



Rolling hills of
San Clemente

Welcome from OC LAFCO

The September 2022 edition of The Pulse provides highlights of OC LAFCO's projects and activities for the second half of fiscal year 2021-2022. So, read on as you learn more about the accomplishments of the Commission, what is on the horizon for 2022-2023, and hear from OC LAFCO Vice Chair and Third District County Supervisor Donald P. Wagner on his experience and leadership with the Commission.



Second-Half Accomplishments and Activities

Unincorporated Island Annexations Spanning Over 22 Years

Since legislation for streamlining the annexation process for small unincorporated areas was first enacted by the California Legislature in 2000, OC LAFCO has successfully annexed over 50 unincorporated areas to multiple cities that include: Anaheim, Brea, Costa Mesa, Garden Grove, Fullerton, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach, Irvine, Laguna Niguel, La Habra, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, San Juan

Capistrano, Santa Ana, Stanton, and Tustin. Transitioning these areas has been a collaborative partnership with the County and adjacent cities, and during the second half of this fiscal year, the Commission annexed another unincorporated area to the City of Placentia. Beginning the process in 2018, the residents of Hamer Island became a part of the City in July 2022, bringing the total remaining unincorporated areas to 23.



FIRST EDITION



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As OC LAFCO continues to partner with the County and cities on the effort to enhance efficiency in the delivery of municipal services,

Commission staff has participated in discussions with the Cities of Fountain Valley and Westminster on annexing the unincorporated

areas adjacent to their jurisdictional boundaries. There are a total of five unincorporated areas located within the cities' spheres of influence.

Municipal Service Reviews (MSR) – A State Mandate

In 2018, OC LAFCO began a five-year schedule of conducting MSRs to review the efficiency and sustainability of municipal services delivered by Orange County's 34 cities and 34 special districts. A State mandate that the Commission has been fulfilling since the early 2000s, the OC LAFCO MSR process includes a deliberate effort that includes collaborative communication with the agencies during their review. For this review cycle, the Commission has completed an MSR for six independent and dependent special districts. During the second half of the fiscal cycle, MSRs were prepared for three County Service Areas (CSAs) responsible for funding wastewater and park and recreation services and programs managed by the County Public Works and Parks Departments. The CSAs function as dependent districts that are governed by the County Board of Supervisors and can be traced back to as early as 1935. While two of the CSAs have funded the respective services for many decades, the OC LAFCO MSR indicated an opportunity for them to be dissolved through the annexation of the areas served by the adjacent cities of

Buena Park and Yorba Linda. In the coming months, the Commission staff will initiate discussions with the County and cities.

In October, the Commission will consider adopting the final MSR for the Orange County Cemetery District. Currently, the District manages and operates three cemeteries and will bring a new one on line in 2025 to serve the County's nearly 3.2 million residents. In summary, the MSR indicates the efficiency and long-term sustainability of the administrative and fiscal operations of the District. The Public Draft of the MSR is currently available on the agency's website and has been sent to all affected agencies and interested parties. The Commission welcomes any comments.

Also, during the second half, MSRs for the Southwest and West MSR regions got underway. In part to these reviews, 24 agencies (13 cities, 11 special

districts) and one joint powers authority will be engaged and the plethora of services, including but not limited to public safety, water, wastewater, library and parks and recreation, will be assessed in line with the MSR determinations. The process will also include a review of the agencies' current and future boundaries as it pertains to the logical and sustainable delivery of municipal services.



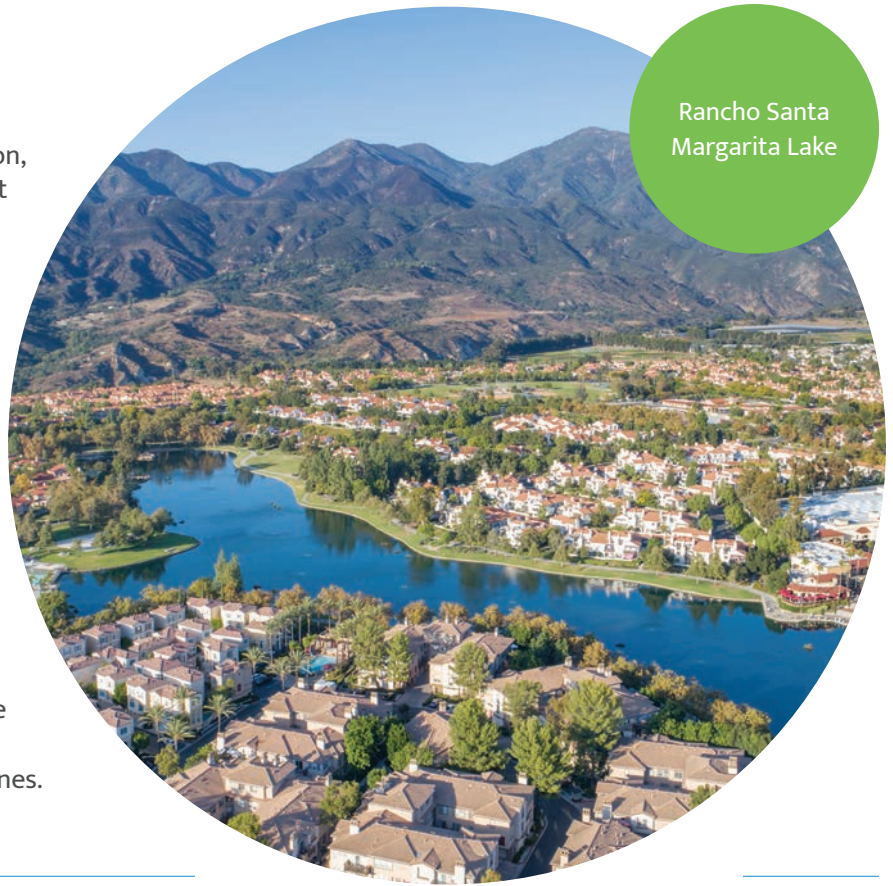
Boundary Realignment for County/Cities/Special District Continues

Over the past several years, OC LAFCO has seen an uptick in applications seeking to improve shared boundaries between cities and affect the better alignment of boundaries and services for special districts. During the latter part of the prior fiscal year, this activity continued with the Commission's final actions of processing and approving multiple proposals involving the cities of Anaheim, Orange, and Tustin, the County and Orange County Sanitation District that brings not just clarity in boundaries but supports more efficient delivery of services within the respective agencies' operations and for residents of the subject areas.

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Legislative Affairs

At the beginning of the current legislative session, OC LAFCO identified two areas of LAFCO interest involving proposed legislation. Since then, relevant legislation grew to a total of seven bills for which the Commission adopted watch, support and oppose positions. The subjects of the proposed legislation involved: 1) CALAFCO annual omnibus bill, 2) protest provisions within the CKH Act, 3) the conducting of public meetings by teleconference, 4) written communication received relative to public meetings, 5) provision of water service within tribal areas, 6) grant funding for the annexation of unincorporated islands, and 7) yearly validating acts. While a few of these bills have been signed into law, the Commission awaits the fate of others as both houses in the Legislature scurry to meet critical end-of-the-session deadlines.



Rancho Santa Margarita Lake

New Beginnings

OC LAFCO Adopts a Three-Year Strategic Plan

On July 13, 2022, the Commission continued their customary conducting of the OC LAFCO strategic planning workshop. Led by an experienced facilitator, William Kelly of Kelly Management Associates Group, the Commission engaged in robust, long-term goal-setting and a review of the agency's strengths, weaknesses, external threats, and opportunities. The following month, the Commission formally adopted the OC LAFCO Three-Year Strategic Plan (2022-2025). Below are the agency's approved three-year goals. You may find more details on the Plan's objectives to meet these goals and schedule at www.oclafo.org.

OC LAFCO Three-Year (2022-2025) Goals

GOAL

1 > Staff Development, Retention, and Recruitment

GOAL

2 > Improve Municipal Service Review (MSR) Process for Future MSRs

GOAL

3 > Promote Legislative Engagement

GOAL

4 > Optimize External Communication

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Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Expected Activity

In addition to the continued processing of boundary change and MSR applications and the preparation of comprehensive MSRs, here are other activities on the horizon for the recently started fiscal year.

Enhanced Communication

Over the next fiscal year, OC LAFCO will continue the optimization of communication with our local agencies, communities and other interested parties through the following activities:



Video FAQs

Brief videos where the public can learn about the genesis of LAFCOs and OC LAFCO's local mission.



LAFCO 101

An introductory course on the LAFCO basics, Commission and staff composition, funding and other key areas.

Greetings and Visits with OC Legislators

During even election years, the Commission staff conducts an OC LAFCO introduction and visits with OC legislators elected during the general election. The visits are intended to inform legislators of OC LAFCO's legislative and local missions, projects and activities, particularly within their respective districts, and take place at the local district offices. In part to the meeting, the OC LAFCO press kit, which includes the agency's brochure, bi-annual news, the agency's most recent strategic plan and legislative report, and other miscellaneous relevant items is shared. If you are interested in receiving a press kit, contact Commission staff.

California Association of LAFCOs (CALAFCO) – Representing LAFCOs Across the State

Formed in 1971, CALAFCO arrived at 50 years of establishment last year as the statewide association assisting LAFCOs across the State with educational, technical and legislative resources. The Association also provides the coordination of LAFCO activities, serves as a resource to the Legislature and other bodies, and offers a structure for sharing information among the various LAFCOs and other governmental agencies. OC LAFCO has been an active member of CALAFCO since the organization's inception and currently, Commissioner Derek J. McGregor serves on the CALAFCO Board of Directors. Additionally, the Commission's Executive Officer and Assistant Executive Officer serve on the Association's Legislative Committee and Advisory Committee, respectively.

Below are some additional highlights of CALAFCO recent and upcoming activities:



New Executive Director

In March 2022, CALAFCO appointed new Executive Director **René LaRoche** to provide executive leadership and management of the Association. Prior to joining CALAFCO, Rene served as part of Mariposa County's executive

management team in the position of Clerk of the Board of Supervisors. René earned a Master's Degree in Public Management from Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Las Vegas Nevada.

2022 Conference

In October, CALAFCO will welcome over 200 Commissioners and staffs from LAFCOs across the State at the Association's annual conference in Newport Beach. The conference has been on hiatus for the past two years due to the circumstances of the pandemic. However, thanks to the conference planning committee, this year's program will not disappoint. Session topics include: conflicts of interest for commissioners, grand jury and LAFCO, municipal service reviews, and a mock hearing...just to name a few!

A One-on-One Interview with

OC LAFCO Vice Chair Donald P. Wagner



In August, **Executive Officer Carolyn Emery** caught up with Third District County Supervisor and **OC LAFCO's Vice Chair Don Wagner** to hear his thoughts on the Commission's role in Orange County and his commitment to public service. Vice Chair Wagner has served on OC LAFCO as the County Member since 2019 and in Commission leadership as the Vice Chair for the past two years.

Emery: You've held multiple elected positions at both the state and local levels. Why is commitment to public service important to you?

Wagner: My wife and I and our kids moved to Orange County in the early 90s and fell in love with the community and the great quality of life it provides. Policy and decision-making involved in sustaining and enhancing that quality of life has always been of interest to me and my roles at both the state and local levels have afforded me the opportunity to be at the table during discussions around having great schools and business-friendly and safe communities.

Emery: Your term as a County Supervisor commenced shortly before the pandemic began. How do you stay motivated as an elected official during challenging times such as what we have experienced over the past two years?

Wagner: Yes, it's been the toughest time in the years I've been in office, and at times, it can be difficult to find a path through that. However, I remain very interested in policy development and contributing to making government work even during difficult times as the pandemic.

Emery: What are the distinctions between being a locally elected official, such as County Supervisor or Mayor of Irvine versus a state assembly member, if any?

Wagner: There are enormous differences. The opportunity to do more and do it immediately and see the results are much better at the local level. As a local official you are on the ground and, as in the case of the Board of Supervisors, are one of five votes and can get more done. Likewise also in the case with other small boards like LAFCO, you are more recognizable and responsive to the community. In Sacramento and as a state official, you need more votes to get things done.

Emery: As the Third District Supervisor, you serve on numerous boards and commissions and were appointed to OC LAFCO as the County Member in 2019. In that role, what do you see as one of the most important components of OC LAFCO's mission in Orange County?

Wagner: Many people are unaware of what LAFCO is or what it does. But, when you are on the ground and part of LAFCO, you see the Commission as quintessential and good government and an effort by the State to be responsive to the residents where there are illogical boundaries. It is good that you have an agency that looks at things locally and comes up with solutions rather than looking to Sacramento to fix it.

Emery: The Commission is comprised of county, city, special district and an at-large public member. How important is the diversity of the board and county's participation?

Wagner: Because I've held both local and state positions, I can appreciate the richness involved in the board's diversity and find it quite important. Each member of the Commission brings a different perspective and experience that you should have on the Board.

Emery: Given today's landscape of Orange County's demographics and many local governments recovering from the pandemic, where should the OC LAFCO's leadership and resources be applied?

Wagner: While the federal government has provided some funding to local governments due to the circumstances of the pandemic, I do not believe that many agencies, in particular cities, will remain sustainable in the long term. I am most concerned that when the belt tightening begins, in particular for cities, that agencies may wonder what is the value that they are getting from OC LAFCO. But perhaps the Commission can offer some solutions to the fiscal challenges ahead.



Donald P. Wagner

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Emery: Over the past 2-3 years, we have seen legislation impacting the role and authority of LAFCO increase. Based on your experience as a former State Assembly Member, what advice and guidance would you share with your fellow Commissioners and staff to stay in front of this?

Wagner: First, I do not believe that fixing LAFCO is a pressing topic in the legislature. Legislation involving LAFCO is likely from special interests or groups. A good approach is to identify the group, work with them on their issue, and to educate legislators that the interest does not require a legislative fix. It's good to get in front of it as when it hits a legislator's desk, it may be too late or a harder job to address. I also think it is of value to extend relationships to others in the Legislature beyond Orange County. Forming alliances with other counties that have the same issues as Orange County with proposed legislation, I believe, would be helpful.

Emery: If you were limited in words, how would you describe OC LAFCO?

Wagner: The management by the OC LAFCO team and the engagement of the Board is truly the best.

Emery: One last question Don, what is the most rewarding part of the job?

Wagner: Our office has experienced many successes, such as the reopening of Irvine Lake, and the most rewarding part of the job is when someone says thank you. And, to have residents paying attention and understanding that I am fighting for them is also rewarding.



Meet the OC LAFCO Team



Carolyn Emery

Executive Officer

Joined OC LAFCO in 2000



Luis Tapia

Assistant Executive Officer

Joined OC LAFCO in 2016



Gavin Centeno

Policy Analyst II

Joined OC LAFCO in 2016



Cheryl Carter-Benjamin

Commission Clerk/Officer Manager

Joined OC LAFCO in 2011



Scott C. Smith

General Counsel

(Best Best & Krieger LLP)
Serving OC LAFCO since 1994