

**MINUTES  
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY  
HELD FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026**

The Board of Directors of the *San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA)* met in Regular Session on Friday, March 6, 2026 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 and Programs; Joann White, Director of Finance and Administration; Adam Hoffman, Water Resources Specialist; and Marisol Bonilla, Administrative Assistant

**PRESENT:**

Andrew McClure, Minasian Law; and David Cory, Consultant

The following participated via Conference Call:

Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard; Mitch Partovi, The Water Agency, Inc.; Dominic DiMare, Arc Strategies (via Zoom 9:30 – 10:00 a.m.); Landon Stropko, Invariant (via Zoom 9:30 – 10:00 a.m.); and, Andy Lynch, Lighthouse Public Affairs (via Zoom 9:30 – 10:00 a.m.)

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Chris 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:**

The Executive Director asked to move up agenda items #16 and 17 to have the lobbyist firms, along with the public relations firm, provide their quarterly report to the Board.

Introductions were provided by those present in person and participating by phone.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The unapproved minutes from the February 6, 2026 Board meeting were presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve of 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 FEBRUARY 2026 EXPENDITURES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Marisol Bonilla provided a summary of the February 2026 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 approved.

**WATER REPORT:**

The Water Resources Specialist recapped the initial 2026 water allocations for Central Valley Contractors released by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The Exchange Contractors received a non-critical year determination allowing 100% allocation and South of the Delta CVP contractors were only provided with a 15% allocation based on the present data. The Friant Division water supply allocation under their Class 1 supply also received 100% allocation, with Class 2 currently at 0%. These allocations are preliminary and may change as water supply conditions develop.

Mr. Hoffman informed the San Joaquin River flows are around 200 cubic feet per second (cfs) increasing by about 50 cfs per day until April. The reservoir storage conditions improved during February due to late-month storms. Shasta Reservoir currently holds about 3,885,308 acre-feet (AF), San Luis Reservoir is at 1,743,005 AF with the state side at 1,050,188 AF and the federal side at 692,817 AF. Millerton Reservoir also increased to 373,070 AF, and upstream reservoirs remain at the same storage due to warm temperatures melting lower-elevation snow. The pumping operations at the Jones Pumping Plant are currently running at five units.

Mr. White said that he and Mr. Hoffman have been participating in regional meetings regarding Delta operations.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

The Executive Director reported on a site visit of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) projects with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Assistant Administrator, Eugenio Pineiro Soler.

Regarding the SJRRP, the construction plans for the fish screen facilities is approximately 90% complete and Reclamation is also expected to release a design build bid package in July for the South Canal project.

Legislative outreach has included meetings in Washington, D.C. with congressional staff to discuss program priorities. Upcoming activities include a Legislative Committee meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup>; a Sacramento legislative tour on March 24<sup>th</sup>; and a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 7<sup>th</sup> at the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam, with state, federal, and local dignitaries have been invited.

Manager Martin reported the Delta-Mendota Subbasin Joints Powers Authority continues to meet every Monday. The hearing on this matter before the State Water Resources Control Board has been scheduled for April 7<sup>th</sup>.

Executive Director said work continues regarding evaluating the costs of the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project, with updated analysis expected to be presented soon to the committee and brought back to the Board.

**LEGISLATIVE AND PUBLIC OUTREACH REPORTS:**

Dominic DiMare of Arc Strategies presented an overview of the California state budget explaining that the governor's proposed budget totals approximately \$349 billion. Negotiations are still in early stages and will continue through June. DiMare also noted that regarding water legislation, approximately 28 bills are being tracked, with relatively few directly affecting water rights.

Landon Stropko of Invariant provided the federal update discussing the ongoing process for the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir project, noting that Representative Adam Gray's office has been supportive. Stropko explained that requests are currently being submitted through multiple congressional offices, after which members will prioritize projects before forwarding them to the Appropriations Committee.

Andy Lynch of Lighthouse Public Affairs next provided the communications update. Recent efforts include promoting the Community Infrastructure Fund grants, publishing articles by leadership in the Westside Express, updating social media, and creating informational materials that explain the history and importance of the Exchange Contractors and their water rights. Other

activities include responding to media inquiries and preparing coverage for upcoming events such as the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam ribbon-cutting ceremony.

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY & PROGRAMS REPORT:**

Steve Chedester provided a review of his Board report.

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

Steve Chedester informed the pumping plant at the Orestimba Creek Recharge and Recovery was successfully tested and operated properly during the trial run. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for April 14.

The Los Banos Creek Reservoir Regulation project, where the 450-cfs box culvert has been completed. Water levels at the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam recently rose by approximately 5,000 AF, which temporarily prevents completion of the boat ramp until releases lower the water level. Installation of the 54-inch and 30-inch pipelines has been completed. The team is also addressing a Golden Mussel issue and is evaluating filtration options to eliminate the mussels.

Executive Director White reported public comments on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were completed, and responses were submitted to Reclamation before the end of the February deadline. Reclamation is now reviewing those responses, and a one-year extension has been granted by the Department of the Interior if needed.

**WATER TRANSFER PROGRAM:**

The Executive Director reviewed several 2026 water transfer proposals included in the Board packet. He explained that the Water Transfer Committee reviewed the information and recommended approval of the following transfers:

- SLCC 2026-1 Landfallowing transfer to Semitropic Water Storage District of up to 8,622 AF
- SLCC 2026-2 Landowner to self transfer in Westlands Water District - WB Timber, LLC of up to 162 AF
- SLCC 2026-3 Groundwater Exchange transfer from SLCC to San Luis Water District - up to 1,545 AF
- SLCC 2026-4 Water transfer from SLCC to Panoche Water District and Triangle T Water District under the Eastside Conveyance Project - up to 7,000 AF
- FCWD 2026-01 Conserved water transfer to Westlands Water District up to 4,500 AF
- FCWD 2026-02 Conserved water transfer to San Luis Water District - up to 1,500 AF
- FCWD 2026-03 Conserved water transfer to Panoche Water District - up to 1,500 AF
- FCWD 2026-04 Conserved water transfer to Pacheco Water District - up to 500 AF
- FCWD 2026-05 Landowner to self transfer in Westlands Water District and Panoche Water District - Turlock Fruit Co. of up to 804 AF

- FCWD Groundwater Exchange Transfer from FCWD of up to 3,965 AF to Pacheco, Panoche, San Luis and Westlands Water Districts

A motion was made by Director Michael and seconded by Director Fontana to approve the recommendation from the Water Transfer Committee as reported. The motion was unanimously carried.

**WATER TRANSFER AGREEMENT BETWEEN EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS AND SANTA CLARA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT (2026-2030):**

Executive Director White recapped the Water Transfer Agreement between Exchange Contractors and Santa Clara Valley Water District for the years of 2026 to 2030 and recommended Board approval.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Stearns and seconded by Director Michael to approve the Water Transfer Agreement between Exchange Contractors and Santa Clara Valley Water District (2026-2030). The motion was unanimously carried.

**MENDOTA POOL GROUP (MPG):**

Steve Chedester explained that the annual MPG Technical Committee meeting consisting of consultants and staff was held on February 24<sup>th</sup> and reviewed the Pumping and Monitoring Program, Recharge Program and Draft Proposed 2026 MPG Pumping Program. He said it was determined that all the data was in compliance with the agreement and recommends approval of the proposed MPG 2026 pumping program.

A motion was made by Director Fontana and seconded by Vice-Chair Stearns to approve the recommended Mendota Pool Group 2026 Program. The motion was unanimously carried.

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

Consultant, David Cory reported that the SWRCB Second Statewide Agricultural Expert Panel is expected to produce a draft report by late March. The report will undergo a 30-to 45-day public comment period. The panel will then hold a final meeting to review comments and update the report before submitting it to the SWRCB staff in June.

The Nitrate Control Program draft order implementing a nitrogen management plan for the Modesto management zone was released. Public comments on the draft order are due by April 15, and the Regional Board is expected to consider adopting it in early June. Although the order applies only to the Modesto area, it will likely serve as a template for other management zones, establishing deadlines and compliance requirements for agriculture.

Chairman Cardella reminded everyone of the deadline for submittal of the Nitrate Plans is approaching.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT:**

Attorney Andrew McClure provided updates on

*Johnson v. PG&E et. al.:* The court has not yet signed the order related to the Exchange Contractors.

*Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir Project Environmental Review Procedures and Litigations:* Responded to comments on the NEPA environmental document with assistance from consultants. Once Del Puerto Water District formally adopts the updated environmental document, there will be a 30-day statute of limitations for any new legal challenges.

**FOUR ENTITIES' MANAGER REPORTS:**

**Columbia Canal Company:** Manager Gardner reported that CCC started water deliveries on February 16 and delivered around 600 AF.

**Firebaugh Canal Water District:** Manager Bryant also said FCWD's water deliveries were minimal.

**San Luis Canal Company:** Manager Wiersma said that SLCC also had low deliveries in February. Working on preparations for the annual meeting and elections. Expecting demands to start increasing next week and continue to rise after that. They have also set up some traps to monitor Golden Mussels and identify vulnerable areas in the system.

**Central California Irrigation District:** Manager Martin reported currently delivering about 500 cfs.; working on CCID annual grower's meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> as well as the Los Banos Creek Ribbon Cutting event, and the April 14<sup>th</sup> the Orestimba Creek Ribbon Cutting ceremony.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

Executive Director White recapped some upcoming events through April and May.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

The meeting was adjourned to Closed Session and a short recess was called at 10:41 a.m. The meeting was reconvened to Closed Session at 10:50 a.m.

Chair Cardella returned the meeting to Open Session at 11:20 a.m. and announced that direction was given to staff and legal counsel.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 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