

# MINUTES

# County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

April 23, 2015

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. at Statham Hall, Lone Pine, Ca. Commissioners in attendance were Chairperson Mike Prather, Bruce Dishion, Craig Patten, and Mike Carrington. Commissioner Red Owl was absent. Present from the Water Department were Bob Harrington and Laura Piper.

## **1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Commissioner Prather stated there was not a flag present for the pledge of allegiance.

## **2. Public Comment**

Commissioner Prather opened public comment and there was no one from the public wishing to address the Commission.

## **3. Approval of minutes from the February 4, 2015 meeting**

Moved by Commissioner Patton and seconded by Commissioner Dishion to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2015 meeting. Motion carried.

## **4. Commissioners reports**

Commissioner Patton reported on his attendance at the last Bishop Creek Water Association Meeting. He stated they have changed the bylaws to effect the operation of new ponds in West Bishop and to provide guidance on lining ponds. They have also been on a rotation plan to get water to all the ditches.

## **5. Water Director's report**

Dr. Harrington stated the Water Department is currently working on budget, updating databases, Sustainable Groundwater Management Act; and pursuing the Standing Committee's direction to examine and improve vegetation monitoring. He also stated LADWP notified Inyo County that they intend to install four new wells in the valley; two in Bishop were included in the 1991 EIR, a well west of Big Pine (supply well for Big Pine Ditch System – outlined in the Water Agreement) and a replacement well in Laws.

Public Comment – Nancy Masters – Ms. Masters asked if the Bell Canyon well is anticipated to be used to supply the Big Pine Ditch System. Dr. Harrington stated yes. She asked what water that project presently uses and Dr. Harrington stated surface water.

## **6. Action: Approval of Goals for 2015**

The Chairperson requested this item be tabled until the next meeting when all Commissioners are present.

Dr. Harrington asked if Larry Freilich, Mitigation Manager could present his power point presentations first on items 7, 8, and 11 to accommodate his drive to Los Angeles. The Chairperson approved.

## **7. McNally Ponds E/M Project**

Mr. Freilich provided a power point presentation on the McNally Ponds E/M Project and the many challenges for this project. The Commissioners, Water Director, and Mr. Freilich discussed this project in detail and at length.

Public Comment – Nancy Masters – Ms. Masters asked when the project was originally scoped. Mr. Freilich stated 1986.

## **8. LORP Recreational Use Plan**

Mr. Freilich provided a power point presentation on the LORP Recreational Use Plan. The Commissioners and Mr. Freilich discussed this Recreational Plan in detail.

Public Comment – April Zrelak – Ms. Zrelak stated her concern with volunteer’s responsibility for maintaining the area.

Public Comment – Ursula Esser - Ms. Esser stated it seems like there are several entities that would be willing to support this project and the budget seems very minimal in cost.

## **11. Mitigation projects status**

Mr. Freilich provided a power point presentation on the status of the Mitigation Projects. He provided information and the link on the Water Department website that lists the projects status. Mr. Freilich stated LADWP was preceding with the revegetation projects.

Public Comment – Ben Holgate – Mr. Holgate stated in review of documents between the City and Water Department in the past several months he came across this position that the City seems to be taking regarding what kind of water can be used for enhancement mitigation, stating the water was not available. Mr. Freilich stated LA had brought to the County their concern that projects that were scoped to require makeup water did not, and makeup water is not being provided. Dr. Harrington asked if Mr. Holgate would table this question to the annual operations plan where he feels his question will be answered.

Public Comment - Nancy Masters – Ms. Masters stated the mitigation measures and CEQA are not just advisory. These mitigation measures have not been provided, which is a violation of CEQA. She stated private citizens can sue but if they start a case it would be against LADWP as well as Inyo County which sets a poor tone.

Public Comment – Larry Kraus – Mr. Kraus stated after listening to Ms. Masters, he believes there is no method of enforcement for these mitigation projects.

Public Comment - Paul Lamos – Mr. Lamos stated he believes it’s legitimate that an area could be modified. He believes in some areas it would be good to reevaluate the projects. He stated in an area where there is no recharge, it’s tough to maintain.

## **9. LADWP Annual Operations Plan**

Dr. Harrington provided a detailed summary and power point presentation on the process of the LADWP Annual Operations Plan and the document, an overview of the runoff forecast, and discussed the current drought. Dr. Harrington and the Water Commissioner’s discussed the annual operations plan and drought in detail and at length.

Public Comment – Larry Kraus – Mr. Kraus stated Dr. Harrington outlined the shortfall in runoff and the effect it will have on the valley but it seems LA is usually facing a huge loss of water and he would like to know based on the size of the loss what they are going to do about it. Dr. Harrington when on to explain the export of water in the next twelve months and that it is the lowest export on record, local groundwater pumping, and the percentages for this year. Dr. Harrington explained the drought is a statewide issue.

Public Comment – Nancy Masters – Ms. Masters asked how many irrigated leases depend solely on surface water. Dr. Harrington stated he did not know. He stated so many leases are supplied from ditches with co-mingled groundwater and surface water.

Dr. Harrington took a moment to address Mr. Holgate’s earlier question, pumping for Mitigation Projects. Mr. Holgate stated that LADWP’s stance was that they only had to use water from exempt wells for mitigation. Dr. Harrington asked if

he was looking at page 2-27 of the annual operations plan to pose his question. Dr. Harrington stated there is a table for water use for E/M projects and water pumped for E/M projects and LADWP uses this to track or illustrate that less water is being pumped by E/M wells for E/M projects. He stated they are not exempt but designated to supply E/M projects. Some are exempt for a sole source use and some are subject to on/off. He stated that is one of the issues at McNally Ponds.

Public Comment – Larry Kraus - Mr. Kraus stated can the irrigators survive by changing their crops or changing their methods of irrigation. Dr. Harrington stated this is a serious drought and he cannot speak for the individuals in this business.

Public Comment – Nancy Masters – With regard to groundwater pumping and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, she stated she is not sure how everything ties together but people who own land, own water rights that have wells that are being impacted by the City which examples have been noted in Bishop, and hopes this will be addressed in the McNally Ponds comments because this could expand.

Public Comment – Tom Nolan – Mr. Nolan stated there is a dramatic decrease in the irrigation. He stated last year was a very bad year and the decrease wasn't as bad as this year. Mr. Nolan discussed the Shepard's creek alfalfa project and the main reason for the project was the dust. He stated if irrigation is cut way back, the valley is going to see a lot more dust. He stated there is a huge amount of wasted water on Owens Lake that could be used for irrigation. He also stated there is 7,000 acre feet more being put on Owens Lake than last year.

Public Comment – Larry Kraus – Mr. Kraus stated this is a good example of what happens with unrestricted pumping. The central valley was an absolute disaster and he stated that is no way to solve a problem. He stated their wells were going dry so they just dig deeper and that's not the answer.

## **10. May 7 Standing Committee Meeting**

Dr. Harrington provided detail on the meeting, the tour, a brief summary of the topics on the agenda, and the process by which the Board of Supervisors provide direction to the Standing Committee members.

## **12. Public Comment**

Public Comment – Mary Roper – Ms. Roper said she had a question regarding the chart and asked if the amount of 15,300 acre-feet is for the LORP is the net use. Dr. Harrington stated yes. Dr. Harrington stated just the base flows are 30,000 acre-feet.

## **13. Schedule next Water Commission meeting**

The next Water Commission meeting will be scheduled for the month of June 2015.

## **14. Adjourn**

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.