

**MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY
HELD FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, May 3, 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; John Wiersma, General Manager
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

The following participated via Conference Call:

Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Brian Grant, SLCC Director; David Cory, Consultant; Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; and Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency, Inc.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Cardella called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and asked Manager Martin to lead the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

REVIEW OF AGENDA:

There were no proposed changes to the Agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The unapproved minutes from the April 5, 2024 Regular Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Fontana and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Introductions were provided by those participating by phone.

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

Joann White provided a summary of the April 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 that the entities' demands are back on track for this time of the year. He next commented on the pulse releases on the San Joaquin River with an increase of up to 500 cubic feet per second (cfs) following execution of a seepage agreement. Due to the changes, both the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) were out on May 2nd to take measurements. In response to a comment, Manager Wiersma confirmed that the gates were working as projected. They will start reducing the flows by 50 cfs per day with a target flow of 90 cfs. by May 20th which will remain through the summer.

Mr. Hoffman then reported on pulse flows starting at Shasta on Monday of 13,000 cfs. This will be the second pulse flow this year. Shasta's current storage is at 96% of maximum. He then reviewed the San Luis Reservoir with federal side at 882,000 today. It has been determined that the federal contractors are currently paying back the state side as a result of exchanges completed in 2023 with approximately 180,000 acre feet (AF) owed. Their obligation is estimated to be fulfilled in June. Regarding Millerton storage, operators are saying that there is a potential that Friant Dam will spill as an outcome of the upcoming rain forecast this weekend. They have increased uncontrolled releases through May 28th to try and reduce additional spills.

Moving onto operations at the Jones Pumping Plant, Mr. Hoffman reported that they had increased to two pumps but down to one unit today. As a result of regulations contained in the Interim Operation's Plan (IOP) they will remain at one pump until about mid-May. After that time, they should be able to increase to two or three units. Mr. Hoffman concluded by stating that the rest of his report was for informational purposes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

Executive Director White began his report by outlining the budget issues with the San Joaquin River Restoration Program. The Exchange Contractors continue to work with Reclamation in support of seeking funding to finish the projects needed. He then recapped the Voluntary Agreement workshops held by the State Water Resources Control Board the prior week. After reviewing some of the documents, he has requested an additional enforcement document and will have a package to present to the Board at the June meeting.

Next, Manager Martin provided an update on the development of the single Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), noting that they have come to closure on the man management strategy -- one of the major milestones they have been working on. The work continues on other requirements, but they are on track for July – August timeframe to adopt the draft GSP, which will require a public hearing held by the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Manager Wiersma added that they have decided as a sub-basin to publish the various sections of the GSP for public review upon completion in order to allow more time for review. The links to the chapters are available on the Delta Mendota SGMA website. Concluding this topic, it was noted that Chairman Esquivel of the SWRCB had been out to the area for a tour of the sub-basin, adding that they have had four of the five board members out for a site visit.

The Executive Director continued his report by providing the updated progress of the road alignment at the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir site with a recommendation of the final alternative be presented to Stanislaus County for their consideration by the end of May.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

Steve Chedester reported on the work being conducted by Jacobs Engineering in coordination with Reclamation to improve flow balance and measurements in the Mendota Pool Control Structure as a result of the revised flume design. They are currently considering moving gates downstream.

Manager Martin provided an update on the Poso Canal Bridge Crossing. He said CCID received one bid for \$900,000, and because the approved estimated funding for the project was \$400,000, CCID is now developing a modified design which will be completed by the end of the month.

The Director of Policy & Programs also provided an outline of the presentations heard during the SWRCB workshop held on Voluntary Agreements.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

Mr. Chedester provided highlights on the work completed at both the Los Banos Creek and the Orestimba Creek projects.

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

Consultant, David Cory reported on the meeting held with local water district managers to discuss the upcoming CV Salts anticipated process which includes selecting the initial archetype area which will be used in setting surface water and groundwater salinity targets. Mr. Cory then reminded the Board of the July 1, 2024 timeline set by the Regional Board on the Groundwater Protection (GWP) Targets to be incorporated into individual coalition’s Groundwater Quality Management Plans. The coalitions are working to update their plans to incorporate the GSP Targets. Another condition approved by the Regional Board was development of a work plan by the coalitions to evaluate model uncertainties and describe future model validation efforts. The mandated work plan was submitted to the Regional Board on April 1, 2024. If approved, the results of the work plan tasks will inform the next review and update of GWP Targets due on June 30, 2028.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

Legislative Committee Report: Steve Chedester reported on the Legislative Committee meeting held on April 17th. At that time, Dominic DiMare of Arc Strategies provided the Committee with a list of bills for the Exchange Contractors to take a position. As an outcome, Mr. Chedester provided the recommendations made by the Committee: AB 2552 – Oppose; AB 2614 – Watch Closely; AB 2079 – Oppose; SB 1390 – Support if amended; AB 2060 – Support; and AB 2661 – Watch.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the recommendations as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

State: The report was reviewed during previous discussions.

Federal: Chris White referred to the report included in the Board packet. He then said that two trips are being planned to Washington, DC. The first one will be the week of May 20th for the signing of the Drought Plan with Director Fontana and Managers Martin and Wiersma attending as well. The second trip is scheduled mid-June with San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority to jointly support each other’s projects. There will be various side meetings scheduled as well.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

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

ATTORNEY’S REPORT:

Attorney Andrew McClure stated that not much has changed since the previous month’s report regarding litigation other than an opposition brief will be filed in the Sierra Club CEQA matter

within the next seven days. Legal Counsel then reviewed the recent action taken by the SWRCB assigning a probationary designation to the Tulare Lake Sustainability Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) subbasin. A list of initial impacts of the probationary designation was provided that included reporting and fees/expenses. Mr. McClure next informed the Board that comments were submitted by the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors GSA to the McMullin Area GSA Groundwater Bank Proposal Draft Initial Study/Mitigated demanding a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be prepared.

FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Bryant said water demands are starting to pick up for FCWD and reported on a recent theft of equipment stolen at their solar project site.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma reported that the month of April was below average, but demands are picking up for them as well. He recapped the new slate of officers for the San Luis Canal Company as follows: Cannon Michael, President; Michael Palazzo, Vice-President; William Gilardi, Treasurer/Secretary. The new Board Member is Brian Grant. Mr. Wiersma then stated that after installing the new Rubicon gates, they are considering expanding to different locations throughout the service area. They are currently touring other districts who have them installed to obtain more information on the operation and maintenance of them.

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin reported that last month's water operations were less than average but are starting to see an increase. They were able to apply the first treatment for aquatic weeds.

Columbia Canal Company: Chair Cardella said that water demands are starting to pick up and provided an update on Manager Gardner's progress. He ended his report by stating that with Manager Bryant's assistance, they have been successful in starting up the application program for aquatic weeds.

INFORMATIONAL:

The Executive Director confirmed some upcoming events in May.

CLOSED SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session at 10:13 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:28 a.m. and announced that direction was given to staff and legal counsel.

No further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:28 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