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Welcome to *The Pulse*, where agencies and the public can obtain more information about the Commission's recent activities and projects. This edition highlights the Commission's activity during the 2025-2026 fiscal cycle, including recent appointments, key activities and projects, and progress of the Alliance of Local Agency Formation Commissions.



Wendy Bucknum, Chair

As the OC LAFCO Chairwoman, I welcome you to the Spring Edition of *The Pulse*. This edition provides an update on recent activities by the Commission and staff, underscoring the agency's continued efforts to accomplish the goals outlined in the OC LAFCO FY 2025-2028 Work Plan. To our new readers - and to those who have been engaged through our past editions - we thank you for your continued interest in OC LAFCO.

In January, I was appointed Chairwoman, alongside longstanding Commissioner James Fisler, as Vice Chair. Since the appointments, Commissioners and staff have been working collaboratively to ensure the agency upholds its mission

A Message from the Chair

statement and the goals set out in the OC LAFCO FY 2025-28 Work Plan. During the fiscal year 2025-26, the Commission welcomed the reappointments of experienced long-standing Commissioners, a transition in the Executive Officer position, and the hiring of two new analysts. Although there were significant changes in staff, the Commission did not halt its ongoing projects and activities - OC LAFCO continued with its regular agenda.

Some of the key items included as part of the Commission's agenda were routine administrative activities, a fiscal and legal analysis of a potential consolidation, municipal service reviews, activation of latent powers, monitored and adopted positions on legislation of LAFCO-interest. OC LAFCO also entered into a partnership between Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, and San Diego to create the Alliance of Local Agency Formation Commissions. As the fiscal year continues, the Commission and staff will continue to support the County, cities and special districts with inquiries and potential proposals.

As Chairwoman, I will continue to provide

leadership during the upcoming fiscal year to remain on track with the Work Plan and be responsive to Orange County's local agencies and communities.

To learn more about OC LAFCO, I welcome you to continue reading the articles included in this edition or attend one of our monthly meetings.



SPRING EDITION

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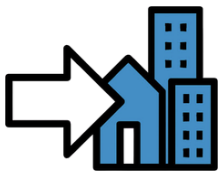
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OC LAFCO FEATURED PROJECTS

Over the past several months, the Commission has advanced several projects related to OC LAFCO's work in local government service delivery across Orange County. Below are summaries highlighting recent key activity.



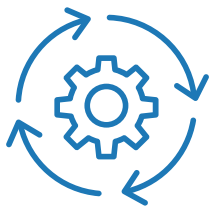
The Commission recently approved a request to activate latent powers for the Three Arch Bay Community Services District (Three Arch Bay CSD). The District currently provides stormwater management and security services to the community. Historically, within the Three Arch Bay community, park and recreation services, including beach and park maintenance, lifeguard services, and other recreational activities, have been provided through the Three Arch Bay Homeowners Association. As outlined in the Community Service District's Principal Act, community service districts may provide park and recreation services. As service needs have grown and long-term costs have become a concern, the District submitted an application to OC LAFCO requesting to activate its latent powers to provide park and recreation services, including: upgrades to turf areas, planter beds, hardscape areas, sports courts, the recreation building, cleaning beaches and beach amenities, as well as maintenance of these areas. Lastly, the District would provide lifeguard services. The Commission's approval of the activation of the latent powers allows the proposal to move forward in the process. This action is expected to enhance the efficient delivery of park and recreation services to the residents within the Three Arch Bay CSD.



Building on the efforts of processing applications, the Commission will also consider the proposed annexation of two small areas associated with the Gateway Development located within the City of Irvine. The proposed annexation totals approximately 1.97 acres of unincorporated territory. The annexation realigns two small "notch" areas within the Gateway Development project site to establish a more logical jurisdictional boundary for the City of Irvine and support the efficient delivery of municipal services. Upon annexation, services such as public safety, public works, and parks and recreation would be provided by the City of Irvine, while water and wastewater services would be provided by the Irvine Ranch Water District upon development of the project site.



In addition to project-specific proposals, OC LAFCO is continuing its Municipal Service Review (MSR) efforts. An MSR is a comprehensive evaluation of how services are delivered across jurisdictions. Work is underway on the North MSR Region, which includes the cities of Brea, Fullerton, La Habra, Placentia, and Yorba Linda, as well as the Placentia Library District and the Yorba Linda Water District. The MSR is nearing completion and is expected to be presented to the Commission at a public hearing in early summer.



As the North MSR is nearing its completion, OC LAFCO has initiated the Coastal MSR Region, which includes the cities of Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, and Seal Beach, as well as the Costa Mesa Sanitary District, Irvine Ranch Water District, Mesa Water District, Rossmoor Community Services District, Rossmoor/Los Alamitos Sewer District, Sunset Beach Sewer District, Surfside Colony Community Services District, and Surfside Colony Stormwater Protection District. MSRs are a key planning tool used by LAFCOs to assess service delivery, identify opportunities for coordination, and support long-range planning of services. Through the MSR effort, OC LAFCO ensures that boundary and organizational decisions are responsive to community needs. The reviews include data analysis, coordination with affected agencies, and development of recommendations for Commission consideration.



Concurrently with the ongoing projects, staff have continued to enhance communication by meeting with stakeholders involved in multiple projects and MSRs. Additionally, staff participate in multiple stakeholder groups, including: Alliance of Local Agency Formation Commissions, Center for Demographics, Independent Special Districts of Orange County, Orange County City Managers Association, Orange County Council of Governments, and Orange County Business Council.

Legislative Corner



During FY 2025-26, OC LAFCO has been actively engaged in legislative and legal efforts of interest to LAFCOs. Staff reviewed key bills and provided recommendations to guide Commission action, while also participating in an effort focused on small water and wastewater systems with documented health and safety threats, and a statewide amicus brief effort that addresses issues with potential implications for LAFCOs.

This year marked an important step forward in regional collaboration. OC LAFCO joined the Alliance of California Local Agency Formation Commissions (Alliance), a partnership among Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and San Diego LAFCOs. The Alliance serves as a unifying platform to foster efficient, sustainable, and transparent local governance through legislative advocacy and education. As part of this effort, the Alliance formed a Legislative Committee, which meets regularly to review and monitor legislation of shared interest. This collaboration enables coordinated action among LAFCOs and offers deeper insight into statewide legislative priorities.

In addition to these efforts, OC LAFCO staff participated in a stakeholder group focused on potential amendments to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (CKH Act) regarding small water and wastewater systems. The proposed amendments aimed to strengthen LAFCO's authority in supporting efficient and reliable service delivery, particularly in communities facing public health and safety challenges tied to water and wastewater services, while also improving coordination between state and local regulators. OC LAFCO staff remained engaged in these discussions and provided updates to the Commission. Ultimately, the stakeholder group decided to pause the effort due to a lack of support and feedback from stakeholder groups. If the effort resumes in the future, OC LAFCO will reengage in the discussions.



OC LAFCO has also actively participated in a statewide legal policy effort through an amicus brief related to the case of Monterey Peninsula Water Management District v. Monterey LAFCO. The case arose from Monterey LAFCO's denial of the District's request to activate latent powers to provide retail water service in part of Monterey County. While the trial court ruled in favor of the District, Monterey LAFCO appealed the decision, asserting that the court applied a 'rational connection' standard rather than the substantial evidence standard defined by the CKH Act. As part of this effort, OC LAFCO joined other LAFCOs as a party to an amicus brief, which will be submitted on July 10, 2026. The amicus brief will highlight the CKH Act's substantial evidence standard and emphasize that a ruling in the District's favor would be inconsistent. By participating in the amicus brief, OC LAFCO reinforces the importance of consistent standards across LAFCOs and contributes to discussions that shape local governance statewide.

Looking ahead, OC LAFCO will continue to actively monitor legislative developments, participate in statewide policy efforts, and build on local and regional partnerships to remain proactive, engaged, and connected to the issues shaping local governance.

Alliance of LAFCOs Workshop

The Alliance of LAFCOs convened its inaugural workshop on March 24, 2026, bringing together Commissioners and staff from four southern region LAFCOs to discuss its structure, priorities, and future direction. Read on for highlights of the workshop.



The Alliance of LAFCOs, comprised of the Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and San Diego LAFCOs, held its inaugural Workshop on March 24, 2026 at the Duck Club in the City of Irvine, a facility owned and operated by Irvine Ranch Water District. The workshop brought staff and Commissioners from the four LAFCOs together to exchange ideas and further define the future direction of the Alliance.

Guided by its mission to promote efficient, sustainable, and transparent local governance through legislative advocacy and education, the Alliance used the workshop as an opportunity to reflect on its role and consider how the group will operate moving forward. Discussions focused on clarifying the Alliance's structure and purpose, strengthening coordination among the four LAFCOs, and identifying where the Alliance can be most effective. The discussion was facilitated by Stephen Lucas, a longtime LAFCO professional and former Executive Officer of Butte County, whose experience helped guide a thoughtful and productive conversation. Keynote Speaker Bill Pellman, a Partner at Nossaman LLP and previously a longtime legal advisor to Los Angeles LAFCO, shared insights into the broader legislative and legal landscape affecting LAFCOs.

A central focus of the Workshop was the Alliance's legislative efforts. Staff and Commissioners emphasized the importance of taking a more proactive approach, identifying opportunities to shape legislation and advocate for policies that support LAFCOs at both the regional and statewide levels. The Alliance has already taken steps in this direction by securing a consultant to assist with tracking legislation of interest to LAFCOs, and there was strong agreement among participants that legislative engagement should remain a primary focus moving forward. Concurrently, participants acknowledged the continued importance of education and information sharing. While legislative advocacy will be a key priority, providing opportunities for staff collaboration and professional development remains an important component of the Alliance's mission. In support of this goal, the Alliance committed to continuing to plan an annual staff workshop to provide a space for staff to connect, share best practices, learn from one another, and engage with guest speakers.



The four LAFCOs reaffirmed their commitment to the Alliance, including continued collaboration for the next two years. With a renewed focus on proactive legislation, member education, and ongoing collaboration, the Alliance is ready to advance shared priorities and make a meaningful impact across the region.



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Legal Alert: New Digital Accessibility Requirements in 2026



Scott Smith

On April 24, 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) published a final rule that updated Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These regulations require all services, programs, and activities of state or local governments to be accessible to people with disabilities including public sector websites, online systems, and digital resources. As part of the final rule, the DOJ adopted Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA and incorporated them by reference into Title II. Beginning in 2026, public agencies must “comply with both Level A and Level AA success criteria and conformance requirements specified in WCAG 2.1.” (28 CFR § 35.200(b).) This is the first time that the DOJ has ever adopted a technical standard for digital content.

Compliance Deadlines

- April 24, 2026: Public entities with a total population of 50,000 or more (except special districts).
- April 26, 2027: Public entities with a total population of less than 50,000, and all special districts regardless of size.

WCAG’s Key Requirements

WCAG 2.1 Level AA is a set of technical standards to ensure a public agency’s website meets the minimum criteria for accessibility. Public agencies will still be subject to requests for reasonable accommodations. WCAG 2.1 Level AA includes testable criteria for web access, including contrast, headings, links, images, forms, and all types of multimedia. The guidelines are organized under four principles that digital content must be Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust, also referred to as the “POUR” model.

The requirements of WCAG 2.1 Level AA include, but are not limited to:

1. Perceivable

- Alternative text (alt-text) for images: Any informational image must also provide meaningful alt-text. For example, a county parks webpage that uses map icons must provide alt-text such as “icon depicting a shaded tree overlooking a picnic table.”
- High contrast: Text and interactive controls must contrast sufficiently with backgrounds so users with low vision can read them. Text and images of text must have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5 to 1.
- Captions/transcripts: Video content and time-based media must include captions.

2. Operable:

- Keyboard navigation: All functionality of the site or app, including forms and navigation, must be accessible by using a keyboard alone.
- Focus indicators: Each item receiving focus must have a visible indicator to specify where on the screen the user is navigating.

3. Understandable

- Navigation links should be identical and predictable across several different web pages.
- The body of the page should be formatted differently from headers, and should be identified using the “lang” attribute (<html lang=“en”>).
- If an input error is detected on a form page, suggestions should be provided for fixing the input in a timely and accessible manner. Submissions should also be fixable when an error is detected.

4. Robust

- Content should be compatible with a wide range of user agents, including assistive technology like screen readers, speech-output software, Braille displays, etc.
- Semantic HTML: Use proper structural elements (e.g., <header>, <nav>, <main>, <footer>) so assistive devices can interpret the page.

WCAG’s Key Requirements

Confidential documents; individualized, password-protected documents, such as an individual’s municipal water bill; and third-party content; pre-existing documents; archived content. The following are exempt from WCAG 2.1 Level AA: social media posts created before the compliance date.

SCOTT C. SMITH of Best Best & Krieger LLP, General Counsel Orange County LAFCO



City of
Aliso Viejo

Getting Acquainted with the Executive Officer



Luis Tapia,
Executive Officer

I've had the pleasure of serving on the OC LAFCO team for over a decade, including as Executive Officer since October of 2025. In this role, I look forward to guiding staff efforts and supporting the Commission by implementing the Board's policies and its mission: "Serving Orange County cities, special districts, and the county to ensure effective and efficient delivery of municipal services."

As Executive Officer, I will lead by balancing technical expertise, policy insights, and coordination among multiple stakeholders. I am committed to ensuring that proposals brought before the Commission are thoroughly evaluated, supported by clear analysis, and grounded in an understanding of their impacts on the communities in the County, all with the goal of ensuring effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

During my tenure with OC LAFCO, we have processed a broad spectrum of initiatives, including multiple reorganizations (e.g., annexations, detachments, and transitions of water and sewer systems) involving cities and special districts, annexations of unincorporated islands, municipal services reviews, special studies, collaborative efforts with stakeholders focused on boundary changes, activation of latent powers, and legislative advocacy for LAFCOs. These efforts will continue in the coming fiscal years through close collaboration with the County, cities, and special districts.

Looking ahead, I see continued opportunities for OC LAFCO to expand its impact to ensure the delivery of efficient and effective municipal services and serve as a valuable resource for public agencies and the public.