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SAN GORGONIO PASS WATER AGENCY
A California State Water Project Contractor

Milestone Event Centers Water in the Pass Area's Economic Future

New research connects 65 years of water decisions to economic impact through 2050

CABAZON, CA (October 8, 2026) – Sixty-five years after its founding, San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA) brought 220 people together Tuesday for its landmark *State of the Pass* event at Morongo Casino Resort & Spa. New research from Beacon Economics quantified what decades of investment in reliable water have made possible, and what it will take to secure the Pass area's water and economic future.

Roughly one in four gallons used in the Pass area today depends on engineered supplies, meaning water that is imported, stored, recycled or captured through deliberate investments in water reliability. By 2050, that figure is projected to approach one in two. Every acre-foot of water used in the region supports about $243,000 in annual economic activity.

"Water gives the Pass area choices," said SGPWA Board President Robert Ybarra. "It gives our cities the ability to pursue housing, jobs and economic opportunities based on what is right for their communities, rather than having their future dictated by water scarcity. When water is reliable, communities can make decisions based on opportunity instead of limitation."

Headlining *State of the Pass* was Christopher Thornberg, Ph.D., Founding Partner of Beacon Economics, who presented findings from *Economic and Community Impacts of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency*. The event connected the region's economic outlook with the water required to support it and featured two videos highlighting SGPWA's history and its commitment to partnerships and regional collaboration. Thornberg and SGPWA General Manager Lance Eckhart closed the program with a lively Q&A with the audience.

Attendees also received a preview of *The Last 32 Miles*, SGPWA's forthcoming history book by water history author Jeff Crider, through a companion booklet distributed at the event. SGPWA offered everyone in attendance a complimentary copy of the full book when it is released.

Economic and Community Impacts of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency is the second regional analysis Beacon Economics has prepared for SGPWA. The first, *San Gorgonio Pass Economic Outlook and Forecast*, examined the forces shaping the region's prosperity. The latest study goes deeper, measuring the role reliable water has played in supporting that progress and what rising demand means for the future.

In 1961, SGPWA was formed and committed the region to the State Water Project. It took 42 years for that water to reach the Pass area in 2003, connecting the region to supplies traveling

roughly 500 miles from Northern California. Beacon Economics found that supplemental water became an essential condition for development at the scale the region has experienced.

Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District's (BCVWD) service area offers a clear example. Its population increased from approximately 29,700 in 2001 to more than 63,000 in 2025. During roughly the same period, BCVWD grew from approximately 6,080 connections in 2000 to 22,225 in 2025. Beacon Economics found that water did not produce that development by itself, but reliable supplies were essential to supporting it at that scale.

The need for those investments will only increase. The Pass area currently uses approximately 28,200 acre-feet annually, with engineered supplies meeting about 28% of demand. By 2050, demand is projected to reach 38,600 acre-feet, with engineered supplies providing approximately 47%, even with continued improvements in water-use efficiency.

"For a small team, the responsibility we carry is enormous, and I could not be prouder of the people doing this work every day," said SGPWA General Manager Lance Eckhart. "Our small but mighty team is constantly looking ahead, securing supplies, building partnerships and advancing projects so the burgeoning communities we serve have a resilient water future. The leaders who committed to the State Water Project had the foresight to plant shade trees they knew they would never stand under. That is the same responsibility we carry today."

Read *Economic and Community Impacts of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency* and explore the findings at beaconecon.com/published-research/san-gorgonio-pass-water-agency/.

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About San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency

Formed in 1961, SGPWA is a State Water Contractor that serves a 225-square-mile area of western Riverside County. The service area includes the cities of Calimesa, Beaumont, and Banning, and the communities of Cherry Valley, Cabazon, and the Banning Bench. In addition to importing State Water Project (SWP) water from Northern California to augment local groundwater sources, the Agency builds local system infrastructure, participates in water transfers, partners in statewide water projects and collaborates on regional water reliability and conservation efforts.