

**MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY
HELD FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2024**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, April 5, 2024 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): Michael Palazzo, Alternate Director

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

Kimberly Brown, CCC Director and David Cory, Consultant

The following participated via Conference Call:

Andrew McClure, Minasian Law (departed 9:51 a.m.); Joe Mastro, Cuttone & Mastro CPA (10:05 – 10:16 a.m.); Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency, Inc.; Don Wright, Journalist; Thomas Berliner, Duane Morris (departed 10:05 a.m.); Cannon Michael, SLCC Director (9:45 a.m. – 10:05 a.m.)

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Chris Cardella called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m.

REVIEW OF AGENDA:

The Executive Director reported that to accommodate Legal Counsel’s schedule, Closed Session will be moved up following Agenda item #3.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The unapproved minutes from the March 1, 2024 Regular Board and the March 14, 2024 Special Board meetings were presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Alternate Director Palazzo and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Introductions were provided by those present in person and participating by phone.

CLOSED SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session at 9:24 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:05 a.m. and announced that direction was given to staff and legal counsel.

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023 AND 2022:

Joe Mastro of Cuttone & Mastro provided a page-by-page summary of the Exchange Contractors' Financial Statements for the years ended December 31, 2023 and 2022.

Following the presentation, a motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the Financial Statements and Supplemental Data as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

BOARD TO APPROVE THE MARCH 2024 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Joann White provided a summary of the March 2024 Expenditure List and Financial Report.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Alternate Director Palazzo to approve the Expenditure List and Financial Report as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

WATER REPORT:

The Water Resources Specialist reported on the updated Central Valley Project (CVP) water allocation announcement by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) from 15% to 35%, adding that Friant Water Authority's allocation for Class I water has been increased to 95% on April 1st. He then said Jones Pumping Plant is only at a one pump operation and there is a potential that they will remain at one pump through May. Following the update, Mr. Hoffman referred to the current storage numbers included in his report. He next referred to the 14-day

precipitation outlook and said that snowpack is looking positive, leaving the remainder of his report for informational purposes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

Executive Director White reviewed several activities throughout the month which included review of agreements surrounding Voluntary Agreement (VA), announcing that there will be a State Water Resources Control Board workshop held on April 24 through 26 regarding this matter. He then reported that the final draft of the South of the Delta Drought Plan Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all parties, and development of the pilot program will be initiated. Next, Mr. White said that the Biological Opinion public draft environmental coverage is due out this summer; comments have been submitted on the cooperating agency draft.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

In Steve Chedester’s absence, the Executive Director referred to the Director of Policy & Programs’ report included in the Board packet.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

Mr. White again referred to the Director of Policy & Programs’ report in the Board packet for updated information.

Manager Martin reported that they received notice of funds being awarded from Reclamation for the Orestimba Creek project of \$1.3M. He then stated that in March, they tested the project, and the recharge rates were good with encouraging results. Next step is to begin work on the pump station.

Regarding the Los Banos Creek Project, Mr. Martin said that Congressman John Duarte had been out to the site on March 25th and presented the award of \$5M for the project from the Community Fund he had sponsored on behalf of the partners. These funds will be split with San Luis Water District. The Los Banos Creek Storage Project has been making good progress on the environmental process with the likelihood of starting ground work by the end of 2024 or first part of 2025.

The Executive Director then provided an update on the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir Project regarding the road alignment discussions with the County of Stanislaus, adding that they should have one option narrowed down within the next week. Once this is determined, an amendment to the Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) will be made to that section with the conclusions.

WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM:

The Executive Director recapped information included in the Board packet relative to agenda items 11 A) and B). He reported that the Water Transfer Committee met on April 3rd and recommended approval as follows: CCID’s Landowner to Self transfer on behalf of Redfern Ranches of up to 2,604 Acre Feet (AF); CCID Groundwater Exchange Transfer to Westlands Water District of up to 1,500 AF; FCWD 2024-01 Conserved Water Transfer to San Luis Water District of up to 1,500 AF; FCWD 2024-02 Conserved Water Transfer to Panoche Water District of up to 1,500 AF; FCWD 2024-03 Conserved Water Transfer to Westlands Water District of up to 4,500 AF; FCWD 2024-04 Conserved Water Transfer to Pacheco Water District of up to 500 AF; FCWD 2024-05 Landowner to Self transfer on behalf of Turlock Fruit Co. of up to 690 AF contingent on receipt of landowner verification; and FCWD Groundwater Exchange Transfer program contingent on completion of environmental coverage.

Following the report, a motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Alternate Director Palazzo to approve the Water Transfer Committee’s recommendation as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-02 – RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTION OF JAMES L. NICKEL:

Upon presentation of Resolution No. 2024-02, the Executive Director said that Jim Nickel retired from the San Luis Canal Company’s Board of Directors in March and acknowledged the well-deserved recognition he received at the SLCC Annual Shareholder Meeting. Alternate Director Palazzo added that a Nickel family member has been on the SLCC board for over 80 years.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve Resolution No. 2024-02 recognizing the contributions of James L. Nickel. The motion was unanimously approved.

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

Consultant, David Cory reported that CV Salts is in the early stages of implementing Phase I of the Salt Control Program. He encouraged actively participating early in this process and anticipates the development of the Prioritization and Optimization Study (P&O Study) to be completed by the end of the year. He is coordinating a meeting with the various local district managers to provide an overview of what they will be looking at in the operational impacts or how to eliminate any impacts and put together a plan for moving forward. The goal is to get engaged early to have an opportunity to add input and determine what is currently being done to fit into the program. On another subject, Mr. Cory said that Arthur G. Baggett, Jr. had recently been appointed by the governor to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

The Executive Director referred to the report provided by Dominic DiMare, noting a Legislative Committee meeting has been scheduled for April 17th with Mr. DiMare to provide an outline of this year’s proposed State legislation. This will be an opportunity to review all potential legislation that may be affecting the Exchange Contractors and determine if the Exchange Contractors should support or oppose any of the proposed bills.

Mr. White moved onto Invariant’s report stating that the Exchange Contractors are working closely with them in submitting requests for FY 2025 Appropriations funding for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir Project.

Referring to a copy of a letter included in the Board packet to Congressman John Duarte, the Executive Director stated that Grassland Water District had reached out for a letter of support to obtain funding for one of their groundwater projects. He then provided some background information for the project.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Reference was made to the updated report from Lighthouse Public Affairs included in the meeting packet.

ATTORNEY’S REPORT:

There was no attorney’s report provided.

FOUR ENTITIES’ MANAGER REPORTS:

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin reported that last month’s water operations were as anticipated; expecting increase in deliveries with the upcoming weather changes. They are getting an early start on their aquatic weed maintenance.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma was not in attendance to provide a report.

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Bryant also said FCWD’s water deliveries were as estimated, and they are currently testing a new application on invasive weeds in the lower section of their canal with favorable results thus far. Solar project continues to move forward.

Columbia Canal Company: In Manager Gardner’s absence, Chair Cardella said that Manager Bryant is assisting them with the aquatic program moving forward.

INFORMATIONAL:

Executive Director White acknowledged both CCID and SLCC for their successful annual meetings they each had for their landowners/shareholders. He then highlighted some upcoming events through May.

No further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 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

MICHAEL PALAZZO, ALTERNATE DIRECTOR

MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR