

**MINUTES  
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY  
HELD FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2023**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, August 4, 2023 in the Board Room of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority*, 541 “H” Street, City of Los Banos, County of Merced, State of California.

The following persons were present:

**REPRESENTATIVES:**

**Central California Irrigation District (CCID):** Eric Fontana, Director; Jarrett Martin, Manager

**San Luis Water District (SLCC):** James Nickel, Director; John Wiersma, Manager (arrived 8:10 a.m.)

**Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD):** Mike Stearns, Vice-Chair (via teleconference); Jeff Bryant, Manager

**Columbia Canal Company (CCC):** Chris Cardella, Chair

**STAFF MEMBERS:**

Chris White, Executive Director; Steve Chedester, Director of Policy and Programs; Joann White, Director of Finance and Administration; and Adam Hoffman, Water Resources Specialist

**PRESENT:**

Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; and David Cory, Consultant

The following participated via Conference Call:

Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency; Don Wright, Journalist; Lauren Layne, Baker, Manock & Jensen; Breanne Vandenberg, Merced County Farm Bureau

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Chris Cardella opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. and asked Manager Martin to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**REVIEW OF AGENDA:**

The Executive Director explained that there is an immediate need to take action on a matter that arose following the posting of the agenda. He requested to add Agenda item 12 C) Selection of Federal Government Relations & Legislative Advocacy Firm. A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Director Nickel to add Agenda item 12 C) Selection of Federal Government Relations & Legislative Advocacy Firm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. White next reported that Agenda item #10B needed to be moved following Closed Session.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The unapproved minutes from the July 12, 2023 Regular Board meeting were presented.

Director Nickel made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Fontana, and unanimously carried.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Introductions were requested from those participating via teleconference. No public comments were provided following introductions.

**BOARD TO APPROVE THE JULY 2023 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Joann White presented and reviewed the July 2023 Expenditure List and Financial Report.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Director Nickel to approve the Expenditure List and Financial Report as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

**WATER REPORT:**

Water Resources Specialist, Adam Hoffman began his report by referring to the data and plots he had prepared of flood flow releases down the San Joaquin River, Chowchilla Bypass, Kings River, and at Mendota Dam. He next outlined the following data: Exchange Contractors' total demands: 2,679 c.f.s., of that, 2,069 c.f.s. from the Mendota Pool and 610 c.f.s. from the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC). Releases from Friant Dam into the San Joaquin River was 384 c.f.s., with 298 c.f.s. at Gravelly Ford, 254 c.f.s. entering the Mendota Pool and 140 c.f.s. going past Sack Dam, noting that 125 c.f.s. to 140 c.f.s. is currently the San Joaquin River Restoration Program's (SJRRP) target flow.

The current reservoir storage was then summarized as follows: Shasta – 3,876,150 acre-feet (AF); San Luis Reservoir (SLR) – 1,851,939 AF, with the Federal share at 891,970 AF, and the State project water at 959,9697 AF. He reported that Millerton's current storage is 500,544 AF and the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam is 22,402 AF. The Upper San Joaquin Basin combined storage is 574,296 AF, which is about 126% of average, and the accumulated full natural flow into Shasta Lake is 102% of average.

He concluded his report by reporting on the Delta Operation's data as follows: 23,917 c.f.s. of inflows, with exports at 11,137 c.f.s. The outflow index is 8,580 c.f.s.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

The Executive Director provided a quick review of the month's activities which included CVP-wide planning issues, administrating water transfer program and water operations.

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:**

Steve Chedester said that they have approved the 90% design process of the Mendota Pool Fish Screen and Control Structure and are holding technical discussions today to coordinate the process in moving forward. He then reported that CCID received an extension of their Financial Assistance Agreement (FAA) through December 2025, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) have forwarded documents for the Poso Canal Bridge Crossing which is needed for the construction of the Sack Dam fish screen and the operations building for the Sack Dam Complex. Concluding his report, Mr. Chedester reported that SLCC has ordered five Rubicon gates for installation at Sack Dam this fall/winter timeframe.

**WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:**

The Director of Policy and Programs provided an update on the following WRP projects:

- *Orestimba Creek* – Construction started in the first week in July and they have completed 90% of the earth work.
- *Los Banos Creek Project* – The release of the public draft of the NEPA/CEQA should be out this month, and the Geotechnical work was completed this week.

**BAY-DELTA WATER QUALITY AND REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD (RWOCB) REPORT:**

Consultant, David Cory provided a review of his report relating to current activities involving Groundwater Protection Formulas, Values, and Targets; Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, and Nitrate Control Program.

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT:**

**State:** The Executive Director referred to the report provided in the Board packet and provided a few highlights of recent activities pertaining to proposed water rights legislation.

**Federal:** Mr. White then briefly reviewed the report provided by Nancy Williams regarding Federal legislation and activities.

**Selection of Federal Government Relations & Legislative Advocacy Firm:** The Executive Director circulated copies of information that was developed during this process. He then said that a recommendation has been made by the Ad Hoc Committee to approve a contract with the firm Invariant, adding that this will cause an increase to the annual budget of approximately \$95,000 after adjusting other estimated expenses that would no longer be needed. For the year 2023, it would amount to an estimated increase of \$47,500.

After some discussion, a motion was made by Director Nickel and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the Committee’s recommendation to hire the firm Invariant as the new federal government relations and legislative advocacy firm. The motion was unanimously carried.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:**

The Executive Director stated that there is a report from Lighthouse Public Affairs included in the Board packet for their review, and that Andy Lynch, an associate of the firm, will be attending the October Board meeting to provide a quarterly update.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT:**

Attorney Andrew McClure reported that the case filed by California Sportfishing Protection Agency (CSPA) to challenge the First Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plans has been set for court proceedings in October. He also provided an update on the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigations and will discuss this matter further in Closed Session.

**FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:**

**Firebaugh Canal Water District:** Manager Bryant said that FCWD experienced a normal July, and commended CCID for working through the issues at the Mendota Pool due to continuous adjustments to flood flow operations. To conclude, Mr. Bryant said that FCWD Board elections will be held this Fall.

**San Luis Canal Company:** Manager Wiersma reported an average month for water deliveries in July, working on standard operations relative to aquatics and continue preparing for scheduled capital projects.

**Central California Irrigation District:** Manager Martin said CCID also had an average month in July for water deliveries; continue dealing with aquatic weeds; preparing for fall operations and Mendota Dam dewatering. Mr. Martin then offered site visits for those interested in seeing the Orestimba Creek Recharge Project with the work in progress.

**Columbia Canal Company:** Chair Cardella reported that water usage in July followed the same pattern as last year, but they should be cutting back shortly as harvest will begin soon. They will be working on maintaining some lining projects this winter.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

The Executive Director stated that the annual California Agriculture Leadership Foundation water tour is scheduled for August 16 – 18 and thanked the Board for their support of the event.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

Chair Cardella asked if there was any public input and hearing none, adjourned the meeting to Closed Session and called for a short recess at 8:38 a.m. The meeting was reconvened to Closed Session at 8:46 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 9:30 a.m.

**OPEN SESSION:**

**WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE**

**Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir Project Update and Remainder of 2023 Funding Request:**

After reviewing the actions taken by each of the Member Entity boards on this matter, it was determined that a Special Board meeting be scheduled for Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

---

CHRIS CARDELLA, CHAIR

Attest a true record of proceedings had  
And taken at the foregoing meeting, our  
Presence thereat and our consent thereto.

---

CHRIS WHITE, SECRETARY

---

ERIC FONTANA, DIRECTOR

---

JAMES L. NICKEL, DIRECTOR

---

JEFF BRYANT, ALTERNATE DIRECTOR