

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

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Wednesday, July 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 (arrived at 9:05 a.m.); Jarrett Martin, General Manager

San Luis Water District (SLCC): Cannon Michael, Director; John Wiersma, General Manager (via teleconference)

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

Columbia Canal Company (CCC): Chris Cardella, Chair; Mike Gardner, General Manager

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; and David Cory, Consultant

The following participated via Conference Call:

Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard and Don Wright, Journalist

CALL TO ORDER:

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

REVIEW OF AGENDA:

There were no changes proposed to the Agenda.

REORGANIZATIONAL MEETING:

Vice-Chair Stearns made a motion to appoint Cannon Michael as Treasurer for the Exchange Contractors. The motion was seconded by Jarrett Martin and unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The unapproved minutes from the June 7, 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 Michael and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Introductions were provided by those participating in person and via teleconference.

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

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

A motion was made by Director Michael and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns 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 increased during the month of June with a total of 128,000 Acre Feet (AF) and provided a comparison to water year 2018 at 130,000 AF in June. There is currently 90 cubic feet per second (cfs) going past Sack Dam and Millerton Lake is dropping between 18' to 20' per day, adding that Millerton had filled mid-June causing it to spill for a couple of days. The San Luis Reservoir declined about 160,000 AF since the last meeting, state side is running low but increased pumping is anticipated within the next couple of months. Jones Pumping Plant ran five pumps most of June but as a result of an explosion at an electrical panel within the Delta Mendota Canal-California Aqueduct Intertie (DCI), it was decreased to three pumps over the last few days, with an unknown duration to repair the issue. Mr. Hoffman said that the current controlling factor for Delta operations is water quality and will be closely monitoring this. He then referred to the remainder of his report for the Board's information, noting the above average temperatures being forecasted during the month of July.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director White stated that receiving the late increase in Central Valley Project (CVP) South of Delta allocation in June is tough for farmers for planning and budgeting purposes. He next provided an update on the various meetings being scheduled regarding the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP), with one meeting to include implementing agencies and a

separate meeting with settling parties. Don Portz, project manager, is committed to getting these scheduled as soon as possible.

A recap of the recent trip partnering with the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA) to Washington DC was provided. The main talking points during the meetings with legislatures and/or their staff were joint projects which were well received. Those participating were representatives from SLDMWA, Westlands Water District, Grassland Water District, Santa Clara Valley Water District and the Exchange Contractors. Mr. White said that Senator Padilla's Chief of Staff also came to the area to tour several project sites, some of the stops consisted of Exchange Contractors' projects including the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir and the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam Project.

The Executive Director next presented timelines for release of documents relating to the Voluntary Settlement Agreement (VA) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Biological Opinion (BiOp). The Exchange Contractors will be coordinating with other agencies to get the analysis completed within the short review time frame provided.

Manager Martin provided an update on the development of the single Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), confirming the comment period is closed, and are currently reviewing the submitted comments. They will be finalizing the plan by the end of the month and will circulate to the Delta-Mendota Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA's) for adoption at their August meetings in order to submit to the SWRCB in September. A copy of the draft GSP can be found on the Delta-Mendota Subbasin website. Mr. Martin additionally reported they continue to meet with SWRCB staff and have received significant support, adding that funding is a big issue for the SWRCB who are now looking at the GSA's for mitigation and/or costs.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

In reviewing his report, Steve Chedester confirmed a workshop has been scheduled with the SJRRP, including representatives from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Technical Service Center (TSC) on July 18th and 19th to work through funding, schedules and constructability issues. Mr. Chedester said that Jacobs Engineering is working with Reclamation on the 90% design of the Mendota Pool Fish Screen and Control Structure. He finished by reviewing information found in his report which included projected timelines for the BiOp and VA.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

The Director of Policy & Programs said most of the construction has been completed at the Orestimba Creek project site, waiting on delivery of the electrical control panel with an estimated time of arrival in late 2024. Remaining items other than the panel is installation of the pumping plant transformer and powerlines and the "punch list." He next reported that the FONSI for the Los Banos Creek project had been signed and was received on June 20th. They have since filed for 401 and 404 permits through the California Department of Fish & Wildlife,

and San Luis Water District (project partner) received Reclamation’s license agreement in late June and plan to adopt it at their July meeting.

Chris White said that they have completed the selection of the preferred new road alignment for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project noting positive feedback from landowners thus far. The project partners met with Stanislaus Council of Governments to seek support for the project, and have been asked to come back to their September meeting for a presentation to the board.

WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM:

The Executive Director reported that the Water Transfer Committee met and recommended approval of CCID’s groundwater exchange transfer proposal to Westlands Water District of up to 960 AF and confirmed that all the requirements have been met under the Water Transfer Policy. He added that the CCID board had approved up to 960 AF based on the data provided, however, acknowledging that the pump needed some major repairs and the landowner would only pump around 600 AF. A motion was made by Director Michael and seconded by Director Fontana to approve CCID’s groundwater exchange transfer proposal as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM:

Executive Director White referred to the various documents in the Board packet that included the program’s planning information, adopted Program and Policy, email communications to be circulated to the surrounding cities’ representatives, webpage content, newspaper article, application, and fund accounting matrix. He added that a committee will be appointed by the Chair to review the applications and make a recommendation to the Board for approval.

After some discussion, Mr. White recommended approval of 2% of revenue from the Water Transfer Program funds as outlined in the matrix presented, which is consistent with the adopted policy. The funds would be set up in a separate interest-bearing account and added to the monthly financial reports. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the recommendation as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

Chair Cardella next appointed the following persons to the Community Infrastructure Program Standing Committee: Chris Cardella, Eric Fontana, Jarrett Martin, John Wiersma, Jeff Bryant, and Mike Gardner.

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

Consultant David Cory said that the expert panel being convened by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) will be a major issue through the end of the year as the findings of the panel will apply to all irrigated lands programs throughout the state. A joint letter was sent from a broad group of Central Valley agricultural water quality coalitions to the SWRCB responding to the expert panel process pointing out that the formation of the panel is too premature, provided

suggested parties to be included on the panel, and pre-suppose questions. This process has been a major concern for all coalitions, and they are beginning to gather data to be ready.

He next reported on that various coalitions have jointly began developing crop specific acceptance ranges for the multi-year applied/removed (A/R) nitrogen ratio targets (A/R Acceptable Ranges) which will be used by the SWRCB to help determine if growers are implementing appropriate nitrogen use efficiency management practices. Growers will be required to meet these crop specific multi-year A/R Acceptable Ranges in addition to comply with township specific Groundwater Protection Targets. This information will be submitted in July.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

State: The Executive Director referred to Arc Strategies report included in the Board packet and provided an outline of the two bonds focusing on education and resources, indicating there are no surface water storage funds available.

Federal: Chris White reported on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) information outlined in Invariant’s report, noting that there is a request for funds under WRDA for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Executive Director White reported that Lighthouse Public Affairs has added a lot of support in development of the communications for the Community Infrastructure Program being implemented.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN:

The Executive Director reported that a new law has required that a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan be in place by July 1, 2024. He said that he met with staff on June 28, 2024 to review the Plan in detail, and is recommending the Board to adopt the Plan as presented.

A motion was made by Director Michael and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

ATTORNEY’S REPORT:

Attorney Andrew McClure reported that there have been no activities regarding litigation since the last report was provided. He then gave a brief review of the actions taken by the SWRCB staff recommendation to designate the Kaweah Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) subbasin as probationary and identified issues to closely monitor during the State Water Board’s process.

Next, Attorney McClure provided a lengthy review of the recent decision by the United States Supreme Court on the case being referred to as the “Chevron Case.”

FOUR ENTITIES’ MANAGER REPORTS:

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Bryant said he has been assisting Chair Cardella and Water Resources Specialist Hoffman on water use for CCC throughout the past month. FCWD is experiencing good results in removal of aquatic weeds but they are beginning to build up hyacinth from the Mendota Pool, and they continue with their solar project.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma said that SLCC delivered 22,500 AF in June, noting demand shifting earlier this year than normal. They are spending a lot of time on aquatics but it’s going well; and they anticipate demands going up in July based on the weather forecast.

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin said water demands are high as everyone is expressing and they are spending a lot of time on hyacinth, as well.

Columbia Canal Company: Chair Cardella said CCC is currently running at 80% and thanked Adam Hoffman for his help in assisting CCC. He then reported that CCC had a blow out on their system last month and repairs were completed within a week by McElvaney but unfortunately had another break following that; planning to do lining replacement this winter as a result. CCC also completed their Workplace Violation Prevention Plan presentation with their staff. The Chair thanked Manager Bryant for his help with the aquatic application program that has been working great.

INFORMATIONAL:

The Executive Director provided information for upcoming events.

Chair Cardella adjourned the meeting to a recess at 10:29 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session at 10:34 a.m.

The Chair returned the meeting to Open Session at 11:13 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 11:13 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

MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR

ERIC FONTANA, DIRECTOR

CANNON MICHAEL, DIRECTOR