

**MINUTES  
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY  
HELD FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2025 AT 9:00 A.M.**

The Board of Directors of the ***San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)*** met in Regular Session on Friday, December 5, 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 Director  
**San Luis Canal Company (SLCC):** Cannon Michael, Director (via teleconference); John Wiersma, General Manager  
**Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD):** Mike Stearns, Vice-Chair; Jeff Bryant, General Manager (via teleconference)  
**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, Administrative Assistant

**PRESENT:**

Ethan Hansen, Waterwise; Jerri Chedester (departed 9:15 a.m.); Alexis Chedester (departed 9:15 a.m.); Josh Chedester (departed 9:15 a.m.); Tyler Ryles (departed 9:15 a.m.); and David Cory, Consultant (arrived 9:11 a.m.)

The following participated via Conference Call:

Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; Kimberly Brown, CCC Director; Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; and Don Wright, Journalist

**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 November 7, 2025 Regular Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the minutes as presented. Upon a roll call vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Executive Director White recognized Steve Chedester, Director of Policy and Programs, for his 30 years of dedication to the Exchange Contractors.

**BOARD TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 2025 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Marisol Bonilla provided a summary of the November 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. Upon a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

**WATER REPORT:**

The Water Resources Specialist reported that due to the mid-November rainfall, most of the water operations were shut down. The San Joaquin River is currently flowing at 480 cubic feet per second (cfs), and the San Joaquin River Restoration Program's (SJRRP) target flow is 150 cfs, and levels should remain in that range through February.

Shasta Reservoir is currently at 2,683,113 Acre Feet (AF); San Luis Reservoir is at 1,293.483 AF, with the federal share at 383,568 AF; and Millerton Reservoir's storage is currently at 315,713 AF.

November began with pumping at full capacity, with five units running. With the DCI repair project and water quality issues in the Delta, pumping has been reduced to one unit this week. Mr. Hoffman said the DCI project is ahead of schedule, which is beneficial because it allows them to also address the fire suppression system without additional pumping losses. The project should be completed within the next two weeks, and hopefully storms will arrive in that same timeframe to increase pumping opportunities. Currently, there is nothing in the six-day forecast across the state.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

The Executive Director reported that the SJRRP Sack Dam project is under construction, with significant sheet pile installation underway. Additionally, an agreement has been reached on the facility's operations plan to follow construction, marking major progress on both fronts.

Mr. White reported that the member entities are all dealing with the presence of golden mussel, which has been detected throughout each of their systems. Each district is addressing the issue individually, and it is hoped that ongoing studies will soon produce a more efficient, systemwide management approach.

An update on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), it was mentioned that the domestic well mitigation policy has been adopted by all partners, and signatures are being gathered. Most partners have also approved of the new JPA, and signatures will be collected for that as well.

Regarding water transfers, approvals were given to move water this month to both Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District and Westlands Water District.

The Community Infrastructure Program has been fully awarded, all agreements have been returned, and activity is beginning. Manager Martin reported that CCID is still waiting for the Firebaugh School District to finalize their project concepts. Once received, CCID hopes to perform some of the preliminary work more cost-effectively.

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:**

Mr. Chedester reported that there are few new updates for the SJRRP. Reclamation still anticipates having the project 90% planned by the end of February 2026. The meeting with Denver has been postponed until additional design work is completed. For the levees buyout in Reach 2B, design work can continue, but the buyout and required consultation have not yet begun, which will result in further delays.

Blueprint has an agreement with Metropolitan Water District (MWD) to conduct a groundwater investigation program, with MWD providing paperwork support and in-kind services from Blueprint agency staff. The Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley focused primarily on environmental considerations is also underway, with comments due. Chapter 5 will cover the evaluation of potential solutions and Chapter 6 entails recommendation for a path forward. These documents are still in draft form.

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

Mr. Chedester reported that the breakers were delivered to the electrical contractor and installed this week at the Orestimba Creek project. Testing of the Rubicon gate is scheduled for today, with pump testing planned for next week. Once testing is complete, the contractor can sign off, and the related grant process finalized. Mr. Chedester also stated that the recovery well location and construction process have begun, bids are being collected, test holes have already been drilled, and the 35 cfs recharged from the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC) will continue through the end of the month.

Regarding the Los Banos Creek Reservoir Regulation project, ground was broken in late October and by November 10<sup>th</sup>, construction was underway. Progress includes advancement on the 450

cfs culvert crossing beneath the creek, and delivery and fusion of most of the 40-to-54-inch HDP conveyance pipe.

Executive Director White reported that the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project is targeting February 6th for completion of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The draft EIS, which includes the newly resolved road-alignment issue, was posted online December 5<sup>th</sup> for public commenting. Additionally, the 30% design review has been completed, and a meeting is planned this month to discuss the comments in detail.

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

David Cory reported that the primary focus now is the Agricultural Expert Panel, which held a productive meeting on November 14. Ken Miller provided a modeling presentation, and the goal remains to preserve current Central Valley practices without imposing them on the rest of the state. Their recommendations are expected by the end of January and will then be released for public review. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) staff will use the panel's recommendations to propose changes to the Irrigated Lands Program, which will then undergo a separate, formal SWRCB review.

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT:**

Mr. White referred to both lobbyist reports included in the packet for informational purposes.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:**

The updated report from Lighthouse Public Affairs was outlined.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT:**

Attorney Andrew McClure provided updates on several legal matters.

*City of Fresno et al. v. United States of America:* The petition is scheduled for a Supreme Court conference on December 12.

*Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir CEQA litigation:* The appeal period for the attorney fee award has passed, and the opposing attorney is not challenging the \$64,000 award, allowing payment to proceed. The remaining task is to publish the supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addressing the downstream terrestrial resources issue.

*Johnson v. PG&E:* The Exchange Contractors have filed a demurrer. The hearing originally scheduled for December 21 has been rescheduled by the court to December 23, and no opposition has been filed yet.

*McClure reported on the McMullin Area GSA Aquaterra Groundwater Bank Draft EIR:* A project covering 4,600 acres south of Mendota Pool in the Kings Subbasin. The project proposes storing up to 800,000 acre-feet of water, with annual recharge of up to 208,000 AF and recovery

of 148,000 AF. Draft comments are being developed and included in the closed-session packet, with the comment deadline occurring this month.

**FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER'S REPORTS:**

**Columbia Canal Company (CCC):**

Manager Gardner reported average deliveries for the month and shut down the system on November 24 to begin maintenance projects. Staff are currently dewatering and pumping down the system, and contractors have begun work.

**Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD):**

Manager Bryant reported an average irrigation month and noted that they are isolating areas within the canal system to complete maintenance while continuing water deliveries. They are addressing a significant Golden Mussel infestation observed at their No. 1 pump station and plan to dewater all four pump stations in order to remove the mussels manually, followed by monitoring and testing to track regrowth, which is expected.

**San Luis Canal Company (SLCC):**

Manager Wiersma reported a low-average month for November and noted that two contractors are actively working on canal lining projects. Between engineering support, maintenance work, and winter construction activities including the installation of new Rubicon gates, SLCC is operating at full capacity. SLCC is also assisting with the SJRRP scheduling, surveying, and engineering needs, and continues work associated with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) while increasing focus on the Golden Mussel issues.

**Central California Irrigation District (CCID):**

Manager Martin reported that they plan to test a Rubicon automatic flow-control gate on a large community ditch next year. The system will allow growers to remotely adjust water deliveries, reducing the need for manual gate operation. The pilot project aims to determine whether the district's recent technological advancements can be effectively extended to the grower level. Installation is planned for the coming weeks, followed by account setup for water users.

**JANUARY BOARD MEETING:**

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Fontana to change the January Board meeting to Friday, January 10, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

The Executive Director recapped the meetings scheduled for the upcoming trip to Washington D.C. and announced that the Water Users Conference is scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup> through January 30<sup>th</sup> in Reno.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

Chair Cardella adjourned the meeting to Closed Session and called for a short recess at 9:57 a.m. The meeting was reconvened to Closed Session at 10:00 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 10:18 a.m. and reported that direction was provided to legal counsel and staff.

No further business came before the Board; the meeting was adjourned at 10:18 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