

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

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

Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD): Mike Stearns, 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 & Programs; Joann White, Director of Finance and Administration; Adam Hoffman, Water Resources Specialist; and Marisol Bonilla, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Chase Hurley, Mendota Pool Group (departed at 9:50 a.m.); Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; and Kenneth D. Schmidt (departed at 9:50 a.m.)

The following participated via Conference Call:

Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; David Cory, Consultant; Bobby Phillips, Westlands Water District; and Lauren Layne, Baker, Manock & Jensen

CALL TO ORDER:

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

REVIEW OF AGENDA:

There were no proposed changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The unapproved minutes of the February 7, 2025 Regular Board meeting was presented. A motion was made by Director Fontana 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 FEBRUARY 2025 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Joann White provided a summary of the February 2025 Expenditure Lists and Financial Report.

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

WATER REPORT:

The Water Resources Specialist reported that demands decreased because of this week's precipitation. Mr. Hoffman outlined U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) recent allocation for the Central Valley Project (CVP) with 100% North of Delta, and 35% South of Delta.

Mr. Hoffman next provided an update on the current reservoir storages: Shasta Dam is 3,617,951 acre feet (AF), San Luis Reservoir 1,684,867 AF, and Millerton at 291,065 AF, noting that Millerton made some gains but still remains below average at this time. The Bill Jones Pumping Plant was at five units almost all of February, with the Banks Pumping Plant decreased to about a third of what they could pump.

DRAFT ANNUAL GROUNDWATER REPORT- ANALYSIS REVIEW TO BE PROVIDED BY CONSULTANT, DR. KENNETH D. SCHMIDT:

Kenneth Schmidt presented his analysis of the 2024 well pumping program which covered excerpts from each of the member entities' groundwater conditions reports in the various sub-areas within the Exchange Contractors' service area, and the current conditions of the service area's groundwater aquifers. The report also included management recommendations.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the Draft Annual Groundwater Report as submitted by Kenneth D. Schmidt & Associates. The motion was unanimously carried.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:

The Director of Policy & Programs recapped his monthly report which included status on the Mendota Pool Fish Screen & Control Structure at 90% in February 2025. Making progress with Jacobs Engineering's design, which could be 100% by October. Mr. Chedester also provided the current timeline for the Re-consultation on the Long-Term Operations (LTO) of the State Water Resources Control Boards's (SWRCB) Phase 2 Staff Report, and Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley activities.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director White reviewed the meetings held during their recent trip to Washington D.C., noting that a copy of the weekly itinerary had been circulated.

Mr. White reported on activities involving the Community Infrastructure Fund that included quarterly reports received and began distributing funds towards the projects. He added that we will start to advertise in June-July timeframe for this year's program.

Mr. White reported that he has been working as a technical staff on behalf of CCID and SLCC regarding the extension of the agreement with Triangle T Water District. They are currently holding meetings to identify data and should have that completed within the next 7-10 days.

Lastly, Mr. White briefly covered matters pertaining to the Drought Plan discussions.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

Steve Chedester provided an update on the Orestimba Creek project, noting that the electrical control panels are now to be delivered in April 2025.

Next, Mr. Chedester reported that all plans for the Los Banos Creek Reservoir Regulation have been submitted to Reclamation. One outstanding issue is obtaining approval of the long-term water rights petition. Reclamation submitted the petition to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and once it is posted, there is a 30-day comment period.

Mr. Chedester provided an update on the funding process regarding the Los Banos Creek Recharge and Recovery project.

Mr. White added that consultants continue to work on the roadway for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project, and Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors has adopted the new alignment. Also getting ready for submitting the 30% design to the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) and continuing to work in obtaining additional funding.

RESOLUTION NO. 25-02 – BOARD TO ADOPT AMENDMENT AND RESTATEMENT EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT PLAN- DEFERRED CONTRIBUTION PENSION PLAN:

Executive Director White presented the Resolution to Adopt the Amendment and Restatement Employee Retirement Plan- Deferred Contribution Pension Plan. Adopt to be compliant with IRS regulation no accrued benefits affected.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve Resolution No. 2025-02. The motion was unanimously approved.

WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM - WATER TRANSFER COMMITTEE REPORT:

Executive Director White provided a brief review of the reports included for informational purposes. The next Water Transfer Committee meeting has been scheduled for March 31st to review proposals by the member entities, which will then be brought for approval at the April Board meeting.

MENDOTA POOL GROUP (MPG):

Mr. Chedester informed the Board about the annual technical meeting held with Exchange Contractors, Wonderful Orchards, MPG and consultants on February 24. He said that based on the information provided, staff are recommending approval of the 2025 program.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the proposed 2025 MPG pumping program and to send a letter to Reclamation notifying them of the approval. The motion was unanimously approved.

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

Consultant David Cory reviewed his report which covered Management Zones noting the executive officer of the Central Valley Regional Board conditionally approved the Early Action Plan (EAP), and provided the conditions included under the EAP. The outreach is to inform them of the requirements of legislation (AB 2454) that was passed last year.

He also provided an update on the SWRCB's selection of expert panel members to evaluate existing agricultural nitrate control programs for discharges to groundwater and develop recommendations to ensure that ongoing efforts are protective of groundwater quality.

LEGISLATIVE REPORTS:

Executive Director White said that the State Legislative bill introductions' deadline was February 21, 2025, which included 2,350 new bills, and referred to the state lobbyist report included in the Board packets

He stated that he provided a report earlier regarding federal lobbyist activities.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

The Executive Director outlined current activities and referred to the report included in the Board packets.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

Attorney Andrew McClure covered four items in litigation.

The first case, City of Fresno, et al. v. United States of America, Friant is seeking a re-hearing.

CSPA Groundwater Cases - CSPA filed a motion for leave to file a Fifth Amended Complaint, which asserts a challenge to the single Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) adopted by the 23 Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA). In response to the filing, the joint defendants, consisting of 26 GSA's, filed a Motion to Dismiss the Fourth Amended Complaint, adding that the Court denied the Motion.

Regarding the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation, the Appellate Court issued its decision. There was one issue we lost, which was the downstream impacts to terrestrial critters. The Court of Appeal denied Request for Rehearing to demonstrate to the trial court the results of the analysis of downstream instream impacts were adequately represented for downstream terrestrial impacts and no further analysis was required.

Attorney McClure stated that the last matter was the recent lawsuit of Johnson vs. Rameriz, et al was originally filed in 2020, and brought CCID into the lawsuit in 2022, and the case has been dismissed. On February 10th, the Exchange Contractors and the four member entities were provided with copies of the Third Amended Complaint. On behalf of the Exchange Contractors and CCC, noting that a motion to Quash Service was filed since they were served without a summons.

FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:

Columbia Canal Company: Manager Gardner said CCC started deliveries on February 18th delivering a total of 991 AF.

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Bryant stated they had some major issues at their headworks for pumping which were resolved. They had a subpar February due to November and December pre-irrigation, and they are spending some time in the field working with engineers on the 3rd lift canal lining/reservoir.

San Luis Canal Company: Manager Wiersma said they delivered about 5,000 AF in February which is around average for them. They are preparing for their annual meeting this month and focusing on their two environmental documents with Reclamation. He finished his report by

stating they are pushing to get the Operation's Agreement done with Reclamation regarding the Sack Dam facility.

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin reported that on April 2nd, CCID will hold their annual grower meeting. Water demand is slow due to the weather, and they expect creeks to run from the forecasted rainfall.

INFORMATIONAL:

The Executive Director referred to the upcoming Water Education Foundation event on April 24, and ACWA Spring Conference from May 13-15 in Monterey.

Chair Cardella adjourned the meeting to a recess at 10:27 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session at 10:35 a.m.

The Chair returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:51 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 10:51 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