

**MINUTES  
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY  
HELD FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2025**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, January 10, 2025 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

**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 & Programs; Joann White, Director of Finance and Administration; Marisol Bonilla Reynoso, Administrative Assistant; and Adam Hoffman, Water Resources Specialist

**PRESENT:**

Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; David Cory, Consultant; Greg O’Banion, CCID Director (arrived 10:30 a.m.); Andrew Bloom, CCID Director (arrived 10:30 a.m.); and, Kirk Jensen, CCID Director (arrived 10:35 a.m.)

The following participated via Conference Call:

Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Lauren Layne, Baker, Manock & Jensen; Don Wright, Journalist and Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency, Inc. (9:50 a.m.)

**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 December 13, 2024 Regular Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Director Michael to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

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

Chair Cardella announced that the meeting will be adjourned into Closed Session and asked if there were any public comments. Following not hearing any comments, the Chair adjourned the meeting to Closed Session at 9:02 a.m.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

The Chair returned the meeting to Open Session at 9:42 a.m. and announced that direction was given to staff and legal counsel.

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

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

Following her report, a motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Michael to approve the Expenditure List and Financial Report as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

**ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS:**

Upon presenting the proposed 2025 list of Annual Contributions, a motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Michael to approve the 2025 Annual Contributions. The motion was unanimously approved.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-01 – RESOLUTION TO ADOPT ANNUAL STATEMENT OF INVESTMENT POLICY AND GUIDELINES:**

The Executive Director presented Resolution No. 2025-01 to Adopt Annual Statement of Investment Policy and Guidelines and explained the purpose and requirement, confirming there were no changes from the previous year's statement.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve Resolution 2025-01 as proposed. The motion was unanimously approved.

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE UPDATE & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Personnel Committee Member John Wiersma said the Committee met and recommend a 3% Cost of Living increase to all 2024 employees, a merit increase for the Executive Director and approve the Director of Finance & Administration working remotely.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the Personnel Committee's recommendations as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

**WATER REPORT:**

The Water Resources Specialist reported that Exchange Contractors' current demands are 272 cubic per second (cfs), with flows of 170 cfs. from the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) at Sack Dam. Mr. Hoffman confirmed that the SJRRP is still on schedule to run a pulse flow of 240 cfs. in February.

Current storage at Shasta Dam is 3,549,214 acre-feet (AF), noting that on January 1<sup>st</sup>, they began making flood releases at Shasta Dam. The San Luis Reservoir is still gaining with current storage at 1,445,486 AF, however, pumping may be reduced this month as a result of potential turbidity restriction triggers. There has been little precipitation at Millerton with current storage at 212,135 AF, adding that this is below average for this time of the year.

Mr. Hoffman recapped the California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) recent Water Year (WY) forecast and referred to the remainder of his report for the Board's information.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Executive Director White reported there are meetings later this month with Reclamation and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) relating to the San Joaquin River Restoration Program. The Exchange Contractors continue to work with Central Valley Operations on early modeling with the assistance of consultant Daniel Steiner and the Water Resources Specialist; with another call scheduled next week.

Mr. White reviewed other matters including the water transfer and the Community Infrastructure Fund programs.

Relating to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), Manager Martin provided an update on State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) activities with regard to subbasins that are currently on probation, noting good progress by some. He also recapped recent discussions with the SWRCB staff.

Concluding his report, the Executive Director reported on the meetings being scheduled in both Sacramento and Washington DC following the election, adding that the newly elected City of Los Banos Mayor has communicated that they are committed to resume discussions regarding the construction of the joint water agency and Milliken Museum project.

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:**

The Director of Policy & Programs provided a detailed recap of his report noting significant timelines for each of the SJRRP projects. He added that the SJRRP released their Draft Supplement Environmental Assessment for the Arroyo Canal Fish Screen and Sack Dam Fish Passage Project at the end of 2024, with comments due by the end of January. Discussions continue with Reclamation exploring alternatives to reduce the phasing costs for the Reach 2B project including the proposed use of a Whoosh fish passage system. Reclamation has reported they will be meeting with NMFS later this month to discuss the proposed concept.

Manager Martin added that the project at Poso Canal Crossing had been completed other than placement of control gates in the area.

Mr. Chedester completed his report by giving updates and proposed milestones on the Bay-Delta Plan, Voluntary Agreements, and Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley.

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

Steve Chedester said they are still waiting on the timing of delivery of the electrical panels for the Orestimba Creek project. Once received, they will be able to begin work on installation of the pumping plant transformer, powerlines, and motors.

Regarding the Los Banos Creek project, Mr. Chedester reported they are close to completing the 100% design, with the bid package to be circulated soon after.

Manager Martin mentioned that one of the land acquisitions has been approved and they are working with the second landowner to complete the second acquisition.

The Executive Director next reported on the progress of the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project, noting that they are making adjustments the road realignment in coordination of Stanislaus County. Follow up meetings are being scheduled with Stanislaus County and Stanislaus County of Governments (StanCOG).

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

Consultant David Cory reviewed his report and provided some background regarding the Biostimulation and Cyanotoxins Plan, noting that Tess Dunham has been retained to assist with this new issue.

**LEGISLATIVE REPORTS:**

The Executive Director stated that these matters had largely been covered previously during his Executive Director's report and, in the interest of time, referred to the written reports from the State and Federal advocates for the Board to review.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:**

The Executive Director referred to the report provided in the Board packets.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT:**

Attorney Andrew McClure covered three items in litigation. The first case, City of Fresno, et al. v. United States of America, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued an opinion on December 17, 2024 affirming the decision of the Court of Federal Claims on all respects, awarding Reclamation, the Exchange Contractors, San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority and others complete victory on all claims. Regarding the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) case, the matter has been stayed for one year and there's been no other filings submitted since the judge's order. The final matter involves the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation, mentioning that the appeal for oral argument for both the Friant Water Supply Protection Authority and Sierra Club, et al. is scheduled for January 16<sup>th</sup> in the Fifth District Court of Appeal in Fresno.

**FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:**

**Columbia Canal Company:** Manager Gardner said CCC's operations are shut down for winter construction projects. He stated that they delivered slightly less than average for the year.

**Firebaugh Canal Water District:** Manager Bryant stated they are working on winter maintenance and will start filling their system around February 1<sup>st</sup> but may be earlier depending on precipitation. They also continue to work on their environmental coverage for the lining project.

**San Luis Canal Company:** Manager Wiersma reported they are wrapping up their winter projects; continuing to work on the NEPA document for the High Groundwater Mitigation Conservation program and preparing for their upcoming annual meeting and election.

**Central California Irrigation District:** Manager Martin said that winter construction continues including solar, automated systems, concrete work in Dos Palos and installation of a long-crested weir on the Central Canal.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

The Executive Director reminded the Board of the upcoming Water Users Conference in Reno and recapped the meetings throughout the month with agencies and legislators.

**SECTION 6.8 OF THE WATER TRANSFER POLICY:**

CCID Directors Greg O'Banion, Andrew Bloom, and Kirk Jensen arrived for Agenda Item 18. CCID Chair Eric Fontana called a Special Meeting of the CCID Board of Directors to Order.

The Executive Director explained that pursuant to the Water Transfer Policy, a review of Table 6.8 under Section 6.8 is required every five years and is now due. Further, in a separate effort, SLCC has been developing a new High Groundwater Mitigation Conservation program which they have previously brought to the Board for informational purposes. SLCC is asking that the program be added to Table 6.8 with a maximum set at 10,000 acre-feet. With that, the Executive Director recommended that the Board approve the request and provided a review of his analysis that the recommendation was based upon. He confirmed there is currently no proposal for a transfer being requested at this time, adding that all proposals are required to be brought to the Water Transfer Committee with a recommendation to the Board. It was confirmed that if the change is approved, it will not preclude changes to Table 6.8 before the next five years.

After further discussions, it was determined that the matter be presented to each of the member entity boards for their consideration and brought back at the Exchange Contractors' February Board meeting for Board action. Both Director Michael and Manager Wiersma offered to attend each of the meetings to respond to any questions.

The CCID Special Meeting was adjourned at the completion of discussion of Agenda Item 18.

No further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:59 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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ERIC FONTANA, DIRECTOR

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CANNON MICHAEL, DIRECTOR

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MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR