



Meeting Minutes

Meeting of the California Water Commission
Wednesday, May 20, 2020
Remote Meeting
Beginning at 9:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Quintero called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Executive Secretary Kimberly Muljat called the roll. Commission members Teresa Alvarado, Carol Baker, Daniel Curtin, Armando Quintero, and Matt Swanson were present, constituting a quorum.

3. Closed Session

The Commission did not hold a closed session.

4. Approval of February 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Baker moved to approve the February 19, 2020, meeting minutes. All Commissioners present voted in favor.

5. Executive Officer's Report

Executive Officer Joe Yun reported that the final Water Resilience Portfolio has not been released and item 11 on the agenda, which is related to a role assigned to the Commission in the draft Portfolio, has been postponed. The Commission received a letter signed by six applicants from the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) asking that the program be modified to assist with the COVID-19 related economic downturn. This will be placed on a future agenda to discuss possible options and actions for Commission decisions. Mr. Yun announced the retirement of Assistant Executive Officer Jennifer Ruffolo. The interview process to hire her replacement is currently underway. Commissioner Alvarado expressed her appreciation to Ms. Ruffolo for her service.

The Commission took public comments. Jerry Brown, Executive Director for the Sites Project, asked the Commission to direct staff to conduct a review of WSIP implementation requirements and make changes as broadly as possible to respond to the economic downturn from COVID-19. Fiona Sanchez, Director of Water Resources with Irvine Ranch Water District, requested the Commission consider providing all WSIP applicants an opportunity to apply for early funding to help balance the financial impacts of COVID-19, as well as adjusting the schedule deadlines due to force majeure conditions. Leland Frayseth, citizen, expressed concern for California's current budget situation and feels WSIP funds should be redirected to help fix the deficit.

6. Commission Member Reports

There were no reports.

7. Public Testimony

Leland Frayseth, citizen, spoke about the numerous public information requests he has submitted to the Commission, the Division of Safety of Dams, and the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority regarding the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project, and expressed his dissatisfaction with spending taxpayer funds on the project.

8. Action Item: Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) Request for Additional Early Funding Under the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP)

Amy Young, WSIP Program Manager, provided an overview of WSIP early funding regulations and the award decisions from July 2018. At that time CCWD was eligible to receive five percent of their maximum conditional eligibility determination (MCED) in early funding. They requested and were awarded three percent, and are now requesting the additional two percent. Ms. Young concluded that due to expenditures associated with the progress of their project, CCWD could use the full five percent early funding prior to the final award hearing.

Marguerite Patil, CCWD's Program Manager for Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project, presented a brief overview of the project, its proposed benefits, and potential partners. In July 2018 CCWD received an MCED of \$459 million and were eligible for \$22.95 million in early funding. They requested \$13.65 million in early funding and are now asking for the additional \$9.3 million for planning and permitting as work is progressing faster than they had planned. Ms. Patil explained that accelerated federal funding and new costs for state agency permitting staff also contribute to the need for additional early funding. Ms. Patil requested the Commission authorize an amendment to CCWD's early funding agreement to provide additional early funding.

The Commission took public comments. Leland Frayseth, citizen and CCWD customer, expressed his concern for the condition of the existing dam and the reservoir water quality and questioned CCWD's claim of WIIN Act funding. Mark Smith, with Grassland Water District, expressed his support for the project and their request for additional early funding, and looks forward to seeing the ecosystem benefits materialize.

Commissioner Alvarado moved to increase early funding for CCWD up to five percent. Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion. All Commissioners present voted in favor.

9. Action Item: Annual Review of the State Water Project

Jennifer Ruffolo, Assistant Executive Officer, presented the main points of the draft 2019 Annual Review of the Construction and Operations of the State Water Project (SWP). Three of the key issues in 2019 included the release of the SWP Vulnerability Assessment, Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-10-19, and the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) completion of recovery work at Oroville Dam. The report also includes information about SWP water deliveries and power generation, dam safety activities, coordinated operation with the Central Valley Project, incidental take permits under the California Endangered Species Act, forecast informed reservoir operations (FIRO), California Aqueduct subsidence, ecosystem

restoration, and construction project updates. Ms. Ruffolo then highlighted the Commission's findings, which include that DWR has kept the Commission apprised of its progress in implementing its strategic plan and that DWR continues to take significant steps to address climate change. Ms. Ruffolo discussed the proposed recommendations and noted that the recommended actions are critical to the SWP's resilience to climate change. Some of the topics in the recommendations, like FIRO, will be long-term activities. Staff will continue to work with DWR to keep the Commission and public apprised of SWP activities.

Commissioner Baker moved to approve the 2019 Annual Review of the State Water Project. Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion. All Commissioners present voted in favor.

10. Priorities for California's Water

Alvar Escriva-Bou, Research Fellow with the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Water Policy Center, briefed the Commission on how to prepare California's water system for climate extremes. Water management must adapt to climate change; population growth; and groundwater sustainability requirements. The relationships between state, federal and local agencies must also evolve. Climate pressures have broad impacts on California water management, and addressing them requires an innovative, integrated portfolio of solutions. PPIC identified priorities including modernizing the water grid; preparing for changing supply and demand; providing safe, affordable, reliable drinking water; reducing wildfire risk in headwater forests; and improving the health of freshwater ecosystems. Watershed-wide solutions and planning are key to improving resilience. Mr. Escriva-Bou outlined four principles for managing water in a changing climate: flexibility to manage increased volatility and build resilience; incentives to implement smarter and more flexible management; alignment across agencies to make it easier to trade water, re-charge aquifers, and restore ecosystems; and multi-benefit approaches to broaden cooperation and leverage more sources of funding. Improving conveyance can help us adapt to water scarcity and reduce flood risk. Challenges to improved conveyance include funding and easing local concerns about transferring water between basins, counties, and regions. Mr. Escriva-Bou highlighted that collaboration is necessary for lasting solutions and said California must work across regions.

11. State Role in Financing Regional Conveyance Infrastructure

This item was postponed.

12. Consideration of Items for Next California Water Commission Meeting

Agenda items at the next meeting will include a briefing on SWP efforts to improve habitat for endangered fish species in the Delta, discussion of the WSIP applicant letter, and an update on the current status of WSIP projects. Commissioner Baker expressed her appreciation to Ms. Ruffolo for her service.

13. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned at 11:22 am.