

**MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY
HELD FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2025**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, February 7, 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 (9:10am)

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; Adam Hoffman, Water Resources Specialist; and Marisol Bonilla Reynoso Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Andrew McClure, Minasian Law and David Cory, Consultant

The following participated via Conference Call:

Lauren Layne, Baker, Manock & Jensen; Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Don Wright, Journalist; and Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency, Inc.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Chris Cardella called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and asked Director Eric Fontana 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 January 10, 2025 Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Fontana and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

There were no public comments presented.

BOARD TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 2025 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Joann White presented the January 2025 Expenditure List and Financial Report.

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

2024 SUMMARY OF CHARGES ON VISA CARDS

Executive Director Chris White presented the detailed breakdown of the various charges on each of the Visa cards assigned to employees for the Board's review. He added that this is provided to the Board on an annual basis for their information and no Board action is required.

2024 REPORT – REIMBURSEMENT TO EMPLOYEES IN EXCESS OF \$100:

Next, the Executive Director reviewed the charges included in the 2024 Reimbursement to Employees in Excess of \$100 report and again said that this is for informational purposes only with no Board action needed.

WATER REPORT:

The Water Resources Specialist referred to the summary page of his Water Report and stated that demand is picking up in February. As of today, the pulse flows past Sack Dam remain at 200 cubic feet per second (cfs), and they intend to increase to 400 cfs, in March, followed by a decrease to 100 cfs, and then 70 cfs by June 1. From June 20 until September, there may be no restoration flows past Sack Dam if the hydrology in the San Joaquin Basin stays dry. Mr. Hoffman said that Shasta has 4,116,000 acre feet (AF) in storage and is encroached into the flood space reservation. Reclamation is making flood releases of 60,000 cfs. at Keswick, and Oroville received 30 inches of rain within the last seven days. San Luis Reservoir total storage is over 1.5 million AF and continues to climb. The recent storm has helped inflows at Millerton; however, it is still currently below average. The next California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) forecast should be released on February 10, 2025.

Mr. Hoffman referred to the remainder of his report for informational purposes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director White reported that they had a good meeting with the San Joaquin River Restoration Program during the recent Water Users Conference with good progress being made on the operation's agreement for the Sack Dam project. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) will begin drafting the agreement. Mr. White next said that the Poso Canal project had been completed within a week, and they are working with PG&E to relocate some gas lines, as well as working with Reclamation regarding the access agreement.

Mr. White said that they continue to work with the Central Valley Operations (CVO) on operations and forecasts.

Regarding the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), Manager Wiersma said they continue to coordinate with DWR staff on the pumping reduction plan. He said that the annual report is due on March 15th and this will require to schedule a San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Groundwater Sustainability Agency meeting in March for adoption. He added that the consultants are reviewing neighboring subbasin plans and will prepare comments as appropriate if they can affect the Delta Mendota Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

Managers Martin and Wiersma reported on the recent meeting with Triangle T Water District in regarding the extension of their agreement. The Executive Director confirmed he received the additional data from Scott Jacobson for 2024 pumpage and will be completing the analysis. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled once that is completed.

The Executive Director said that the City of Gustine will be submitting their first quarterly report for the two projects, along with an initial invoice for one of the projects under the Community Infrastructure Fund.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

Steve Chedester reported that Jacob's Engineering has completed the 90% design of the Mendota Pool Fish Screen and Control Structure project, and they continue to work on the Financial Assistance Agreement for additional funding to complete the 100% design. Other matters reported on were the Bay-Delta Plan, Voluntary Agreements and Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

The Director of Policy & Program said that they are still waiting on the electrical control panels for the Orestimba Creek project, new time frame for delivery is April 2025, with the project to be completed by May 2025. They have not heard anything from the SWRCB on the hearing date regarding the permanent water right matter.

Mr. Chedester then provided an update on the Los Banos Creek Reservoir Regulation stating they have finalized the 100% plans and specifications, with a bid package ready in March 2025. Recently received notice from Reclamation that the revised Standard Operating Plan (SOP) needs to be reviewed by the Technical Service Center (TSC) in Denver for approval before they can move forward with the bid. Reclamation has applied for a Point of Redivision with the SWRCB.

DEL PUERTO CANYON RESERVOIR PROJECT (DPCR):

Executive Director White reported that the final draft of the road alignment design for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project was presented to Stanislaus County, which they adopted.

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

David Cory reported that 13 Irrigation Agricultural Coalitions within the Central Valley submitted joint comments to the Biostimulation and Cyanotoxins Plan the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) is developing. The process of picking a SWRCB Expert Panel has slowed down, waiting for individuals to be selected. For CV-SALTS (Salt Control Program), the second archetype was selected, and they are meeting with local water districts to develop models.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT:

On January 21st, there was a meeting with Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot and Samantha Arthur, Deputy Secretary of Water, focusing on the state's involvement and financial commitment to the San Joaquin River Restoration Program, focusing on proper sequencing the projects and routing funds towards them.

The Executive Director referred to the Invariant report and stated that on January 27th, the Office of Management and Budget (OBM) announced a pause on all federal funding until a complete comprehensive analysis is completed on all their financial assistance programs by February 10th. A visit to Washington DC has been scheduled for February 11th and 12th. He also recapped the Executive Orders focusing on increasing water supply from Sacramento San Joaquin Delta and a new bill, the "Every Drop Counts Act," introduced by Congressman Jim Costa.

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 granted Plaintiffs an extension of time to file a Petition for Rehearing. The second case involving the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA), the 23 GSA's in the Delta-Mendota subbasin are preparing a joint opposition for leave

to amend, in addition to filing a motion to dismiss the Fourth Amended Complaint. The next hearing date is scheduled for March 7th. Lastly, he provided a recap of the Court of Appeal's decision on the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation, and the next steps.

FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:

Columbia Canal Company: Manager Gardner reported that their system has been down since November 2024 to perform winter maintenance. They are working on their last lining project. Once completed, they will begin running water in their system.

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Jeff Bryant reported they irrigated up through the new year and are filling some of their canals. They have received a grant to line their Third Lift Canal and build a holding reservoir. They will be working with Reclamation's Denver staff, along with Chris Linneman on this project.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma said that SLCC system has been shut down, with only refuge deliveries. They continue completing some winter projects and are focusing on their work with Reclamation in completing the environmental document for their High Groundwater Mitigation Project. Mr. Wiersma reported that their annual meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2025.

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin reported that CCID's water operations were back up at the end of January. They are meeting with Merced and Fresno counties about road crossing.

INFORMATIONAL:

The Executive Director reminded the Board of their trip to Washington DC next week, Board pictures are scheduled to be taken before the March 7th Board meeting, and registration for the ACWA Spring Conference in May in Monterey.

SECTION 6.8 OF THE WATER TRANSFER POLICY:

The Executive Director recapped discussions held the previous month on updating Table 6.8 of the Water Transfer Policy and said that the matter has been presented at each of the member entity board meetings. He then presented a proposed Alternative 3 outlining changes to Table 6.8 that will include a new program, "High Groundwater Mitigation Conservation" with a maximum of 10,000 AF for SLCC's share of 19.48% share and adding a footnote that provides the other member entities to add to the program up to their four entity share. To conclude, Mr. White said that he is recommending the Board adopt the proposed third alternative as presented.

Discussions ensued and it was confirmed that Table 6.8 can be reviewed and updated at any time, but no later than five years from the year of adoption.

With no further comments presented, counsel asked if there was any public participation regarding the matter and there was none.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve Alternative 3 revision to Section 6.8, Table 6.8 of the Water Transfer Policy as proposed. The motion was unanimously carried.

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 10:19 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:43 a.m., and reported that direction was given to staff and legal counsel.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:43 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

CANNON MICHAEL, DIRECTOR

MIKE STEARNS, VICE-CHAIR