

**MINUTES  
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY  
HELD FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 2024**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, August 2, 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 Canal Company (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 (via teleconference)

**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 Jordyn Vannersdel, Water Wise

The following participated via Conference Call:

Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Don Wright, Journalist; and David Cory, Consultant

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Cardella called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**REVIEW OF AGENDA:**

The Executive Director said that a matter had been brought to his attention following posting of the agenda and requested to add agenda item 1.b. Changing the September Board meeting from September 6<sup>th</sup> to September 13<sup>th</sup>. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by

Director Michael to add agenda item 1.b. changing the date of the September Board meeting to Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. The motion was unanimously approved.

**CHANGE SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING:**

Vice-Chair Stearns made a motion to change the September Board meeting from September 6, 2024 to September 13, 2024. The motion was seconded by Director Fontana, and unanimously approved.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The unapproved minutes from the July 3, 2024 Regular Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Director Michael and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

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

**BOARD TO APPROVE THE JULY 2024 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

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

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

**WATER REPORT:**

The Water Resources Specialist reported that the demands in July were average, still tracking close to 2018. Friant releases are at 445 cubic feet per second (cfs), with 90 cfs going past Sack Dam. Friant Water Authority's Class 1 allocation has decreased to 90% due to a lower low point that was projected. Shasta Reservoir's current storage is 3.4M acre feet (AF) and San Luis Reservoir is currently at 873,491 AF with an estimated 430,000 AF at low point in August. There may be some drawdown by September caused by the X-2 requirements.

The Jones Pumping Plant was expected to run five pumps in July but as a result of an electrical panel malfunction at the end of June, they had to reduce pumping, in addition to some salinity issues causing to reduce to 3 units. Testing on the electrical panel is being completed and they anticipate being back to five units around August 7<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hoffman referred to the remainder of his report for the Board's information.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Executive Director White stated that the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) has a lack of sufficient funding to complete the projects. They have met with representatives to identify the shortfall in order to complete the three main projects. They are scheduling a series of workshops and meetings to address these issues which would result in significant third-party impacts.

An outline of activities tracking low point in the San Luis Reservoir was reported which consisted of working with other Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors in tracking operations and coordinating with the Central Valley Operations (CVO) to help streamline in the future.

There has been a lot of activity the past month with legislatures, announcing that Congressman Duarte is holding a field hearing in Santa Nella on Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>.

With regard to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the Exchange Contractors GSA adopted the Delta-Mendota Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) at their meeting this morning.

The Executive Director next said that because of the SGMA, proposed Voluntary Settlement Agreement (VA) and the proposed National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Biological Opinion (BiOp), the landscape could be significantly changed, and have combined impacts on future water supply. The Exchange Contractors continue to coordinate with San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA) in drafting comments.

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:**

In reviewing his report, Steve Chedester provided an update to the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley regarding their strategic plan and funding.

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

The Director of Policy & Programs said they are just waiting on the arrival of the electrical control panel for the Orestimba Creek project, and that the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) had been completed on the Los Banos Creek Reservoir (LBCR) project. A review of the 100% plans of the LBCR is being completed; two boat dock quotes have been received; and comments received from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife on the permits which are being responded to. The license agreement was adopted by the San Luis Water District in July.

Regarding the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project, Chris White said that they have received the Technical Experts Review from the design team reflecting great analysis and conclusions. Continued outreach is being completed for the new road alignment to the local landowners and the County of Stanislaus is in the process of preparing a letter of support. Once this process is completed, the information will be added to the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Other

outreach activities include contact with California Department of Transportation and Stanislaus Council of Governments.

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

Consultant David Cory reported that the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA), California Environmental Protection Agency (CA EPA) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) have contracted with Crowe LLP to draft a Regulatory Alignment Concept Paper to evaluate and identify opportunities to streamline administrative process. The Concept Paper unfortunately proposes new “Regulatory Pathways” that could complicate and increase grower costs associated with the Irrigation Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) if implemented. Other issues being monitored is the formation of a SWRCB Expert Panel that could develop findings that would apply to all irrigated lands programs and result in significant changes to ILRP’s across the state.

He next provided an update on the jointly development of crop specific acceptable ranges by various coalitions 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. The target date of submittal was July but has now been moved to August.

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT:**

**State:** The Executive Director referred to Arc Strategies report included in the Board packet and said it was disappointing that the proposed \$10M bond does not include water storage.

**Federal:** Chris White stated the report from the federal lobbyists refers to changes in the upcoming election with President Biden endorsing Vice President Harris as the Democrat nominee for President. Other subjects included the failure to pass the Energy and Water appropriations bills before going into recess, noting there were two amendments made by the House Rules Committee’s with one led by Congressmen John Duarte, Jim Costa, Vince Fong, and Josh Harder which signaled a bipartisan support for a study to be done on sediment build-up in rivers and streams in the San Joaquin River Watershed and to make recommendations to Congress on actions to improve channel flows, reduce flood risk to communities, and improve riverbanks.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:**

Executive Director White referred to the Lighthouse Public Affairs report included in the Board packet.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT:**

Attorney Andrew McClure reported on the following matters: Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation and the CVP/State Water Project (SWP) Long Term Operation Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), outlining four proposed alternatives and noting that there is no good alternative for the CVP. They have also been monitoring the SGMA developments regarding probationary orders and actions taken by agencies in response.

**FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:**

**Firebaugh Canal Water District:** Manager Bryant said it was a hot, busy July. As a result, they have experienced a larger percentage of electrical outages versus previous years for pumping water.

**San Luis Canal Company:** Manager Wiersma said that SLCC is similar with a heavy delivery in July; should drop off around end of August. They continue to deal with removal of the hyacinth. Mr. Wiersma then provided an update on SLCC's high groundwater mitigation project; with the adoption of the Negative Declaration and NEPA document to be consistent. Will begin discussions with the Exchange Contractors on proposed transfers in the future under this program. A copy of the documentation will be circulated to the managers and staff for review.

**Central California Irrigation District:** Manager Martin said water use in July had set records; and they too continue to deal with hyacinth. CCID staff has begun their preparation for winter projects.

**Columbia Canal Company:** Chair Cardella said CCC had a high use in July as well but have been able to maintain the hyacinth so far.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

The Executive Director provided information for upcoming events.

Chair Cardella adjourned the meeting to a recess at 9:46 a.m.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session at 9:54 a.m.

The Chair returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:46 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 10:46 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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MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR

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ERIC FONTANA, DIRECTOR

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CANNON MICHAEL, DIRECTOR