

# DRAFT

## PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

### Hugh M. Burns Building, Fresno, California

Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP)

California Water Commission (Commission)

April 15, 2015

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS

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### Introduction

The Commission has made community and stakeholder engagement one of its key priorities in developing the WSIP. Their intent is to educate Californians about Proposition 1 (Prop 1), the WSIP and to gain feedback on program development through a robust engagement process involving public meetings, a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), hearing testimony at Commission meetings, and obtaining feedback through open comment periods. Their second public meeting was held at the Hugh M. Burns Building in Fresno. Approximately 45 residents living south of the Delta attended the meeting. California Water Commissioners Joseph Byrne, Paula Daniels, Joe Del Bosque, Maria Herrera, Armando Quintero and Anthony Saracino attended. Juliana Birkhoff, senior mediator/facilitator for the Sacramento State, Center for Collaborative Policy, facilitated the meeting. Meeting materials can be downloaded from [https://cwc.ca.gov/Pages/2015/04\\_April/041515PublicMeetingAgenda.aspx](https://cwc.ca.gov/Pages/2015/04_April/041515PublicMeetingAgenda.aspx).

### Meeting Welcome

Acting Executive Officer Rachel Ballanti welcomed attendees and invited each Commissioner to introduce themselves. Each spoke briefly about their background and their familiarity with the region. They also expressed deep interest in hearing from those attending the meeting and the public at large. After remarks from the last Commissioner, Ms. Ballanti returned to the podium to thank the Commission staff for their work and introduced Ms. Birkhoff. Ms. Birkhoff greeted attendees, reviewed the meeting agenda, as well as provided ground rules and safety information.

### Proposition 1 and the WSIP Program

Following this, Ms. Ballanti and Project Manager Jennifer Marr presented an overview of Prop 1 and Chapter 8, the Commission’s role, and the WSIP. The PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from [https://cwc.ca.gov/Pages/2015/04\\_April/041515PublicMeetingAgenda.aspx](https://cwc.ca.gov/Pages/2015/04_April/041515PublicMeetingAgenda.aspx).

## Public Comment

Ms. Birkhoff facilitated the public comment portion of the meeting. She ensured that all attendees had an equal opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Attendees asked questions and commented about Prop 1, the WSIP, potential storage project locations, as well as other general comments about water and the drought. The following is a summary of these questions and comments.

### Major Themes

#### *Proposition 1 Questions and Comments*

One attendee explained that voters in this region believed that Prop 1 was intended to fund Sites and Temperance Flat reservoirs and suggested that the funds allocated must provide real water. Commissioner Saracino explained that Chapter 8 (of Prop 1) was written specifically around public benefits and processes. He also explained that the Commission is looking at integrated projects in an effort to ensure that a set of projects provide the benefits intended.

#### *WSIP Questions and Comments*

Attendees had a variety of questions and comments about the Commission's goals, program focus, funding, project eligibility, measurement and benefits to the region.

The Commissioners were asked about their short-term goals given the program timeline. Commissioner Del Bosque explained that the state's Water Action Plan provides some short-term goals. Commissioner Saracino added that the Commission's short-term goals for the WSIP include ensuring the program is able to provide funding in a timely manner by meeting its timeline goals and through providing technical assistance to applicants.

One attendee asked about being included in SAC membership and how the Commission intends to use the information provided by the committee to develop the WSIP. Ms. Marr explained that project staff is still reviewing requests for inclusion on the SAC. Staff will make final decisions before the next SAC Meeting. Commissioner Byrne explained that the SAC is an advisory committee charged with advising the Commission. It has no voting power. Ms. Birkhoff explained that CCP is working with the Commission and DWR to help the SAC seek common ground/themes, knowing there will not be enough time to reach consensus. The Commission will use information from its monthly meetings, the public meetings and SAC to make informed decisions for the WSIP.

Regarding program focus, one attendee asked why there is such a focus on the ecosystem given the current water restrictions. Commissioner Saracino explained that the goal of the program is to develop additional water supply for the future. Commissioners Quintero and Del Bosque explained that the Commission is looking for projects that demonstrate partnerships and integration. This can include partnerships between the north and the south.

There were a few questions about spending Chapter 8 funds and ensuring that partnerships do not dissolve after funding has been awarded. One attendee asked if the funds would be distributed over multiple years. Ms. Marr explained that it is a goal of the program to have all funding distributed by 2022. She also noted that the Commission intends to have one solicitation to allocate all of the \$2.7 billion but if this does not occur, it will initiate a second solicitation. In addition, funds could be staggered in time because of the wide variety and scale of projects. Another attendee asked whether any of the \$2.7 billion would be used for costs associated with administering the WSIP. Commissioner Byrne explained that the Commission is aware that there can be high costs associated with administering these types of programs; however, he noted that the Commission intends to spend very little on administration of the program. The statute includes a 5% cap on funds to administer the program.

On the issue of eligibility, several attendees expressed concern about requirements for projects to have measurable benefits to the Delta or its tributaries. They indicated this might reduce the likelihood of funding for projects south of the Delta as it could exclude some agencies and projects. They asked how projects south of the Delta could potentially qualify. Commissioner Del Bosque reminded attendees that this requirement also includes Delta tributaries. Commissioner Saracino added that projects in the southern region could create benefits to the Delta by reducing regional reliance on the Delta or possibly partner with other projects providing direct benefits to the Delta. Ms. Marr explained that potential projects would be able to better determine their eligibility before the end of 2015 when the draft regulations and guidelines will be available for public review. Prior to the release of these documents, projects can also review the list of the eligible public benefits on the Commission's website as well as meeting materials from public meetings and the SAC. Applicants should also consider collaborating and cooperating with others to seek funding.

Related to developing partnerships, one attendee asked whether there would be oversight of project partners to ensure that they do not absolve their partnerships. Ms. Marr clarified that upon being awarded funding, projects must sign contracts and written commitments with the Commission for funding and the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the State Water Quality Control Board for administering the public benefits.

There was also a question about whether projects can seek technical assistance from the Commission's project staff prior to applying for funding. Ms. Marr strongly encouraged potential projects to seek technical assistance prior to applying.

Relative to measurement, one attendee asked when Project Staff might develop measures for projects to review. Ms. Marr explained that Project Staff has been working with the Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Water Quality Control Board, and Delta Stewardship Council to identify these measures. Another attendee encouraged the Commission to weigh benefits as a whole and look at projects that provide multiple benefits. Commissioner Quintero noted that the drought is driving innovation in water management. He also suggested that the WSIP is an opportunity for projects to be innovative and to allow the Commission to fund those projects. Commissioner Saracino added that

integrated water management works because it forces water agency managers to look at the management of water through a different lens. He further stated that flood planning was an important step towards planning for the next drought.

Although the program is intended to provide funding for public benefits, one attendee recommended that funding be provided to help the families in the region who have been negatively affected by the drought. Commissioner Saracino acknowledged that something must be done to restart the economy in these areas. Commissioner Byrne explained that although the Commission only has the ability to fund the public benefits side of water storage projects, these projects may also provide communities with other benefits. Commissioner Herrera explained that the Commission wants to provide as much information to communities as it can about available sources of funding to help them through this harsh situation.

One individual also asked whether there would be opportunities to glean data from completed projects. Commissioner Quintero indicated there would be.

#### ***Location Recommendations, Questions and Comments***

Several attendees were in support of funding for the Sites and Temperance Flat reservoirs. One also suggested that the greatest public benefit would be to provide water for agricultural interests. Another also noted that the Central Valley has been hit hard by the zero allocation of water and recommended that the Commission work to ensure that the funded projects have a benefit to the Central Valley.

#### ***General Comments***

The Commissioners were thanked for listening to the attendees and informed that they have an opportunity to provide real time feedback to the Governor on what's going on throughout the State.

## Comment Forms

At each public meeting, attendees were provided with a Public Meeting Comment Form (Comment Form) to make additional comments about the presentation and the WSIP. A copy of this form is included in Appendix A.

### Key Highlights from the Comment Form

- Of the 45 attendees, only eight returned a completed Comment Form.
- Most respondents (5) indicated they were very familiar with Prop 1 before the public meeting.
- Three respondents indicated the presentation answered their questions about project eligibility. Four indicated the presentation answered some of their questions. In addition, one respondent indicated the presentation did not answer their questions.
- 75% (n=6) of respondents indicated that the presentation answered their questions about the funding timeline.

### Excerpts from the Comment Forms

#### *Water Storage Issues*

- The Central Valley is often forgotten.
- Groundwater.
- Future water storage projects are needed to help agriculture survive. By the time projects are funded and money allocated, there may be no growers left, which will hurt the overall economy in the San Joaquin Valley.
- Concerned about what entities will fully fund any CALFED storage project in its entirety beyond what Proposition 1 can fund. The CALFED ROD did not approve or authorize any implementation of the storage projects, nor have State or Federal entities. Concerned about the Commission's ability to allocate funds before full project construction is authorized with full environmental compliance permits.
- It is unclear how the WSIP program will affect jobs and the lives of citizens.
- The construction of Temperance Flat Reservoir.

#### *Suggestions for the Commission*

- Focus more attention to groundwater storage and less to above ground storage.
- Align with the federal partners and decision makers responsible for completing storage feasibility reports and approving federal funding, construction authority, regulatory permits, agreements, etc.
- Provide more information regarding stakeholder input and participation in the process; continue to involve the public.
- Use expertise to develop short-term goals before 2016. This region needs help now. The Delta Smelt could give us short term water.

### *Comments on the Information Presented at the Workshop*

- The information was presented in a logical order, focused heavily on public comment. The Commissioners and staff responses worked very well. There was a lot of good information and good questions.
- Very little said about what not to fund. There was no information about how someone opposed to a project could voice the negative points of any proposed project.
- The information was well organized and provided a good starting point.
- Water storage projects are moving too slowly.

## Appendix A



### Water Storage Investment Program Public Meeting Comment Form

How familiar were you with Proposition 1 legislation before today?

Very familiar    I've heard of it    Never heard of it

Did the presentation answer your questions about which projects are eligible?

Yes    Some    No

Did the presentation answer your questions about the funding timeline?

Yes    Some    No

What water storage issues most concern you?


Do you have any comments on the information presented at this workshop?


Do you have any suggestions for the Commission as they develop the program?
