

**MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY
HELD FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2023**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, June 2, 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, Manager

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

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

Columbia Canal Company (CCC): Chris Cardella, Chair; Randy Houk, 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:

Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency; Don Wright, Journalist; Lauren Layne, Baker, Manock & Jensen; Jim Stilwell, Baker Farming Co.; and Robbie Sites

CALL TO ORDER:

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

REVIEW OF AGENDA:

There were no proposed changes to the Agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The unapproved minutes from the May 5, 2023 Regular Board meeting were presented.

Director Nickel made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Fontana, and unanimously carried.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Those participating via teleconference were asked to introduce themselves. No public comments were provided following introductions.

BOARD TO APPROVE THE MAY 2023 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

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

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

WATER REPORT:

Water Resources Specialist, Adam Hoffman initially explained that he has been tracking demands and comparing them to 2017, noting that they are currently behind but should match up this month. He then provided an update on flow reductions in the San Joaquin River starting June 3rd, adding that this will help seepage issues that are being experienced on both sides of the river. Mr. Hoffman next referred to his Board report and reviewed the following data: Exchange Contractors' total demands: 2,062 c.f.s., of that, 1,751 c.f.s. from the Mendota Pool and 311 c.f.s. from the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC). Releases from Friant Dam into the San Joaquin River was 10,019 c.f.s., with 9,248 c.f.s. at Gravelly Ford, 1,714 c.f.s. entering the Mendota Pool and 3,506 c.f.s. going past Sack Dam.

Next outlined were the following current reservoir storage: Shasta – 4,458,018 acre-feet (AF); San Luis Reservoir (SLR) – 2,015,142 AF, with the Federal share at 955,895 AF, and the State project water at 1,059,247 AF, mentioning that the SLR has been full since April. He stated that Millerton's current storage is 230,591 AF and the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam is 23,166 AF. The Upper San Joaquin Basin combined storage is 495,447 AF, which is about 82% of average, and the accumulated full natural flow into Shasta Lake is 102% of average, noting that they are currently releasing flood releases but with increased demands, those should be ramping down.

He concluded his report by reporting on the Delta Operation's data as follows: 77,744 c.f.s. of inflows, with exports at 9,020 c.f.s. The outflow index is 65,824 c.f.s.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

The Executive Director summarized activities during the past month which included water operations, proposed State legislature, water transfer program and supporting Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) efforts noting a Delta-Mendota Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) informational and coordination workshop has been scheduled for June 12th. Manager Martin then provided an outline of the past actions taken by the California Department Water Resources (DWR) on all of the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP)

submitted under the Delta-Mendota Subbasin, next process and timelines. He said an Ad Hoc Committee had been developed to meet with DWR and State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) staff in determining the best steps in moving forward and being responsive which presently looks like it will consist of one GSP versus separate ones for each GSA. In conclusion, Mr. Martin said that the purpose of the June 12th workshop is to explain and get consensus on moving forward and costs associated with the process.

The Executive Director next reported that the 30% design for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir (DPCR) had been received and will be reviewed at the joint board workshop with Del Puerto Water District scheduled for June 20th.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

Steve Chedester said that they are still waiting on the Geotechnical analysis on the Compact Bypass Facility, Fish Ladder and Fish Recapture Facility which is due out this month. He also commented that an operation's plan is being developed regarding the Sack Dam project.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

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

- *Orestimba Creek* – Waiting for approval of the license agreement and notice to proceed on construction to be completed by mid-June with anticipation to start moving dirt shortly after. Still working with Reclamation in obtaining grant funds.
- *Los Banos Creek Project* – With the Section 106 (SHPO) consultation process completed, geotechnical work is scheduled to start in June. Meeting was held with Reclamation to review standard operations agreement; received good feedback.

The Executive Director referred to the information included in the Board packet for additional information relating to the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project.

WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM:

Water Transfer Indemnification Agreement: The Executive Director provided an update that each of the member entity boards had reviewed and approved the Indemnification Agreement included in the Board packet. Following the update, a motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Director Nickels to approve the Water Transfer Indemnification Agreement as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

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

Consultant, David Cory said that they are waiting on the Regional Water Quality Control Board's decision regarding Groundwater Protection Targets (GWP Targets) following their April 27th workshop and mentioned that work continues on the nitrate management zone activities. Referring to his board report, Mr. Cory said that two members of the RWQCB had left the board leaving those

positions vacant, adding that information regarding the remainder board members is outlined in his report.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

State: The Executive Director reported on some State legislation regarding water rights that our lobbyist's office has been engaged in with some of the authors amenable to discussing amendments but unfortunately one legislator has no interest in considering any changes.

Federal: Mr. White then referred to the report provided by Nancy Williams regarding Federal legislation and activities.

Following this report, Steve Chedester referred to his memorandum regarding Federal Legislation. He explained that the Exchange Contractors had been contacted by Senator Dianne Feinstein's office asking for support for three proposed legislation bills that are being drafted, mentioning that no bill numbers have yet been assigned. After reviewing his summary of the proposed legislation, he recommended to the Board to adopt a position of support once the bills are assigned a number. A motion was made by Director Nickel and seconded by Director Stearns to direct staff to send a letter of support of the proposed legislation as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

Attorney Andrew McClure reported that California Sportfishing Protection Agency (CSPA) was granted to file their Fourth Amended Complaint to challenge the First Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plans which has been deemed deficient by DWR. Next, he said that the Friant Petitioners are moving forward with an appeal of the denial of their Petition for Writ of Mandate on the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation and have requested a 30-day extension to file their opening brief. He also reported on Sierra Club appeal case explaining that the Judge has determined to schedule a Court-assisted mediation which has been scheduled for later in June. Should a proposed settlement be determined, it would be subject to final approval by the Board. Attorney McClure concluded his report by reporting on the recent activities involving the Biological Opinion. Additional discussions concerning litigation will take place in Closed Session.

FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:

Columbia Canal Company: Manager Houk reported that: May deliveries had picked up; CCC held their annual shareholder meeting in May with no changes to the board or officers, and flood flows are still occurring, adding that they are experiencing seepage from the bifurcation structure past City of Firebaugh.

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Bryant said that FCWD experienced a normal May for water deliveries, finished the land condemnation process for the solar project and will begin construction.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma reported an average month for water deliveries in May; that SLCC board approved their budget for 2023-2024; that they will start working on design of capital projects; and they are dealing with increased amount of aquatics along the system. Mr.

Wiersma also reported that Reclamation had approved the Financial Assistance Agreement (FAA) for installation of gates at Sack Dam, mentioning that they will be designed in-house and should have them installed by the end of year. In response to a question, he confirmed that they would all be automated.

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin said that water demands are picking up, along with aquatic weeds. In addressing seepage issues, CCID has been coordinating with CCC with operations of flood flows. Some discussion was held on the importance of monitoring and collecting data on the seepage issues during this year’s flood flow releases, asking if the SJRRP has been out doing any surveys. Mr. Martin agreed and reported that CCID has been doing their own monitoring of the seepage and surveying areas with drone flights and pictures.

INFORMATIONAL:

There was none to report.

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 10:21 a.m. The meeting was reconvened to Closed Session at 10:31 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 11:41 a.m. and said that direction was provided to staff and Legal Counsel. The meeting was adjourned at 11:41 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

JAMES L. NICKEL, DIRECTOR

MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR