

Minutes

County of Inyo Water Commission

February 7, 2011

Water Commissioner Mike Prather called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the County Administrative Center, Board of Supervisors Room, Independence, CA. Water Commissioners in attendance were Mike Prather, Mike Carrington, and Sally Symons. Absent were Commissioner Teri Cawelti and Daniel Smith. Present from the Water Department were Dr. Bob Harrington and Laura Piper.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mike Prather led the Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of minutes from January 6, 2011 meeting

Motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Teri Cawelti and Daniel Smith absent.

Report from Staff on Coso/Hay Ranch Groundwater Transfer Project

Dr. Bob Harrington provided an update on this project, the conditional use permit, the restrictions imposed, and management regarding groundwater transfers. The project was approved in spring of 2009 and has been operating for one year as of December 25, 2010; the consultants hired to revise the groundwater models have completed their work and the final report has been received and posted to the Water Department web page. The Water Department is providing the public a 30-day review period prior to approving the final ground water level triggers, pumping rates, and pumping duration for the project.

Public Comment: Gary Arnold, Atty Representing Little Lake Ranch – Mr. Arnold gave his background on HMMP (hydrologic monitoring mitigation plan) for the Coso project and was involved in the process for 3 years. He would like the Water Commission to be involved in the review of the new consultants report, weigh in during the comment period, assist the public in comprehension of the report, and insure the Rose Valley's water resources are protected. He provided a letter to the Commissioners that he sent to Dr. Harrington and would like a response to his questions.

Chris Ellis – Coso Operating Company – Mr. Ellis provided background and an update on the status of the Hay Ranch project. The project involves pumping from the Hay Ranch property owned by Coso Operating Company and transporting to the Coso Geothermal field. He provided some brief answers to Mr. Arnold's letter mentioned above and said Coso Operating Company would provide a more lengthy response by March 2, 2011.

Steve McLaughlin – Ca Native Plant Society – Mr. McLaughlin explained his concern over the revised groundwater modeling report. He believes that sections of the report are contradictory to the original report and he is concerned over how much water will be removed from Little Lake with the new criteria.

Sally Manning – Plant Ecologist – Ms. Manning stressed her concern with the pumping at Rose Valley, would like the Water Commission to become more involved with the 30-day review, and is concerned that the Water Commission is not up to speed on this issue. She stated the new hydrological report changes things significantly from the

previous report, the new data, etc., may require another CEQA review or amended EIR, the comment period should be extended, and pumps should be turned off until it can be determined what is going on.

Bill Helmer – Big Pine Paiute Tribe – Mr. Helmer had questions regarding the process of the 30-day comment period and would like to see an extension of time to review this lengthy report. Dr. Bob Harrington responded and provided a brief explanation of the process that occurs after the 30-day review period.

Vitaly Lee – Terra-Gen Power – Clarified data and answered questions regarding the financial reports for Coso Operating Company.

Discussion of Role of Inyo County Water Commission

Commissioner Mike Prather suggested rescheduling this item until the next meeting when all Water Commissioners are in attendance.

Inyo County Water Commission Goals for 2011

Commissioner Mike Prather suggested rescheduling this item until next meeting when all Water Commissioners are in attendance. He suggested future field trips to view current projects.

Report from Staff on 2/3/2011 Technical Group Meeting

Dr. Bob Harrington gave a brief overview on the February 3, 2011 Technical Group Meeting and touched on each agenda item.

- Approved last years annual report on the Lower Owens River Project
- Discussed publics concern over lack of riparian recruitment below the islands area and resolutions
- Concern over MOU consultant ESI not aware of provisions of the recent addendum of LORP EIR that allows augmentation of flow
- Concern over reducing the scope of the Salt Cedar cutting program
- Consideration of next fiscal years workplan for the LORP
- Big Pine Regreening project – CEQA study in progress
- Big Pine Ditch System – one more section to complete, possibly done in April 2011
- Laws Revegetation Projects - more efficient irrigation adopted
- Yellow Billed Cuckoo Habitat Enhancement Project – Hogback Creek/Baker Creek – planting areas nearly completed
- Klondike South Shore Habitat Area – LA proposed the wetted area be GPS'd this year
- Independence Regreening – Going out to RFP for lessee and bid for well driller in 2012
- Mitigation projects that allocate 1600 acre feet identified in MOU for mitigation of spring and wetland habitat, the report is on the Water Dept website under the mitigation projects section.

Dr. Bob Harrington gave a brief overview on vegetation parcel Blackrock 94 and the current process the Technical Group is undergoing to determine potential impacts to this parcel with regard to the Water Agreement.

Public Comment - Bennett Kessler - requested a copy of the recent letter presented to LADWP regarding Blackrock 94.

The Vice Chairperson recessed the meeting at 7:35 p.m. for a break and reconvened the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

- Owens Lake Groundwater Study – DWP reported monitoring wells were close to completion, they will complete an aquifer test and provide the Water Dept. with material as to what they intend to do on the lake.

Dr. Bob Harrington discussed the dust abatement issues pertaining to the Water Agreement, Health & Safety, and the Great Basin Air Pollution Control. Dr. Harrington gave an overview on the Bishop Cone Audit, why it is completed each

year, the Green Book, and the work being completed jointly between LADWP and the Water Department to revise the pumping management rules. He also reported on the Water Agreement land releases available through public auction on March 23, 2011, the next Standing Committee Meeting scheduled February 24, 2011 in Los Angeles, and on Feb 15th the Board of Supervisors considered the Standing Committee Agenda.

Public Comment – Sally Manning – Big Pine Paiute Tribe – Ms Manning stated there were a few items not mentioned during Dr. Harrington’s Technical Group Summary overview.

- Gary Bacoeh attended the February 3, 2011 Technical Group Meeting and made a statement that the Tribe feels the Technical Group is violating the Brown Act by taking action on important items that are related to the groundwater documents.
- The Blackrock 94 report is not what the CA Native Plant Society requested. They requested the Technical Group take action to avoid an impact at Blackrock 94 because all the data was showing things were not looking good.
- The Water Commission was not active when issues regarding the Big Pine regreening were brought before the Standing Committee and the Water Department has allowed the project to move forward by exempting a well that should not have been exempted.

Schedule Next Water Commission Meeting

The next Water Commission meeting was scheduled for April 25, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. in Bishop, CA.

Adjourn

Mike Prather, Vice Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.