



SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT **DRAFT** 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE

ABOUT SWCD

The Southwestern Water Conservation District (“SWCD”) consists of all or part of nine counties in southwestern Colorado: Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan, San Miguel, and parts of Hinsdale, Mineral, and Montrose counties. Each Board of County Commissioners appoints a representative to the SWCD Board of Directors. The board meets regularly, and the schedule (while subject to change) is available at swgcd.org.

SWCD was formed by the Colorado General Assembly on April 16, 1941 and charged with the conservation, use, and development of the water resources of the San Juan and Dolores rivers basins. SWCD is charged by statute ([C.R.S. §37-47-101](#)) to safeguard for Colorado all waters to which the state of Colorado is equitably entitled and has such powers as are necessary to carry out this mandate. Within [SWCD’s boundaries](#) are the San Juan and Dolores River Basins, in which there are nine distinct watersheds.

Following this mandate, SWCD maintains a broad strategic role on behalf of its diverse constituents. SWCD advocates for southwestern Colorado’s water interests at the local, state, regional, and federal level.

For more information about SWCD, please visit swgcd.org, call 970-247-1302, or email admin@swgcd.org. The SWCD office is located at 841 East Second Avenue in Durango, Colorado.

BRIEF BUDGET OVERVIEW

SWCD will provide the following services during the 2025 budget year: support the conservation, development and management of water use in southwestern Colorado; safeguard all waters to which the State is equitably entitled; participate in and provide funding for data collection; support, participate in, and lead local policy efforts; represent southwestern Colorado on federal and state policy concerns; and provide a variety of public education on water-related issues. Finally, SWCD will seek to serve constituents by providing general water information as requested. SWCD’s strategic plan, adopted February 2022, is available at <https://swgcd.org/our-strategic-plan/>.

SWCD’s accounting is performed on a modified accrual basis, consistent with generally accepted accounting practices. SWCD’s financial statements are [audited annually](#).

This budget reflects estimated revenues and proposed expenditures for 2025. For your reference and information, please find below a detailed description of the budget by line item.

BUDGET DETAIL: REVENUE

SWCD's total budgeted revenues for 2025 are projected to be \$2,234,303.

Property Tax. SWCD is supported through a mill levy, which is assessed on property located within the District boundaries. Property tax revenues are expected to be approximately \$1,830,369, based on a mill levy of .380. This revenue is based on a combined assessed net valuation across nine counties of \$4,805,983,451.

Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Reimbursement. This line item tracks annual reimbursements of SWCD's portion of tax increments collected by urban rural authorities (URA) within the SWCD's boundaries. Currently, SWCD has agreements with the City of Durango to reimburse SWCD for SWCD's portion of the tax increment collected by the North Main Gateway URA and the Durango Midtown URA.

Specific Ownership Tax. This is a property or ad valorem tax levied in addition to sales (or use) taxes on a motor vehicle and is paid annually when the vehicle is registered within a county. SWCD receives a portion of these taxes collected by the nine counties.

Interest, PILT, and Other Tax Revenue. SWCD receives revenue from delinquent tax from prior years that has been recently collected, payment in lieu of tax (PILT), and other miscellaneous taxes.

Other Income. SWCD receives interest income and registration fees for SWCD's educational events. SWCD also receives income on behalf of the Water Information Program from its 28 partner entities and educational event registration fees. SWCD also receives partner contributions to help support our stream gaging joint funding agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey.

TABOR Emergency Contingency Reserve. This line item is required by the TABOR amendment to the state constitution, which mandates that at least three percent of SWCD's fiscal year spending (excluding bonded debt service) be set aside as a contingency reserve for declared emergencies.

BUDGET DETAIL: EXPENDITURES

SWCD's total appropriation of money to the general fund is \$2,019,298.

WATER SUPPLY – QUANTITY AND QUALITY

San Juan Recovery Program Water User Committee. This line item covers SWCD's 50% cost share for the cost of the two consultants, who participate in the broader San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJRBRIP) on behalf of water users in New Mexico and Colorado. This program works to recover the endangered Colorado pikeminnow and

razorback sucker populations in the San Juan River and its ongoing success protects water uses across the basin. Included in this line item is also the small contribution SWCD provides to the Colorado Water Congress in support of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

Weather Modification in SW Colorado. SWCD matches local partner commitments to winter cloud seeding, also known as weather modification.

Public Forums, Data Collection and Related Efforts.

- **Bonita Peak Community Advisory Group.** This line item supports operational costs for the Bonita Peak Mining District Community Advisory Group.
- **Center for Snow & Avalanche Studies.** This line item supports the Center for Snow & Avalanche Studies, which conducts valuable research on the impacts of dust on snow to runoff.
- **Stream Gaging/Federal.** This line item covers SWCD's cost share with the US Geological Survey for operation and maintenance of several regional stream gages. SWCD receives partial reimbursement from local partners for some of the stream gages.
- **Stream Gaging/Colorado.** This line item covers the cost for Colorado Division of Water Resources to operate their Cherry Creek and Long Hollow stream gages.
- **San Miguel Watershed Coalition.** This line item covers support for water quality studies and monitoring provided by the San Miguel Watershed Coalition.

Local Financial Support (Grants). This line item covers grants that may be awarded through SWCD's Grant Program to qualified entities that are carrying out projects consistent with SWCD's statutory purposes.

Previously Committed Local Financial Support (Grants). This line item covers any previously committed aid, approved in a prior year, for which the SWCD staff or board approves an extension through 2025.

WATER POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Federal.

- **Federal Lobbying Fees.** This line item covers fees related to federal lobbying efforts on behalf of SWCD.
- **Federal Lobbying Expenses.** This line item covers principally travel expenses related to federal lobbying efforts on behalf of SWCD.

State.

- **State Lobbying Fees.** This line item covers fees related to contracted state lobbying efforts on behalf of SWCD.
- **State Lobbying Expenses.** This line item covers principally travel expenses related to contracted state lobbying efforts on behalf of SWCD.

Dues & Memberships. This line item covers membership dues for organizations that provide benefits to SWCD and its constituents.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Legal.

- **Attorney Fees/General Counsel.** This line item covers attorney fees and legal costs for representation on general matters.
- **Attorney Travel Expenses/General Counsel.** This line item covers travel time and expenses for representation on general legal and litigation matters.
- **Litigation/General Counsel.** This line item covers attorney fees and legal costs for representation.
- **Attorney Fees/Special Counsel.** This line item covers fees for special legal counsel in matters related to SWCD's water rights and on certain employment matters.
- **Attorney Expenses/Special Counsel.** This line item covers expenses for special legal counsel.

Engineering and Other Technical Services.

- **Engineering Fees/General.** This line item covers fees and expenses related to engineering activities.
- **Engineering Fees/Modeling.** This line item covers modeling efforts necessary to support and assess inter- and intrastate water administration scenarios.

Other Technical Services. This line item covers other contracted technical services (non-engineering) that may arise during the year, such as water quality support, other technical needs, as well as funding to be used as match requirement for grant applications to enhance District capacity.

WATER EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Other Event Sponsorships. This line item covers SWCD support for water-related events regionally and locally.

SWCD Children's Water Festival. This line item covers all costs related to SWCD's Annual Children's Water Festival, at which more than 700 fifth graders from across southwestern Colorado engage in educational programs for a full day at Fort Lewis College each May.

SWCD Southwest Water Seminar. This line item covers all costs related to SWCD's Annual Water Seminar, which nearly 300 people attend each year to hear from state and local water experts.

SWCD Water Leaders Program Scholarship. This line item allows SWCD to potentially support all or a portion of tuition for any professionals from southwestern Colorado accepted to the statewide Water Leaders Program.

Water Connections Event. This line item covers all costs related to SWCD’s fall educational event, “Water Connections,” which has been held with other sponsoring partners.

Water Education Colorado. This line item covers SWCD’s support for the programming and content produced by Water Education Colorado, a statewide educational organization.

Watershed Education Program. This line item covers support for the Watershed Education Program, which provides water-related field trips throughout the year to elementary students in the Upper and Lower San Miguel basin.

WATER INFORMATION PROGRAM

This line item covers all program expenses related to operation of the Water Information Program (WIP), which is presently financially supported by 30 partners in southwestern Colorado, with a dollar-for-dollar match from SWCD for partner contributions. Also included are any revenue generated from sponsored events (e.g. “Water Law in a Nutshell”). WIP provides balanced water-related educational content and programming to our nine-county region. This line item includes the cost of the independent contractor who manages the Water Information Program. As noted under budgeted revenue, among the Water Information Program’s revenue is an estimated \$40,000 from local partners for 2025.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Board of Directors.

- **Director Fees.** The board members are eligible to receive \$100 per day while engaged in SWCD business.
- **Director Travel.** This line item includes mileage, lodging, flights, meals, and any other travel costs incurred by board members while conducting SWCD business.

Staffing.

- **Wages – General Manager.** This line item covers wages for SWCD’s general manager.
- **Wages – Programs Coordinator.** This line item covers wages for SWCD’s programs coordinator.
- **Wages – Payroll Taxes.** This line item includes SWCD’s payroll taxes for two employees.
- **Wages – Retirement Benefit.** This line item includes SWCD’s retirement plan contributions for two employees. SWCD equally matches each employee’s personal contributions to their retirement plan, up to 5% of their annual salary.
- **Wages – Health & Life Insurance.** This line item includes the maximum amount that SWCD will contribute towards the payment of certain health and life insurance premiums for SWCD’s two employees and, in the case of health insurance, any qualified dependents.

Administrative Expenses.

- **Accounting.** This line item covers any costs related to SWCD accounting, such as accounting software or consultation with professional accountants.
- **The Payroll Department.** This line item covers SWCD's fees for using The Payroll Department to process payroll, payroll taxes, and process and distribute tax documents.
- **Audit.** This line item covers the cost of the annual audit of SWCD's financial statements, which is provided to the state by July 31 each year.
- **Capital Outlay.** This line item covers any purchases of items such as computers, other office equipment, or furniture.
- **Casual Labor.** This line item covers any one-time labor needs, such as movers or event support.
- **SDA Membership.** This line item covers SWCD's Special District Association (SDA) membership.
- **Insurance – General Liability.** This line item covers general liability insurance for SWCD, public officials' liability, excess liability, and SWCD's worker's compensation policy.
- **Legal Notice.** This line item includes SWCD's noticing of the budget hearing annually in local papers in each of the nine counties.
- **Meeting Expenses.** This line item covers all meals, venue costs, facilitation, and other meeting-related expenses. This line item also includes all costs related to coordination of the board's remote meeting and basin tour.
- **Miscellaneous Expenses.** This line items covers any expenses that do not clearly fall into another category, such as flowers for a hospitalized colleague or director.
- **Office Expenses.** This line item includes office supplies, consumable supplies, copy costs, software purchases, subscriptions, and other office-related needs.
- **Postage.** This line item covers postage costs for office mailings, principally board packets.
- **Registration Fees.** This line item covers conference, seminar or other event registration fees for board or staff.
- **Staff Training & Professional Development.** This line item covers the cost of courses or training for staff.
- **Telecommunications & IT Support.** This line item includes SWCD's phone, internet, teleconferencing, and website services.

Staff Travel. This line item reimburses staff for mileage, lodging, flights, meals, and any other travel costs incurred while conducting SWCD business.

Rent. This line item includes monthly rent for SWCD's current office space, related utilities, parking spaces, and storage.

County Treasurer Fees. This line item covers fees charged by the nine counties to collect and disburse property tax revenue on behalf of SWCD. Country Treasurer Fees are estimated at three percent of total tax revenue budgeted.