

MINUTES

Owens Valley Groundwater Authority

Board Members:

INDIAN CREEK-WESTRIDGE CSD
CITY OF BISHOP
COUNTY OF INYO

Sarah Petersen
Karen Kong
Will Wadleton

BIG PINE CSD
OWENS VALLEY COMMITTEE

BryAnna Vaughan
Mary Roper

March 24, 2026

The Owens Valley Groundwater Authority meeting was called to order at approximately 2:32 pm at the Inyo County Consolidated Office Building, Bishop, CA.

1. Pledge of allegiance

Will Wadleton led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Introductions

The Board introduced themselves with a new Inyo County Supervisor on board, Will Wadleton. Mary Roper was attending remotely from Independence.

3. Public Comment

The Chairperson opened the public comment period.

Lynn Boulton requested the Board make sure there is plenty of monitoring and controls set for groundwater pumping that might be developing in the Olancho/Cartago area.

Mel Joseph stated the Lone Pine Tribe submitted comments regarding the Crystal Geyser EIR, including that the OVGA and Inyo County Water Department should be listed as regulatory agencies in the document.

4. Approval of minutes from the June 25, 2025, OVGA Board meeting

Mel Joseph requested under the pledge of allegiance that the spelling of Looren Joseph's name be corrected. He questioned if the minutes were posted from the meeting nine months ago. John Carl Vallejo stated for the record, draft minutes cannot be posted. They are posted after Board approval.

Motion to approve the June 25, 2025, minutes by BryAnna Vaughan with the requested change of Lauren Joseph to Looren Joseph, seconded by Will Wadleton. Motion passed.

5. Election of OVGA Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for 2026

Will Wadleton made a motion to select Karen Kong as Chairperson, seconded by BryAnna Vaughan. Motion passed. Motion made by Will Wadleton to assume the Vice Chairperson position, seconded by BryAnna Vaughan. Motion passed.

6. Board Member Reports

BryAnna Vaughan stated two of their three IRWMP grants are progressing for the sewer system upgrades. Sarah Petersen stated the Indian Creek-Westridge CSD sent notices to customers regarding consolidation with Sierra Highlands CSD and stated the state has hired an engineer to oversee the process which is currently stalled waiting on the next funding cycle. Will Wadleton stated he reviewed the many comments received on the EIR. Karen Kong stated the City of Bishop approved a contract last night for the Line St. water main replacement project. Mary Roper stated she had been attending a lot of meetings.

7. OVGA Financial Report

Laura Piper provided the OVGA financial report stating the cash balance is \$220,382.12 with revenue of interest \$5,015.53 and \$30,430.25 in expenses which include the following: \$18,568.00 in consultant costs, \$9,432.75 in staff charges, and \$2,437.50 for insurance.

Terry Tye inquired about revenue for the OVGA. Dr. Alpert stated currently there is not a revenue source in place, they are sustained by the beginning member contributions but will need to re-evaluate that in the future.

8. Presentation of draft 2026-27 OVGA budget and consideration of a final budget

Dr. Alpert provided an overview of the staff report and draft OVGA budget for 2026-27. Terry Tye inquired about the percentage of budget tied to staff services. Motion to approve the 2026-2027 OVGA budget by Mary Roper, seconded by Will Wadleton. Motion passed.

9. Ordinance 2022-01 Well Registration Program update

Tim Moore provided a PowerPoint presentation and an update on the status of the well registration program. He stated 35% of entities have provided the reporting data requested, and the 2025 deadline for reporting is April 1. Gus Tolley, DBS&A, was also in attendance and provided information regarding reporting requirements from Department of Water Resources. The Board and staff discussed this item in detail to include possible enforcement options to encourage reporting. Terry Tye mentioned enforcement policy to reach compliance with reporting. Lynn Boulton stated her concern for not receiving reporting data for well in the Olancho/Cartago area with possibly providing water to K2 Gold and stated they are not disclosing in any documents where they are getting the water from. Mel Joseph stated he thinks it's time the OVGA put some teeth into reporting requirements for enforcement. Sally Manning inquired if the ordinance points out it could be to their advantage to have their wells registered in case of changes like this. John Vallejo provided information from the ordinance and SGMA legislation to the Board and public regarding possible enforcement.

10. Status of GSP

Dr. Alpert provided information and correspondence to both Mono County and Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District asking if there is interest in collaborating and Mono County declined. There has been no response yet from Tri-Valley. Kristen Stipanov suggested using CDFW's idea of expanding the Fish Slough subbasin to include Tri-Valley. It wouldn't break up the management area but would give the OVGA authority over the Tri-Valley area. John Vallejo stated Tri-Valley GMD applied to be its own GSA so it wouldn't allow the OVGA to take over and reach across the boundary, there has to be an agreement. Tim Moore provided clarification on how DWR designates

basins. Gus Tolley stated there is currently no mechanism for triggering reprioritization through SGMA and they seem extremely hesitant to do so per his experience at least in the next 5-10 years. Kristen Stipanov asked if John Vallejo could expand on how the authority works within the Owens Valley groundwater basin. John Vallejo stated it is jurisdictional.

11. Water Year 2024 OVGA annual report

Tim Moore presented the Water Year 2024 annual report, which was due to DWR on April 2025. He explained the management areas, the report content, water management criteria, status of representative monitoring sites, the public comment period, and the process of coming to the final version of the report. Mel Joseph stated the Lone Pine Tribe has previously brought up the issues of the LTWA and the OVGA, water sources are co-mingled, the LTWA is based on a vegetation component not groundwater and the OVGA is based on groundwater sustainability and that's what we need to strive for. He stated issues come up that are not agendized, and because they are not, they are dropped. He stated the LTWA needs to be replaced and is a concern especially with the southern end of the valley. Edie Trimmer stated she had a question about the data point that is below minimum threshold which is northeast spring. She stated what happens given it's at that low point and outside Inyo County boundary, what happens if the OVGA just ignores DWR asking for a complete GSP for the area. John Vallejo stated there are no consequences, we don't have a mandatory GSP.

12. Meeting schedule

The Board and staff decided the meeting will be scheduled some time after July 9, 2026. The Board discussed the next meeting including enforcement options such as fines, imposing liens, installation of meters, and a discussion regarding future revenue for the OVGA, and bringing the OVGA 2024 annual report back for final approval, and what the OVGA is trying to accomplish given the state of the agency and status.

13. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:57 pm.