

**MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY
HELD FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, April 4, 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

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

PRESENT:

Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; and David Cory, Consultant

The following participated via Conference Call:

Joe Mastro, Cuttone & Mastro CPA (departed at 9:14 a.m.); Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Don Wright, Journalist; Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency, Inc; and Clifton Lollar, Homer Water Resources.

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 March 7, 2025, Regular Board meeting was presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

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

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024 AND 2023

Joe Mastro of Cuttone & Mastro provided a page-by-page summary of the Exchange Contractors' Financial Statements for the years ending December 31, 2024, and 2023.

Following the presentation, a motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the Financial Statements and Supplemental Data as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

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

Joann White provided a summary of the March 2025 Expenditure List and Financial Report.

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

WATER REPORT:

The Water Resources Specialist reported that current demands for the Exchange Contractors is about 700 cubic feet per second (cfs). The San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) increased the pulse flows and flows past Sack Dam went from 300 cfs to 720 cfs.

Mr. Hoffman next provided an update on the current reservoir storages: Shasta Dam is 4,097,067 acre feet (AF), and San Luis Reservoir is at 1,817,086 AF, with the Federal share at 821,214 AF. Millerton Reservoir is currently at 355,078 AF.

It appears that starting on April 15th, the Inflow/Export (IE) ratio will be adjusted, with the Central Valley Project (CVP) operating at a 1:1 ratio. This may result in the reduction to one unit for a 30-day period, from April 15th to May 15th.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director White provided an update on activities related to the Community Infrastructure Fund quarterly reports, highlighting key milestones and progress across several projects. The City of Gustine submitted billing and issued payments for the Pond Aeration project; the City of Firebaugh is making progress toward securing a license agreement with CCID; and the City of Los Banos successfully acquired a license agreement with the CCID, making a significant step forward in their project development.

Mr. White and other members will be returning to Washington D.C. April 28 to May 1 to further advocate for local projects and funding opportunities.

The SLCC and CCID annual grower meetings were held last month and were a great success.

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% completion in February 2025. Jacobs is scheduled to complete the design for the Technical Service Center's (TSC) fish recapture facility by July 2025. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) anticipates completing their portion of the Compact Bypass Project by the end of July 2025, with no further phases planned beyond that point.

Mr. Chedester reported the Biological Opinion on the Sack Dam project was released for review this week, and Reclamation has received bids for the project, but no specifics have been released.

Next, Mr. Chedester reported that the Delta Conveyance Project has applied for a point of re-diversion, and the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley is working through the consulting firm, Hallmark to support outreach efforts and secure funding.

WATER RESOURCES PLAN (WRP) – UPDATE:

Steve Chedester provided an update on the Orestimba Creek project, mentioning that the electrical control panels are scheduled to be received next week. The installation of the pumping plant transformer, powerlines and motors will be completed in May 2025. By the end of March, CCID was able to recharge 1,200 AF from the DMC into the ponds.

Next, Mr. Chedester reported that the petition for the Point of Re-diversion relating to the Los Banos Creek Reservoir Regulation project was posted on March 21st by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) website, initiating a 30-day public comment period. If no protests are received during this time, Reclamation anticipates the permit to be processed quickly. This permit is the final one required for the project.

Executive Director White provided an update on the progress of the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project. A meeting was held with the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) to prepare

them for the upcoming 30% design submittal. The Technical Review Board is scheduled to review the 30% design later this month, after which it will be submitted to the DSOD, along with submitting the required fee.

The proposed alignment has been approved by both the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors and Public Works Department.

WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM - WATER TRANSFER COMMITTEE REPORT:

The Executive Director recapped information included in the Board packet relating to Agenda items 11 A) – C). He reported that the Water Transfer Committee met on March 31st and recommended approval as follows:

- CCID's Landowner to Self-transfer on behalf of Redfern Ranches of up to 2,645 Acre Feet (AF);
- CCID's Landowner to Self-transfer on behalf of Britz Dos Palos T.I.C. of up to 881 AF;
- CCID Groundwater Exchange Transfer to San Luis and Westlands Water Districts of up to 1,086 AF;
- SLCC 2025-1 Landfallowing Transfer to Del Puerto, Triangle T, and Westlands Water Districts up to 8,000 AF;
- SLCC 2025-2 Landowner to Self transfer on behalf of W.B. Timber, LLC up to 186 AF;
- SLCC 2025-3 Groundwater Exchange Transfer to San Luis, Del Puerto, and Panoche Water Districts up to 1,189 AF;
- SLCC 2025-4 Water Transfer to Panoche Water District under the Eastside Conveyance Project of up to 5,000 AF;
- FCWD 2025-01 Conserved Water Transfer to San Luis Water District of up to 1,500 AF;
- FCWD 2025-02 Conserved Water Transfer to Westlands Water District of up to 4,500 AF;
- FCWD 2025-03 Conserved Water Transfer to Panoche Water District of up to 1,500 AF;
- FCWD 2025-04 Conserved Water Transfer to Pacheco Water District of up to 500 AF;
- FCWD 2025-05 Landowner to Self Transfer on behalf of Turlock Fruit Co. of up to 500 AF;
- FCWD Groundwater Exchange Transfer to Pacheco, Panoche, San Luis and Westlands Water Districts – up to 7,500 AF

Following the report, a motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Director Michael to approve the Water Transfer Committee's recommendation as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

Executive Director White next presented Agenda item 11 D) regarding the Long-Term Water Acquisition Agreement between FCWD/CCID and Panoche Water District of up to 3,000 AF. He provided an overview of the program explaining that a report is due on an annual basis to Reclamation outlining the previous year's program. He said that this report has been submitted and recommends approval of this year's transfer of 3,000 AF to Panoche Water District.

A motion was made by Director Michael and seconded by Vice- Chair Stearns to approve the Annual of Long-term Water Acquisition Agreement as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

The February 24, 2025, Water Transfer Committee minutes were included for informational purposes.

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

Consultant David Cory recapped the report submitted by 13 agricultural water quality coalitions in order to comply with the Waste Discharge Requirements. He next stated that the State Water Resources Control Board has not yet determined the members of the expert panel who will be evaluating existing agricultural nitrate control programs for discharges to groundwater. In addition to this, the SWRCB staff has started a peer review process to evaluate the Groundwater Protection Targets developed by the Central Valley Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) coalitions to comply with the requirements in ILRP Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR).

He also provided an update on Management Zone noting the Valley Water Collaborative (VWC) is focused on developing early action plans and implementing a domestic well testing program. Regular meetings are being held with environmental justice groups to better understand their concerns related to the management zone and substitute water issues.

LEGISLATIVE REPORTS:

Executive Director White said a Legislative Committee meeting will be held on April 14th to review and discuss proposed bills. Groundwater issues remain a primary focus for several legislators. Additionally, at the Board meeting in May, there will be a Legislative and Public Outreach Quarterly live virtual report provided.

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 five items in litigation.

City of Fresno, et al. v. United States of America, no response has been received from the court regarding the rehearing request.

California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) Groundwater Cases - The court allowed the plaintiffs to amend their complaint to challenge the Single Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and reinstated the stay until the SWRCB completes its review.

Regarding the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation, the court determined that the review of land-based creatures downstream was inadequate. The case has been remitted back to the Superior Court to ensure the review is completed. The legal issue now centers on whether the Plaintiffs are entitled to all fees or only 1/25th of the fees, considering they challenged 25 issues and succeeded on only one.

Attorney McClure stated that regarding the Johnson vs. Rameriz, CCID is out of the case after successfully demurring three times. A motion to Quash Service of summons was filed on behalf of the Exchange Contractors and CCC, arguing improper serving. The court granted the order, confirming that the Exchange Contractors do not have to appear in the case. SLCC moved forward with a demure similar to CCID's, that is set for an upcoming hearing. FCWD was improperly named, and after receiving a letter from their legal counsel, no action is being taken by FCWD.

FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:

Columbia Canal Company: Manager Gardner reported that the current CCC deliveries are at 95 cfs. Total deliveries for March were 2,200 AF, which is 18% higher than the six-year average of 1,800 AF. Year-to-date- deliveries are 9% above the six-year average.

Firebaugh Canal Water District: Manager Bryant reported that March performance was below average. This is not unusual for the January through March timeframe, as they had some pre-irrigation during November and December.

Work continues on their solar project, including evaluating a potential second site. Additionally, working to acquire land for a conservation project near the Third Lift Canal, which includes plans for a holding reservoir. The team is also working on reallocating water rights and continuing environmental work related to the project.

San Luis Canal Company: In Manager Wiersma's absence, Director Michael reported that all projects continue to move forward.

Central California Irrigation District: Manager Martin stated that CCID obtained the Permission to Operate for the solar system, and they continue to work on their projects.

Manager Martin expressed appreciation for the team, specifically thanking Jeff Bryant, who traveled to lead a function for a Catholic school event in Gustine.

INFORMATIONAL:

The Executive Director referred to the upcoming Water Education Foundation lunch event on April 23 at the Delta Party Barn, and the ACWA Spring Conference from May 13th through 15th in Monterey.

Chair Cardella adjourned the meeting to a recess at 10:11 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

After a brief recess, the meeting was adjourned to Closed Session at 10:18 a.m.

The Chair returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:50 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 10:50 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