

STAFF REPORT

TO: SMVWCD Board of Directors
FROM: Carol Thomas-Keefer, Interim General Manager
DATE: January 15, 2026
RE: County Water Agency Dam and Data Monitoring Access

Background:

The District operates Twitchell Dam through agreement with the Santa Barbara County Water Agency and with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The County Water Agency also has responsibility for other dams within its jurisdiction and has considerable experience with the operation of those facilities. It also maintains monitoring equipment at Twitchell Dam and periodically needs access to the dam to adjust, repair or replace equipment. Traditionally, the County representative has to contact the District to gain that access.

The District has also recently completed installation of gate monitoring equipment with remote monitoring capabilities. County personnel have expressed an interest in being able to access and monitor that data on a regular basis.

The County is a knowledgeable and helpful partner, and the District can benefit from that collaboration. Sharing real-time release data is useful to the County, and the collaboration can lead to greater improvements in technology and data collection, even potential cost-sharing opportunities for upgrades. Also, since the County maintains equipment at the dam, it is reasonable to allow controlled or monitored access to those facilities. The access might be limited to specific personnel or positions, as determined by the County and approved by the District.

Recommendation:

The Board should consider authorizing the County Water Agency access to certain dam facilities and access to gate monitoring data, as appropriate.

STAFF REPORT

TO: SMVWCD Board of Directors
FROM: Carol Thomas-Keefer, Interim General Manager
DATE: January 15, 2026
RE: Dam Tender job description (second position)

Background:

In December 2024, the Board approved an updated job description for its Dam Tender positions. The job description addresses both the Dam Tender I and Dam Tender II positions and also includes a full-time as well as a part-time position. The full-time position has been filled since March 2025 with the Dam Tender working a base 40-hour, Monday through Friday work week. Since the District currently employs only one dam tender, the current dam tender is also alternating weekend coverage with contractor Mike Gaedeke.

The District authorized the hiring of a second, part-time dam tender to work a schedule that overlaps the current dam tender schedule on Mondays and Fridays and also covers weekends. The position was referred to as part-time as it was presented as a 32-hour (or less) work week (four days/week). In recruiting for that position, it became clear that few if any qualified and reliable candidates were interested in committing to a schedule that required working every weekend. It was also less attractive to offer the position as part-time, as most candidates were seeking a full-time position that included traditional benefits.

Members of the ad hoc Personnel committee have discussed the possibility of either a) revising the job description to modify the schedule and hours for the second (part-time) dam tender, or b) revising the hiring approval to authorize the hiring of a second full-time dam tender rather than recruit for the part-time position.

If the District were to revise the job description, the schedule change would be to revise the proposed work schedule to a more traditional weekday schedule, with the requirement to alternate weekend coverage with the other dam tender. The Board would also need to determine if the part-time schedule was still appropriate. The option to simply hire another full-time dam tender would keep both employees on a regular weekday schedule but allow them to alternate weekend coverage and provide back-up for vacations and sick days. However, it would also require a plan for ensuring adequate work to keep both employees busy on a full-time basis. With proper training, the two dam tenders could take on some of the maintenance activities currently performed by contractors. They could also begin to assist with other work, such as contractor coordination.

Recommendation:

The Board should review the dam tender job description, edit as appropriate, and authorize the General Manager to recruit for the updated/approved position.

Attachment:

- Dam Tender I and II job description

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
JOB DESCRIPTION
DAM TENDER I AND II**

POSITION: Dam Tender I or Dam Tender II

SALARY RANGE:

Dam Tender I – \$26.00 - \$32.00/hourly (\$54,080 - \$66,560 annually full-time)

Dam Tender II - \$28.85 - \$38.50/hourly (\$62,400 - \$80,080 annually full-time)

DUTIES:

Performs a variety of technical tasks related to control and regulation of the flow of water within Twitchell Reservoir, including but not limited to:

- Collect and report data on water inflow and outflow and weather conditions;
- Maintain dam grounds and structures;
- Regulate outlet flow in accordance with District direction and USBR standard operating procedures;
- Manage emergency operations in accordance with USBR Emergency Action Plan until relieved by another District representative;
- Collect water and other samples;
- Perform routine tests on weather station; analyze and record data from tests;
- Lead or assist in preventive maintenance activities on reservoir equipment, including recorders, rainfall gauges, weirs, pumps, motors, boats, generators and flood gates; inspect, clean and perform minor repair activities;
- Open flood gates and clean debris;
- Patrol lake and property surrounding the facilities and downstream flow; enforce reservoir ordinances as necessary;
- Participate in the repair and maintenance of reservoir roads and drains.
- Lead or assist with groundskeeping and maintenance of reservoir area, including dam superstructures, buildings and grounds; perform grounds maintenance duties including care of lawns, shrubs, flowers and trees; paint buildings as necessary.
- Operate a variety of equipment including vehicles, hand and power tools, mowers, and other equipment used for dam operation, maintenance and groundskeeping.
- Assist outside agencies with operation of their facilities at the dam. Provide access to agencies as required and serve as District point of contact when needed.
- Maintain detailed records and logs related to activities and maintenance at the facility and reservoir.
- Work with a variety of agencies on operations and activities; deal with inquiries and resolve issues on reservoir activities within scope of authority.
- Respond to public inquiries as needed and in a courteous manner; resolve complaints in an efficient and timely manner.
- Perform additional related duties and responsibilities as required.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives direction from and reports to General Manager. Dam Tender II may assist General Manager in supervising Dam Tender I or Part-time Dam Tender I or II.

EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Any combination of experience and training that can provide the required knowledge and abilities may be acceptable. Examples include two years or more of increasingly responsible experience in any of the following areas:
 - Maintaining and repairing water distribution systems or related systems.
 - Collecting and reporting data.
 - Experience operating and maintaining mechanical and/or hydraulic systems operated remotely;
 - Experience operating standby or auxiliary power systems.
 - Experience working outdoors and/or in remote locations.

- Knowledge of and ability to competently use computers and Microsoft Office software.
- Good oral and written communication skills.
- Ability to use hand and power tools and operate light and heavy equipment.
- Ability to perform physical tasks, including but not limited to walking, standing, stooping, bending, crouching, lifting, stretching, or crawling for extended periods of time; must be able to lift and carry up to 50 pounds regularly.

LICENSES, EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

- High school diploma or equivalent
- Valid California Driver’s License, Class C required, with ability to obtain Commercial Driver’s License as needed
- Ability to obtain Dam Tenders Certificate within 6 months of hire. (Training provided through District.)

WORK SCHEDULE

Work days and hours for Full-time Dam Tender are generally 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday but may be adjusted on occasion to allow attendance at District meetings. Emergency conditions may require Dam Tender(s) to work additional hours, up to 12-hour shifts, upon direction of General Manager or the Board of Directors.

Work days and hours for a Part-time Dam Tender are subject to change but are generally 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday through Monday.

All Dam Tenders, whether Full-time or Part-time, may be required to work additional days and hours as needed, including holidays, to ensure reservoir and dam are properly monitored as required.