

SWEETWATER AUTHORITY

Legislative Affairs and Communications Committee

December 18, 2024



Consideration of Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Governing Board adopt the Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines as presented.

OVERVIEW

Every year, the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) adopts updated Legislative Policy Guidelines to provide guidance on issues of importance and a framework to evaluate legislative and regulatory issues. In 2021, Sweetwater Authority reviewed and provided input on SDCWA's Legislative Policy Guidelines and has since used SDCWA's guidelines to provide guidance on developing its own positions on recent legislation that impacts the Authority and its ratepayers, including bills regarding water rights, local autonomy, zero-emission vehicles, and Proposition 218.

Authority staff have evaluated SDCWA's 2024 Legislative Policy Guidelines and propose to adopt similar but more pertinent Legislative Policy Guidelines specific to the Authority's needs as a retail water agency with a unique water resources portfolio and a high percentage of economically disadvantaged communities.

The proposed Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines incorporate the majority of the same policy categories defined by the SDCWA guidelines and, in general, seek to protect reliable and safe water supplies and ensure local autonomy. However, whenever applicable and appropriate, the Authority's Legislative Policy Guidelines emphasize prioritizing funding opportunities for public water service providers who serve disadvantaged communities, as well as protecting the Authority's various local water resources.

The Legislative Policy Guidelines address the following policy issues:

- Binational Issues
- Biological and Habitat Preservation
- Drought Response
- Energy
- Fiscal Policy and Water Rates
- Water Bonds
- Affordability
- Imported Water Issues
- Local Autonomy
- Local Water Resources
- Right of Way and Property
- State Administrative and Regulatory Agencies
- Water Facilities and Operations
- Climate Change
- Integrated Regional Water Management Planning
- Land Use and Water Management Planning
- Water Quality Issues
- Water Use Efficiency

If adopted, the Legislative Policy Guidelines will be used as a guiding document with the intent of providing clear direction to both Authority staff and legislative advocates and will help streamline the evaluation process

of proposed legislation, ensuring a consistent and informed approach when assessing potential impacts on the Authority and its customers.

Legislation, as well as emerging and active regulatory issues, that meets or fail to meet the principles set forth in these guidelines may be supported or opposed accordingly. The guidelines permit staff and legislative advocates to act in a timely fashion between Board meetings on issues that are clearly within the guidelines. Legislation that does not meet the principles set forth in these guidelines or that has potentially complicated or varied implications will not be acted upon by Authority staff or legislative advocates but instead will be brought to the Governing Board for guidance and direction.

These legislative guidelines were presented to the Legislative Affairs and Communications Committee on June 5, 2024, and then to the Governing Board on June 12, 2024. The Governing Board directed staff to present the Guidelines to the Legislative Affairs and Communications Committee for a second review. The proposed Legislative Guidelines remove any reference to a 'solar array' included in the original document and as requested by the Legislative Affairs and Communications Committee.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with adopting the Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines.

NEXT STEPS

1. Adopt the Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines as presented.
2. Adopt the Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines with revisions.
3. Other direction as determined by the Governing Board.

Staff Contact:

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Attachment

Sweetwater Authority Legislative Policy Guidelines

Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Goal No. 3 Financial Viability (FV) – Ensure long-term financial viability of the agency through best practices, operational efficiency, and maximizing assets.

Objective FV3: Develop strategies at both the State and Federal levels to identify and pursue grant funds for high priority projects and programs, and advocate for legislative priorities

Past Board Action

June 12, 2024 The Governing Board deferred this item back to the Legislative Affairs and Communications Committee for further review.

October 27, 2021 The Governing Board reviewed and provided input on the draft San Diego County Water Authority Legislative Guidelines and directed staff to provide those comments to the San Diego County Water Authority before the comment period deadline.