

**MINUTES  
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY  
HELD FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2023**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, September 1, 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, General Manager

**San Luis Water District (SLCC):** James Nickel, Director; John Wiersma, General Manager

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

**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; Audrey Goddard, WestWater Research LLC; and Shane Swartz, Lower San Joaquin Levee District

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Chris Cardella opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

**REVIEW OF AGENDA:**

There were no proposed changes to the Agenda.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The unapproved minutes from the August 4, 2023 Regular Board meeting were presented. The Executive Director then explained that as a result of an oversight, the August 7, 2023 Special Board meeting minutes had been excluded from the Agenda. He further explained that a copy was included in the supplemental packet for the Board's information and would be added to next month's agenda for approval. A motion was made by Director Fontana to approve the August 4, 2023 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Nickel and unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Introductions were requested from those participating via teleconference. Don Wright announced that he will be holding his annual event on September 30<sup>th</sup> which will consist of a fundraiser for California Women for Agriculture and encouraged all to attend.

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

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

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

**WATER REPORT:**

Water Resources Specialist Adam Hoffman reported on the current demands, noting that refuge deliveries will start picking up. He then said that releases at Friant were 388 cubic feet per second (388 cfs) and provided the amount of flows at various sites down to Sack Dam. Next summarized was the current reservoir storage: Shasta – 3,549,442 acre-feet (AF); San Luis Reservoir (SLR) – 1,777,727 AF, with the Federal share at 790,571 AF, and the State project water at 987,1567 AF. He reported that Millerton's current storage is 340,890 AF and the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam is 22,059 AF. The Upper San Joaquin Basin combined storage is 577,913 AF, which is about 149% 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 brief summary of activities throughout the month which consisted of discussions with the newly retained Federal lobbyist, adding that he will have the State and Federal lobbyists and the communications consultant provide a presentation at the October Board meeting. He added that a trip to Washington DC has been scheduled for the end of September with Board members and managers. Other issues addressed this month involved meeting with San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA) and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to continue discussions on renewal of the water transfer agreement that terminates at the end of this year.

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:**

Steve Chedester said that there has not been much of a change to the progress of the Mendota Pool Fish Screen and Control Structure project commenting that there have been staff changes at the Technical Service Center (TSC) in Denver causing some delays. Regarding the Sack Dam complex project, Reclamation is reporting to have 60% design available in September and 90% design by the end of the year. Mr. Chedester then provided an overview of the Poso Canal Bridge Crossing which is needed for the construction of the fish screen and the operations building for the facilities.

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

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

- *Orestimba Creek* – All of the required documents were received this week and construction of the recharge basin is about 95% complete. Work on the pump station, pipeline from recharge basins to the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC) and pipeline under Stuhr Road has started.
- *Los Banos Creek Project* – Consulting meetings with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been initiated.

The Executive Director stated that the Program team has begun fieldwork for Phase 2 geotechnical investigations at the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir (DPCR) project site. They have commissioned a road design consultant for the new road alignment which will be included in the CEQA and NEPA documentation.

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

Consultant David Cory provided a brief summary of the report included in the packet regarding Nitrate Control Program.

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT:**

**State:** The Executive Director referred to the report in the Board packet and provided a few highlights.

**Federal:** Referencing to the new Federal lobbyist report, Mr. White reviewed the current funding challenges and potential Government shutdown if a budget or Continuing Resolution (CR) is not passed by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:**

The report from Lighthouse Public Affairs was in the Board packet for a monthly review of activities.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT:**

Attorney Andrew McClure first reported on the DPCR lawsuits, noting that as a result of Sierra Club Petitioners' response to the settlement proposal, settlement discussions have terminated. He then said that the Friant Petitioners filed their Appeal and opening brief, response due by end of September.

Next reported, Legal Counsel said that he has been developing a cost share agreement regarding DPCR project costs and will be circulating to the Board for their review. The document will ultimately be signed by each of the entities, in addition to the Exchange Contractors, and said the purpose is not to revise the Joint Powers Authority nor revise unanimity affecting water rights. The agreement would contain: formation of a Standing Committee; indemnity for non-participating members; no benefits or rights of project for non-participating members; a provision for withdrawal from project; and a provision for adding members. It was said that they would use this agreement as a template for other Water Resources Projects. Director Nickel questioned why the agreement couldn't include all the projects. Legal Counsel agreed that that could be an option and would look into it further. Closing his remarks, Mr. McClure said that he had one item to discuss in Closed Session.

**FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:**

**Central California Irrigation District:** Manager Martin said CCID had a typical August for water operations; still spending a lot of time on aquatic weeds; and preparing for winter maintenance.

**San Luis Canal Company:** Director Nickel said that they are working on a long list of capital projects; and kicking off high water tables water management environmental document for a long-term source control project in response to a study completed by Dr. Charles Burt.

**Firebaugh Canal Water District:** Manager Bryant said that FCWD also had a normal August water supply and will begin preparing for winter projects and solar projects. He also reported on the damages claim filed with FEMA as a result of the Silver Creek flood flows.

**Columbia Canal Company:** Chair Cardella reported that CCC had a normal August; almond harvest has begun, and water usage has cut back. They too will be preparing for winter projects and began getting materials lined up for the projects.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

The Executive Director referred to a joint letter from the Exchange Contractors, Friant Water Authority and SLDMWA included in the supplemental packet and provided some highlights.

Next, he provided a list of activities occurring during the next couple of months consisting of the CAST Event at O'Neill Forebay on September 23<sup>rd</sup>; trip to Washington DC the last week of September; ACWA Regions 6 & Tour and Water Forum workshops on October 12 and 13; and the ACWA Fall Conference November 28 – 30.

**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 9:59 a.m. The meeting was reconvened to Closed Session at 10:06 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 11:06 a.m. and reported that direction was provided to Legal Counsel and staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

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CHRIS CARDELLA, CHAIR

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

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CHRIS WHITE, SECRETARY

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ERIC FONTANA, DIRECTOR

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JAMES L. NICKEL, DIRECTOR

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MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR