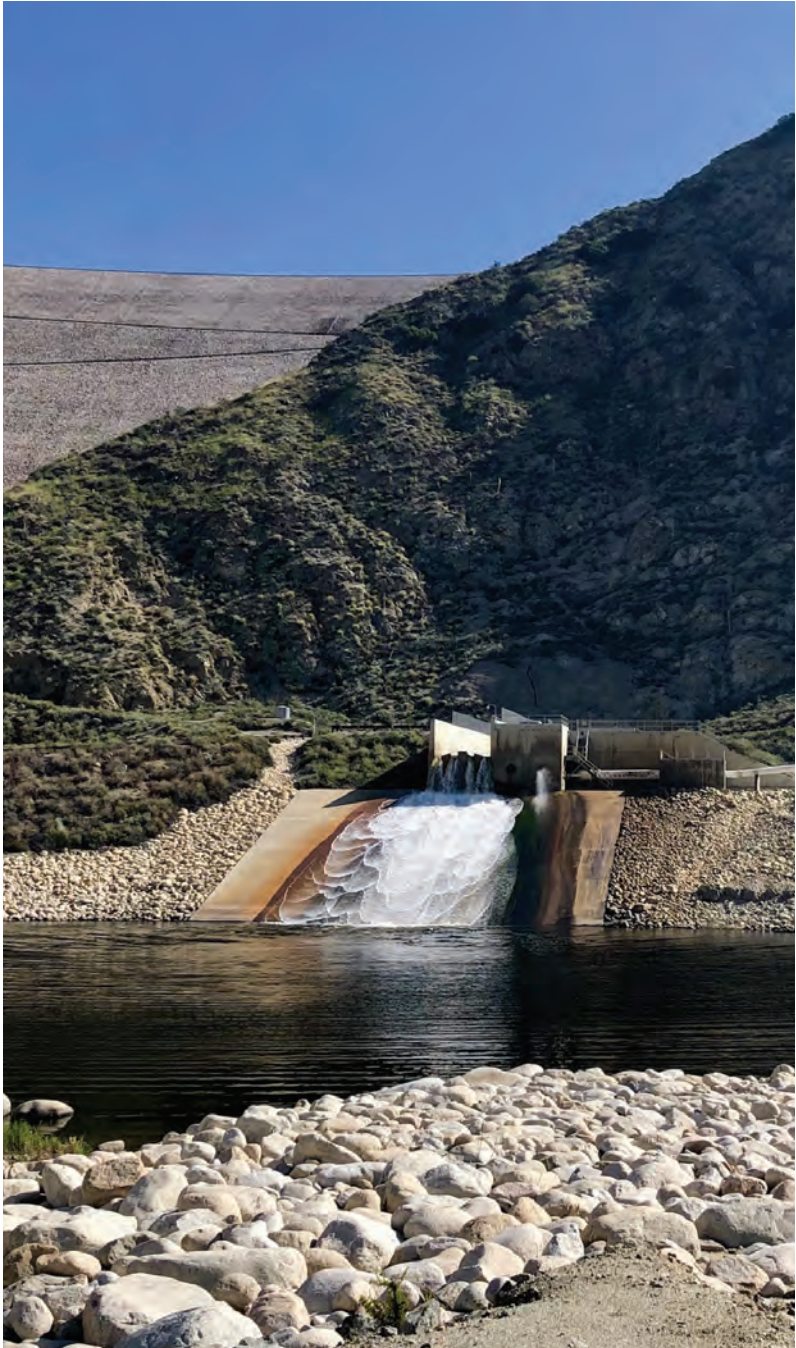
Former long-time District Board member Clare Day on his 100th birthday honored for his service by then-Board President Richard Corneille.

2014 to 2017 — Continuous Improvement

The District's work is dramatically expanded during these years, with a formal review of the Groundwater Council project, the Plunge Creek design completed, and Conservation Trust holding its first official meeting.

- New auditors are selected for the District
- SBVWCD receives its first District of Distinction and Certificate of Transparency Award from Special District Leadership Academy/California Special Districts Association
- Drought impacts the local watershed and State Water Project
- The District completes roof improvements for its retail property
- The Plunge Creek Conservation Project receives a \$500,000 grant from the California Department of Water Resources via the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
- The Board adopts Policy Principles for the District, resulting in a realignment of reserves for improved fiscal responsibility
- The concept of a San Bernardino Basin Groundwater Council begins development with LAFCO Municipal Service Review





2015 — Operations

- The District adopts a Mitigated Negative Declaration for all operations and maintenance activities of the District to allow permitting of the historic efforts
- San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District completes Phase II of its East Branch Extension of the California Department of Water Resources Project. Rock from the pipeline is accepted by the District
- A Jurisdiction Delineation is completed on District lands in Mill Creek and Santa Ana watersheds, providing a clear definition of the District's environmental resources in those areas – and potential areas for collaboration in the future
- Water-efficient landscaping is installed at the District's Mentone house
- The LAFCO Commission approves the District's groundwater basin-based sphere of influence
- District approves an MOA with San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians for collection of culturally significant plants
- The Board approves changes to the Personnel Manual and improved cost savings with updates to the cell phone policy
- District pays off Unfunded Actuarial Liability with CalPERS reducing nearly \$750,000 plus accumulated interest from future costs
- A Wash Plan Wildland Trails Conceptual Plan is approved by the District and Task Force Members
- An Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust is initiated with CalPERS to reduce future costs and increase interest earnings
- Final change orders are submitted to consulting firm ICF for the Wash Plan preparation

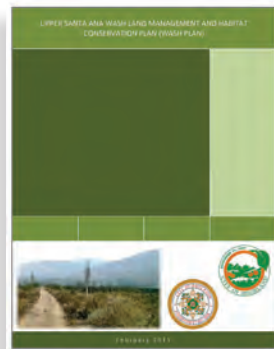


- The District begins using CalFIRE inmate crews for clearing of brush for operations and fire threat reduction
- An updated Agreement for Land Exchange with the Bureau of Land Management as part of the Wash Plan development process is signed
- The Board approves the development of the Groundwater Council which requires significant trust in the basin producers to cooperate and fairly treat the District and each other
- Qualified Water-Efficient Landscape (QWEL) landscape irrigation training begins on behalf of the region
- A financial advisor is selected for the Trust endowment and District funds
- An Assistant Engineer position is added to support groundwater recharge operations



2016

- Staff initiates development of the San Bernardino Conservation Trust, and the investment policy is updated for both the Trust and the District
- Congressmen Paul Cook and Pete Aguilar reintroduce the Land Exchange Act (HR-4024) at District request with broad public support
- The Plunge Creek Draft Design is completed for permitting
- The Conservation Trust is incorporated, and Board members hold their first meeting on March 10, 2016, where they approved the Trust's federal and state nonprofit status
- Mill Creek Diversion design is 65% complete
- Senator Dianne Feinstein introduces a Senate companion Land Exchange Bill
- The equitable allocation model is developed for the Groundwater Council, determining what agencies shall contribute for their participation in the partnership
- Director Milford Harrison joins the District after the passing of longtime director Manny Aranda
- The Mendoza Trust Land is acquired adding buffer and additional recharge lands to the District holdings
- The Wash Plan Wildland Trails Master Plan is adopted by the District and other Wash Plan Task Force members
- The Board approves a Succession and Transition Staffing Plan to identify potential attrition patterns and plan for future changes



2017

- A District Legislative and Regulatory Platform is approved
- A Capital Equipment and Improvement List is developed
- Wet year operations allow for significant recharge of over 45,000 AF
- The proposed Aggressive Recharge approach was tested in Mill Creek
- The District contracts with a communications outreach team to help educate the public and constituencies about the importance of water recharge and habitat conservation
- The Board approves the updated 5-year Community Strategic Plan, refining the mission and promoting future collaboration among agencies and organizations in the region
- HR 497 is introduced as the New Wash Plan Land Exchange Bill in the House and included in S. 357, which is reintroduced by senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris
- The Board approves the Groundwater Council framework that sets the stage for the final inter-agency agreement
- The District succeeds in negotiating revisions to SB-50 to eliminate the prohibition of federal land transfers to California agencies for habitat purposes
- Mentone Community Garden plan is finalized but the local community does not move forward with implementation
- The Operations Committee recommends the implementation of additional storage space for field equipment



General Manager Daniel Cozad testifying before the U.S. Congress in support of the Wash Plan Land Exchange bill.

2018 — Conservation and Mitigation

Significant work was done in 2018 to promote the mutually beneficial goals of water recharge and the protection and preservation of threatened and endangered species. Key accomplishments included permitting for the Mill Creek Diversion project and the establishment of the Groundwater Council.

- The District authorizes funding to expedite a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 408 permit application for the Mill Creek Diversion project
- A Groundwater Council Framework Agreement is approved on February 14, with the first official meeting held on March 12 with all but three of the eventual members, which ultimately included: SBVWCD in partnership with the cities of Colton, Loma Linda, Redlands and Rialto; San Bernardino Municipal Water Department; San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, East Valley Water District; Fontana Water Company; Western Municipal Water District; Yucaipa Valley Water District; and West Valley Water District.
- Community Mitigation efforts are kicked off, identifying potential conservation easements to facilitate expanded habitat and protection of threatened and endangered species, and the first deposits are received by the Conservation Trust
- The District celebrates its 80th budget year; the first budget in 1937 was \$13,035
- A cooperative in-house audit of mining royalties in the Wash is completed
- The District's Procurement Policy is updated
- A compensation and classification study is initiated to align with industry best-practices
- A partnership agreement for Active Recharge Transfer Projects is developed with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

- Grass treatment test plots are conducted for invasive species removal and restoration of native species – both resulting in very positive outcomes
- San Manuel tribal members collect plant materials for traditional uses
- The District sponsors Highland Trails Day
- A partnership is initiated with Steps 4 Life to provide transitional housing at the District’s Mentone house to the organization in exchange for consulting and training services to District employees
- The District undergoes strategic branding clarification with updated logo, tagline, and value statement
- Director Milford Harrison is elected to San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and resigns from the District Board
- A Wash Plan Land Exchange Bill hearing is held in by the House Natural Resources Committee in May
- The Exchange Plan, which was originally initiated in the 1970s, began an effort to update and improve cooperative activities between water rights holders



2019 — Record Recharge

Collaborative projects such as the Groundwater Council and Enhanced Recharge Agreement made the most of significant rains to yield record-breaking recharge totals this year. Key staffing changes were also put into place to accommodate the District's growing responsibilities. This year also marked the expansion of habitat areas for threatened and endangered species.

- Wet year conditions challenge field staff but result in approximately 70,000 AF of recharge
- Director Bob Stewart is appointed to the Board, replacing Milford Harrison
- An Active Recharge Transfer Project Agreement is approved by the District board and the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
- S.47 is introduced as the consolidated Federal Lands Bill including the Wash Plan Land Exchange Bill, and is approved in the Senate and House and signed into law by the President in March
- Initial purchase of conservation easements is made as part of the Active Recharge Partnership Agreement
- 25 acres of land south of the existing Mill Creek lands are purchased from Highland Supply/7W providing buffer, habitat land and potential future recharge
- Aggressive Recharge allows refreshment of habitat on the Judson Brown Preserve, west of the Mill Creek spreading grounds
- The Wash Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement are published in the Federal Register
- The District receives Redlands mitigation land in conjunction with the Wash Plan HCP and begins cleanup and safety closures of areas of high trespass

- Staffing plan changes are made and the District hires Land Resources Manager/Assistant General Manager Betsy Miller to replace retiring Land Resources Manager Jeff Beehler. The District also welcomes Erwin Fogerson, who retired from San Bernardino County Flood Control District to become its Senior Engineer/Project Manager
- District staff help celebrate the Mill Creek Zanja 200th Anniversary
- The State lists San Bernardino kangaroo rat as a Candidate Endangered Species
- District adds a third field staff position supporting both recharge and land management
- A revised MOU is approved with BLM for the Wash Plan Land Exchange



2020 to 2022 — Ongoing Progress, Despite the Pandemic

With the Wash Plan signed into law, work on the project began in full-force this year, and the Plunge Creek project received Southern California's first Safe Harbor Agreement – albeit in the midst of a global COVID-19 pandemic. Like millions of workers all over the world, staff worked remotely whenever possible during periods of shutdown, and followed recommended health care guidelines as established by state and federal officials.

- The District develops a Severe Flu/COVID-19 Response Plan. Other measure include:
 - Compliance with a work-from-home and closure order from state and federal officials to protect staff and the community
 - Authorization of a tenant COVID plan to minimize the impacts to the Redlands Plaza Partners
- Significant basin maintenance is required after 2019 flows
- Plunge Creek permitting is completed with the project receiving Southern California's first Safe Harbor Agreement
- The San Bernardino County Transportation Authority's Freeway Lane Expansion project marks the first project to begin construction under the Community Mitigation program, which will address environmental impacts to the San Bernardino kangaroo rat as a result of the project
- Plunge Creek project is implemented and completed on time
- The Wash Plan's final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement is released thanks to significant effort by District staff. It is entered into the Federal Register on May 15th by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The District's board approves it on July 8th
- On July 13th, the US Fish & Wildlife Service issues an Incidental Take Permit for the Wash Plan

- Staff begins to work with Redlands and Highland on a regional trails program
- An Edison East End Divestiture group is formed to prepare for Southern California Edison's exit from the small hydro field after more than 160 years
- West Valley Water District joins the Groundwater Council
- The first full year of Wash Plan implementation is completed and planning for the future underway
- Dry year fires impact District lands in Mill Creek and along the edges of the Santa Ana River spreading grounds
- A field shop architect is sought at the request of the Operations Committee



A January 2021 storm proves that the Plunge Creek Project worked exactly as planned.

2021

- District approves a renewed lease with CEMEX for mining under the Wash Plan HCP
- Staff prepares a Board workshop in October to discuss a succession and transition plan
- The District initiates discussion of a general manager selection and appointment
- First seasonal flows are seen in Plunge Creek after local snows, but the winter foreshadows a dry summer
- City of Redlands joins the Groundwater Council, completing the original list of entities that were expected to join
- Staff developed a 2081 permit application in house for the state permitting of the Wash Plan HCP
- The Groundwater Council receives the CSDA Innovation Award and is featured on the cover of the association magazine
- The Wash Plan HCP awarded the Southern California Association of Government's Sustainability Award
- Board members approve a sustainability/replenishment component to the Groundwater Charge
- The Operations Committee directs revisions for construction of the new Mentone Shop via a design/build procurement process
- The District hires longtime contracted counsel David Cosgrove as part-time in-house counsel
- The American Public Works Association selects the Plunge Creek Conservation project as Water Supply Protection and Enhancement Project of the Year



David Cosgrove, named part-time in-house counsel.

2022

- Contracts are issued for the engineering and feasibility studies supporting Active Recharge Projects that will convert existing infrastructure to provide multiple benefits, including groundwater recharge
- District coordinates a Trails Plan MOU with Highland, which approves the agreement, with Redlands poised to adopt it later in the year
- The Board approves a general manager employment agreement with Land Resources Manager/Assistant General Manager Betsy Miller, who will succeed Daniel Cozad as the first woman general manager in the District's history
- The first large project flows are seen in Plunge Creek, supporting full implementation of the project's design
- The Plunge Creek Conservation project is recognized by the Association of California Water Agencies as an Innovative Program finalist
- District hires new Land Resources Manager Milan Mitrovich
- District General Manager Daniel Cozad is recognized by the Association of California Water Agencies, which presents him with the Excellence in Water Leadership Award
- Cozad announces his retirement in May
- District hosts its 90th Anniversary Celebration in May
- Brian Kloepfer, a field supervisor with San Bernardino County Flood Control receives the District's first Scrappy Award for embodying the District's ethos of collaboration and providing practical and helpful solutions that remedy challenging situations



Right people. Right time. Right place.

The District's mission could not be fulfilled if it weren't for the people involved.

When General Manager Daniel Cozad came to the District, he established a flat organizational structure with minimal internal bureaucratic obstacles, which is unusual for a government agency of any size. He set clear goals and objectives and encouraged people to figure out the best way to reach them. "You find out quickly what people enjoy doing, and how they grow and learn new things," observes Daniel. "From interns to engineers to field staff, everyone's insights are valuable; there are no repercussions to challenging the status quo or anyone's ideas."



Daniel Cozad discussing Active Recharge Projects during a field tour in collaboration with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District.

By fostering a culture of collaboration, trust, curiosity, and a results-oriented, resource-wise approach, Daniel attracted several key staff members who will lead the District into its next chapters. "We have a strong mission-focused, people-oriented organization, and staff feels satisfaction doing such important for the public," he says. "These values are important now but more so for succeeding generations of leadership."

In 2013, the District hired Land Resources Manager Jeff Beehler to oversee the land-related issues pertaining to major projects, including the Wash Plan and planning for future habitat. This hire marked a turning point for the District as Jeff established a practical and philosophical framework for how the District could take care of its land while managing recharge.

In 2018, Field Supervisor Manuel Colunga was named CalPERS Employee of the Year, a well-earned, statewide distinction for someone whose hands and heart keep the aquifer filled and the land above it healthy. This position is not one that is easily filled. It takes years of field apprenticeship to learn the myriad nuances of the Wash, infrastructure maintenance, and supporting relationships with the growers, districts, and other partners. Manny is already cultivating the next generation of field staff, including Tommy Purvis,



Manuel Colunga,
Field Supervisor



Engineer Katelyn Scholte works with Assistant General Manager Betsy Miller on the Plunge Creek Restoration Project

who is apprenticing to become Manny's successor one day.

Katelyn Scholte is the perfect example of an intern who has thrived in her career. "She is one of the most important people we have hired," notes Daniel. "She was recommended to us by Manuel. Her aptitude for learning and background in engineering, combined with her appreciation for the work done by our field staff improved our operations by integrating field problems with engineering solutions."

Since joining the District, Katelyn has earned her a master's in civil engineering and is on her way to become a licensed Professional Engineer under the mentorship of Senior Engineer/Project Manager Erwin Fogerson. "We find ways to provide opportunities for advancement even in a very small organization," says Daniel.

When Jeff retired in 2019, the District hired biologist Betsy Miller to take over as Land Resources Manager / Assistant General Manager. Her deep knowledge as an environmental planner and her experience managing preserve lands in San Diego, combined with her organizational expertise, made her an integral part of the District's succession plan. Betsy has been exceptionally quick to absorb the District's priorities, culture, and unique role in the region. "I could not be more proud that she will soon be the District's first female general manager," says Daniel.

Betsy and Daniel recently hired Milan Mitrovich to take over as Land Resources Manager. Milan brings experience and expertise in natural community conservation planning and managing habitat conservation plans primarily in Orange County.

Daniel has a gift to lead patiently, with purpose, surrounding himself with excellent staff for whom he cares deeply, says Board President Melody McDonald. "He challenges them, supports them, and gives them an environment in which to thrive. He is responsible for the career direction of many interns spring-boarding off into water and natural resources careers.

"Daniel is leaving us in good hands," affirms Melody. "And we are appreciative."

Looking Ahead: This was Just the Start of Something Much Bigger

Much of the work done under Daniel Cozad's leadership has been foundational to significant advances anticipated in the years ahead.

The District is in strong financial shape, ready to commit the resources necessary to fund its expanded portfolio of water recharge and habitat conservation projects.

Collaborative projects, once rare, have spread organically throughout the Valley resulting in new infrastructure, public trails and facilities that significantly enhance water resilience and independence in the region.

In accordance with the Board's Community Strategic Plan and in partnership with San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, the District is undertaking the design and engineering for the next generation of groundwater recharge facilities working closely under a Memorandum of Understanding with the San Bernardino County Flood Control District. These new facilities will allow the efficient use of flood facilities to actively recharge groundwater. They will improve the flood facilities, increase recharge, and provide community benefits on many of the creeks in the East Valley. These projects are funded with proceeds of conservation easements provided to the River HCP led by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. The design of these facilities on District lands is ongoing with careful attention to the habitat and environment of each of the projects.

But perhaps the most rewarding of all these accomplishments has been the promise of longevity for a tiny hopping nocturnal rodent whose habitat will not only be preserved — but will grow as shown by the Plunge Creek Conservation Project constructed just two years ago.

While the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District celebrates 90 years as a District — with its predecessor, the Water Conservation Association, it has more than 130 years of experience and wisdom gained from recharging groundwater, managing a healthy ecosystem, and promoting a collaborative approach to projects that bring about a greater good. The lessons it has learned serve as a model for others looking for economical, high-impact approaches to recharge their aquifers, nurture their ecosystems, and provide for their communities.



Photo Credits:
With appreciation to Daniel Cozad, District staff,
Stephen Readmond, and Mikael Romich

The San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District was established by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors on January 4, 1932. The District was created to recharge the groundwater basin with native water in order to conserve that water for future use. At that time, the water was primarily for agriculture; today this water is used for agricultural, municipal, and industrial purposes.

Our mission is to ensure recharge of the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin in an environmentally and economically responsible way, using local native surface water to the maximum extent practicable.

We strive to improve the supply and quality of groundwater, balancing such demands with those of land, mineral, and biological resources.



San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District

Helping Nature Store Our Water

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