

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

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, January 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): David Pruitt, Alternate Director, John Wiersma, General Manager

Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD): Dan McCurdy, Alternate Director; 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

The following participated via Conference Call:

Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Lauren Layne, Baker, Manock & Jensen; Breanne Vandenburg, Merced County Farm Bureau; and, Audrey Goddard, WestWater Research, LLC

CALL TO ORDER:

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

Introductions of those participating via teleconference were next provided.

REVIEW OF AGENDA:

The Executive Director reported that he would like to add an item to the Agenda that had been inadvertently omitted when it was posted, and could not wait until the next meeting for action. It will be added to the Finance Committee Report as Agenda item 5. A) vi. – Resolution 24-01 – Adopt Annual Statement of Investment Policy.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Alternate Director Pruitt to add Agenda item 5. A) vi. - Resolution 24-01 – Adopt Annual Statement of Investment Policy. The motion was unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The unapproved minutes from the December 8, 2023 Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Director Fontana to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Alternate Director Pruitt and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

There were no public comments presented.

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

Joann White presented the December 2023 Expenditure List and Financial Report.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 24-01 – ADOPT ANNUAL STATEMENT OF INVESTMENT POLICY:

The Executive Director explained the purpose and requirement of the Annual Statement of Investment Policy, adding that there were no changes from the previous year’s statement.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Alternate Director Pruit to approve Resolution No. 24-01 Adopting the Annual Statement of Investment Policy. The motion was unanimously approved.

2024 WATER RESOURCES PLAN BUDGET:

Executive Director White reported that the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir (DPCR) Project Standing Committee met and reviewed information pertaining to the progress of the project, next steps and goals, and the estimated budget for 2024. He then provided a recap of this information and in conclusion said the Committee recommended approval of the budget with a 2024 cash call

of \$2,101,300 for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir which is incorporated in the Water Resources Plan Budget information included in the meeting packet.

A motion was made by Alternate Director McCurdy and seconded by Alternate Director Pruitt to approve the 2024 Water Resources Plan Budget as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

WATER REPORT:

The Water Resources Specialist referred to the summary page of his Water Report and stated that most of the systems had been shut down last month with a small amount of deliveries to refuges. Current pulse flows past Sack Dam remain at 170 cubic feet per second (cfs), and they intend to increase it to 315 cfs on February 5th through end of February. Mr. Hoffman said that Shasta is starting to gain storage, with inflows beginning to ramp up. He then reviewed his summary of current reservoir storages and Delta operations, noting that if precipitation picks up on the San Joaquin River, it should help with the Old Middle River (OMR) restrictions. Mr. Hoffman confirmed previous information provided by Director Brown on state operations starting on January 1st. This was a result of the state contractors pressing to get their carryover water delivered by the end of the year. Recent snow measurements reflect a small amount of snow and the Jones Pumping Plant had some maintenance issues. As a result, two pumps were shut down for a short time and they are now back up to four units. Concluding his report, Mr. Hoffman said that the remainder of his report was for informational purposes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director White reported that during the month of December, his time was mainly spent on the 2024 water transfer program; working jointly with legal counsel and San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority on developing comments to the Voluntary Agreement (VA) document, noting that both the VA and unimpaired flows have significant impacts. Other matters being addressed throughout the month were the Water Resources Plan projects, budget development and contacts with legislature and staff regarding potential funding for ongoing projects, in addition to the Exchange Contractors' interaction with surrounding communities as it relates to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

Steve Chedester said that there has not been much progress on the 90% design of the Mendota Pool Fish Screen and Control Structure since the last report. San Luis Canal Company has started the preparation work for the installation of the Rubicon Gates which are scheduled to be installed the first part of January.

Manager Martin next provided an update on the Poso Canal Bridge Crossing project noting that Jacobs Engineering provided plans in late December.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

The Director of Policy & Programs outlined the few remaining items that need to be completed on the Orestimba Creek Project, adding that there has been a delay in getting the sheet pile material pushing the completion out to February.

Mr. Chedester then provided an update on the Los Banos Creek Reservoir project noting receipt of U.S. Fish & Wildlife’s consultation letter which will be incorporated in the Draft EA/IS that should be out for 30-day comment period by mid-January. Manager Martin said that they are waiting for a response from a key landowner and CCID staff are preparing some design work for the recharge project. Staff continues to work on grant opportunities and have reapplied for Community Funding grant funds through Congressman Duarte’s office.

The Executive Director reported that the next meetings of the Technical Review Board (TRB) are scheduled for January 10-12. Completion of the Phase 2 geotechnical investigations was done in November. A road construction designer has been brought in to address the new road alignment for Del Puerto Canyon Road. In working with Stanislaus County staff, they have come with four alternatives and should have it down to one alternative by May.

WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM:

Agreement for the Acquisition of Water by the United States, and San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority from the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority 2024-2025 (Agreement): The Executive Director said that the draft Agreement had been brought to the Board at the December Board meeting. At that time, the Board authorized the Agreement to be circulated to each of the member entity boards for their approval. After announcing that each of the member entity boards had approved the Agreement, Mr. White recommended approval to execute the Agreement.

A motion was made by Alternate Director Pruitt and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the Agreement and authorize the Executive Director to execute the Agreement. The motion was unanimously approved.

Water Transfer Agreements (2024-2025): The Executive Director provided a recap of the three water transfer agreements, ie., Westside Water Authority; Santa Clara Valley Water District; and Triangle T Water District. He then recommended that the agreements be approved for presentation to each of the member entity boards for their review and action and brought back to the Exchange Contractors’ Board in February.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Alternate Director McCurdy approving the Executive Director’s recommendation. The motion was unanimously carried.

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

The Executive Director explained that David Cory was unable to attend the meeting and referred to Mr. Cory’s report that was included in the meeting packet.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

The Executive Director reported that he has communicated with Dominic DiMare of Arc Strategies about timing when key State legislative bills will be presented. It was determined that meetings be schedule at the end of January or mid-February to meet with state legislators and their staff, followed by scheduling a Legislative Committee meeting by the end of February to review proposed legislation and to determine what actions are needed to address them.

Mr. White next referred to the federal lobbyist report, stating that a trip to Washington DC is currently being scheduled for the week of February 5th to meet with federal legislatures and agencies.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Reference was made to the updated report from Lighthouse Public Affairs included in the meeting packet. The Executive Director said they continue to hold calls with both lobbyist firms and the public relations firm, and he will schedule to have the three firms provide their quarterly report at the February Board meeting.

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS:

The Executive Director said in response to direction provided by the Board last month, he reviewed his memo outlining a proposal to establish a charitable contributions fund. After some discussion, Mr. White recommended that he move forward by forming an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of two board members to develop the vision, goals, and policies of a program and bring it back to the Board for their consideration. If the concept is approved by the Board, staff and legal counsel would draft a resolution for the member entity boards to consider and be brought back to the Exchange Contractors’ Board for action. The Board gave staff direction to move forward with the Executive Director’s proposal.

ATTORNEY’S REPORT:

Attorney Andrew McClure provided a brief update on the following three items of litigation: California Sportsfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) Groundwater Cases in Merced County; the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA, and the City of Fresno – Court of Appeal for the Federal Circuit. Legal Counsel then reported on the Delta Conveyance Project Final EIR that was approved by the California Department of Water Resources, next steps, and potential concerns it may have to water supply. He added that the Exchange Contractors have been working with San

Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority in developing joint comments to the Supplemental Environmental Document for the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan that was issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. Comments are due by January 19, 2024.

FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin reported that CCID is moving a small amount of water to refuges and continuing with their winter maintenance projects including construction of a new weir.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma said that SLCC is also delivering some refuge water. He further reported that they continue to work on the Rubican gates project at Sack Dam noting that the gates are scheduled to be put in on the following Tuesday with a two-day time frame for completion. Winter maintenance projects are continuing, and they plan to wrap them up by February 15th.

Firebaugh Canal Water District: In his report, Manager Bryant said that FCWD delivered a small amount of water in December; they are currently down for winter maintenance and plan to start up on February 1st. They continue to work on the solar project and next reported that the sump pumps were shut down during rain events at the San Joaquin River Improvement Project (SJRIP).

Columbia Canal Company: Manager Gardner reported that there were no deliveries in December for CCC and winter maintenance projects are being completed.

INFORMATIONAL:

Executive Director White recapped upcoming events for the Board's information.

PERSONNEL:

The Executive Director requested that this matter be tabled until after Closed Session.

CLOSED SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session and a short recess was called at 10:09 a.m. The meeting was reconvened to Closed Session at 10:18 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:32 a.m.

At which time, a motion was made by Alternate Director McCurdy and seconded by Alternate Director Pruitt to approve the Personnel Committee's recommendation that each of the employees receive a 4% Cost of Living increase in 2024. The motion was unanimously carried.

In concluding the meeting, it was reported that direction was also given to staff and legal counsel.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 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

DAVID PRUITT, ALTERNATE DIRECTOR

DAN McCURDY, ALTERNATE DIRECTOR