California
WATER COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Meeting of the California Water Commission
Wednesday, December 12, 2012

State of California, Resources Building
1416 Ninth Street, First Floor Auditorium
Sacramento, California 95814
Beginning at 9:30 a.m.

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
   Chairman Anthony Saracino called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

2. **Roll Call**
   Commission Policy Analyst, Rachel Ballanti called roll. Andy Ball, Joe Byrne, Joe Del Bosque, Kim Delfino, Luther Hintz, and Anthony Saracino were present, constituting a quorum. Danny Curtin was absent.

3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
   A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes from the November 14, 2012 meeting. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

4. **Executive Officer's Report**
   Rachel Ballanti provided the Executive Officer's Report. The Annual Review of the SWP is being drafted and will be brought to the Commission in January for approval. The Commission is working with DWR on the California Water Summit, which will be held in the spring. The Commission members were provided with a report from the California Roundtable on Food and Water Supply on water storage options. Mr. Byrne briefed the Commission on the State Water Project (SWP) Town Hall event at the ACWA Conference on December 5, which featured a panel discussion between himself, Carl Torgersen of DWR, Joan Maher of the State Water Contractors, and was moderated by Commission Executive Officer Sue Sims. An important take-away point was that the Commission will continue to work with DWR and the State Water Contractors to address needs related to aging infrastructure, budget and new investments, and maintaining a highly qualified and skilled workforce on the SWP. . The event was successful and well received from ACWA.

5. **Briefing on California Water Plan Forest Management Strategy**

   Chris Keithley from Cal Fire presented the Forest Management Strategy for the California Water Plan. A collaborative approach was taken as there are several types of ownership of forest land in

the state. California has 32 million acres of forest, and this forest land base can affect water quality and supply. Much of California's water supply originates in those forest lands and California is home to many different types of forests. The Forest Management Strategy outlines how different types of Forest Management Actions affect water supply. Previous research has shown vegetation removal to have a limited effect on water supply. Removing vegetation will increase the water yield; however, this is only a temporary benefit as this will largely disappear when the vegetation grows back. Wildfires influence water quality with increased sediment, greater erosion, and by changing nutrients. For this reason, vegetation management fuel reduction projects include cutting lower limbs and clearing out dense areas.

The Forest Management strategy takes into consideration the benefits of urban forests including filtering storm water and air pollution, and moderating temperatures. Mountain meadows will have more importance as natural reservoirs as climate change affects the timing and release of water. Riparian forest benefits include maintaining stream temperature and flood management. Climate change impacts will lead to changes in forests and forest management including the potential for large wildland fires which can trigger flooding, dangerous erosion and debris flow. Marijuana cultivation on public lands also affects water quality when herbicides and fertilizers are used near streams. The Forest Management Strategy makes several recommendations including; 1) further research on the effects of forest management activities on water quality, 2) continued monitoring and evaluation, 3) coordination of forest management activities across watersheds, and 4) consistent funding for activities such as watershed restoration and tree planting. He noted that the Water Plan has been an effective forum for coordination across agencies.

Barry Hill, Regional Hydrologist for USDA Forest Service, briefed the Commission on the Sierra Nevada Meadow Hydrology Assessment. Before discussing Meadow Assessment, he noted that efforts working with the State Water Resources Control Board to get a blanket permit for work needed to comply with the Clean Water Act on national lands recently fell through. The Assessment will have to be revised to include this issue. Addressing an earlier question from Mr. Saracino, Mr. Hill stated grazing contributes to meadow degradation; however there are other issues that contribute as well. Ms. Delfino asked if the Forest Service is doing any research on different grazing regimes, noting that grazing can sometimes be beneficial. Mr. Hill is unaware of any current studies but referred to the Range Management Program which includes a long term monitoring program that looks at riparian zones which are grazed.

Mr. Hill stated the purpose of the Meadow Hydrology Assessment is to estimate the amount of restored groundwater that could support summer stream flow on forest lands by assessing and monitoring erosion. Previous studies show that restoring meadows will increase base flow or duration. While not all results of the assessment are available, preliminary results of the show an estimated 200,000 acres of meadows on National Forest land; about 50% of those meadows are eroded. There is potential to positively affect water resources by restoring these meadows. Additionally, evapotranspiration from meadows is less than previously thought. Finally, meadows

are getting their water from surrounding aquifers; this information will be important in understanding how meadows interact with the watershed.

Mr. Hill also spoke about the impact of wildfires, which influence erosion rates and nutrient and sediment deliveries by increasing them to 10,000 times their natural rate for approximately five years after the fires. Planting trees after a wildfire has limitations due to funding, but an effort is made to plant about half as many as were burned. Ms. Delfino noted the discussion was framed around DWR's water strategy and asked how the strategy feeds back in to current U.S. Forest Service Forest Plan Management updates for the Sierra Nevada. Mr. Hill said they are referencing the Water Plan and rely on the plan for conditions and trends for that assessment.

8. State Water Project Facilities Update

David Roose, Chief of DWR's State Water Project Operations Control Office, provided an update on the fire at the Ronald B. Robie Pumping-Generating Plant. A fire broke out in the unmanned plant on November 22, 2012 at approximately 0600. Units 1-4 were paralleled and then tripped and within an hour the plant basically shut down. At approximately 0700, an operator apprentice at a remote location was directed to the site and reported heavy smoke and indicated that the CO2 systems had discharged. Hyatt Powerplant was notified and CalFire engaged immediately. However, they were unable to enter the building until approximately 0820 when electricity had been shut off. By 1300 hours, CalFire had to stand down due to the intensity of the fire after unsuccessfully attempting to extinguish the fire. They then deployed an unmanned nozzle to fight to fire, which was finally extinguished at 1300 on November 23. The plant was turned back to DWR and staff began incident command mode. DWR has hired a fire expert to determine the causes of the fire. Additionally, plant staff are currently being interviewed and previous maintenance work is being documented. Once the cause of the fire has been determined, an assessment will take place to ensure another fire does not occur in other SWP facilities for the same reason. Water flow to the State Water Project will not be impacted as water can bypass around the plant. The fire does not seem related to the recruitment and retention issue, although it may play a role in restoration of the plant. Mr. Roose also commended DWR employee Mr. Kevin Mefford for his assistance in extinguishing the fire while keeping everyone safe.

Mr. Ball asked why an alarm was not connected directly to the fire department, as required by the State fire code, and why the CO2 was not successful in extinguishing the fire. Mr. Roose stated he will look into these questions and return with an answer when the failure analysis is completed.

Terry Becker, Chief of the Civil Engineering Branch, provided the Commission with an update on activities at the Alamo Powerplant. Currently, DWR is getting final approvals for design and installation of a second generating unit at the Plant. The bay for the second generating unit was originally installed in anticipation of enlarging the East Branch of the aqueduct. If approved, installation is projected to be completed in April 2018 at a cost of approximately $35 million.

Mr. Ball asked if the Francis Unit was chosen for its steady initial flow. Mr. Becker stated the unit was chosen for its efficiency, as it will be used primarily over the first unit. Mr. Ball also asked why additional environmental documents where needed if the original plans for the plant included the installation of the second unit. Mr. Becker stated the environmental studies were related to the potential installation of a surge tank, which was not a part of the original plan. Mr. Ball commented the project seems to be scheduled to take longer than it should.

Mr. Becker also clarified the cost benefit ratio was determined by comparing the market value of the energy to the projected cost of obtaining equivalent energy. He also noted plans to enlarge the East Branch were postponed due to the focus on addressing Delta issues. He also clarified funding for the second pump at Alamo will be based on State Water Project revenue bond sales.

9. Discussion of Issues Regarding Public Benefits of Water Projects

Ajay Goyal provided a draft issue paper on the definition of ecosystem benefits, discussing which benefits should be eligible for public funding under the current language of the proposed water bond. Two approaches to categorizing benefits have been developed. Under the first approach, any benefit resulting from restoration of water ecosystems and native fish and wildlife would count as an ecosystem benefit. The second approach categorizes benefits based on the type of benefit obtained, whether or not it was enabled by restoration of water ecosystems and native fish and wildlife. Other issues identified include benefits to non-native fish and restoration habitat. Mr. Saracino stated the issue paper would be used to discuss these issues further at future meetings and at an upcoming Commission working on public benefits of water storage projects. Mr. Del Bosque requested more input on water quality benefits. Mr. Goyal also stated a briefing paper on the options to be discussed at the workshop will be available several weeks before the workshop takes place, likely in mid-March.

6. Action Item: Approval of Meeting Schedule for 2013

Maggie Hunnicutt, Commission Staff Services Analyst, presented the meeting schedule for 2013. The Commission agreed with the staff recommendation of continuing meeting on the third Wednesday of each month, with an option to meet on the second Wednesday in December to accommodate holiday schedules.

7. Action Item: Approval of Commission Workplan

Rachel Ballanti presented the updated Commission Workplan for approval. Changes requested at the October 2012 meeting were incorporated and included additional information on groundwater and conservation. Additions were also made the to the monthly actions section, which included water conservation issues such as updates on urban and agricultural water

measurement plans. Events such as a briefing on the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring program, participation in the Water Plan's groundwater caucus and the Groundwater Resources Association Annual Conference were also added. The timing of submittal of public comments on the Bay Delta Conservation Project has been updated. Staff will continue to update this document throughout the year.

The Commission unanimously approved the 2013 Workplan.

10. Action Item: Election of Commission Chair and Vice-Chair

Mr. Hintz made a motion to appoint Mr. Byrne as Chair and Mr. Del Bosque as Vice-Chair, effective January 1, 2013 for one year terms. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

11. Consideration of items for next California Water Commission meeting

Topics for the January meeting will include the SWP Annual Review, SWP Encroachment Regulations, the Integrated Water Management Summit, regulations calendar for the Office of Administrative Law, and a briefing on a new modeling system for ecosystem benefits.

Ms. Ballanti confirmed the SWP Annual Review will include the work that the Commission has done this past year and their recommendations regarding the management of the project.

12. Public Comments

None

Mr. Saracino adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.