

# Minutes

## County of Inyo Water Commission

### August 31, 2011

Water Commissioner Teri Red Owl called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Room, Inyo County Administrative Center, Independence, CA. Water Commissioners in attendance were Teri Red Owl, Mike Prather, Mike Carrington, and Sally Symons. Absent was Commissioner Warren Allsup. Present from the Water Department were Dr. Bob Harrington and Laura Piper.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Commissioner Red Owl led the Pledge of Allegiance

#### **Public Comment**

Sally Manning – Environmental Director Big Pine Tribe – Ms. Manning thanked the Water Commission/Inyo County Water Department for adding public comment at the beginning of the agenda. Ms. Manning stated comments were due to LADWP tomorrow regarding the Big Pine Regreening Project in writing and said LADWP's fax was not working and the contact person was not available that was listed on their CEQA document. Ms. Manning went on in detail and great length regarding the pumping impacts with regard to the Big Pine Northeast Regreening Project and the effects to the groundwater table under the Big Pine Reservation. She stated the CEQA document is inadequate and the negative declaration is incomplete. She also stated she believes there will be widespread impacts from pumping Well 375. She stated the Big Pine Tribe as seen at various Water Commission and Standing Committee meetings is opposed to the project. She stated an environmental impact report needs to be prepared to fully disclose information available on the project and gather public opinion.

Harry Williams – Mr. Williams expressed his concern there has been no public comment at the last several Technical Group meetings. He talked about the damage being done all over the valley throughout the years with regard to LADWP's groundwater pumping. He believes the LTWA is a failed agreement and should be renegotiated in court.

Bob Prendergast – LADWP – Mr. Prendergast provided a fax number for anyone having difficulty submitting their comments regarding the Big Pine Northeast Regreening Project. He said he will make sure they are provided to the corporate office. Mr. Prendergast also stated they could be e-mailed to him and he would again be sure to forward them to the corporate office.

#### **Approval of minutes from June 22, 2011 meeting**

Moved by Commissioner Prather and seconded by Commissioner Carrington to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2011 Water Commission meeting correcting exceptions to exemptions on page 3 under Ms. Manning's public comment. Motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Warren Allsup absent.

#### **Director's report concerning Water Department activities**

Dr. Harrington provided an updated on the IRWMP (Integrated Regional Water Management Plan) and informed the Commission that the IRWMP has received funding for regional projects in the amount of \$1,075,000 and provided detail

on some of the projects these funds will cover; provided details on the Coso Hay Ranch groundwater transfer permit (addendum) which was challenged by a member of the public and the appeal process which was rejected; the groundwater study on Owens Lake by LADWP; the aquifer test study which will be performed by the Inyo County Water Department by agreement between LADWP and Inyo County; and the Commissioners and Dr. Harrington discussed ownership of the wells on Owens Lake. Dr. Harrington provided information on LADWP's new well installations in the permitting process W390 (Lone Pine), W076 Bairs-George well field, and a well for the Independence Regreening Project; provided an update on the Water Department's summer field campaign; State mandated groundwater monitoring and monitoring plans for the Owens Valley; the Recreation Use Plan for the LORP; and the grant application to the Wildlife Conservation Board for \$350,000 for the Salt Cedar Program.

### **Report on County's request for resolution of issues related to LADWP 2011-12 Annual Operations Plan**

Dr. Bob Harrington provided information in detail and great length regarding the current pumping issues between LADWP and Inyo County. Dr. Harrington stated LADWP issued their final operations plan mid May 2011 for the runoff year of April 2011-March 2012 calling for 91,000 acre feet of pumping in the Owens Valley including 17,500 in the Taibut-Sawmill area, and 14,000 in the Taboose-Aberdeen wellfield. The County requested lower amounts in these wellfields because of the outstanding issues on the vegetation conditions near 8 mile ranch. The requests were not dealt with in the final operations plan so the County initiated a Tech Group process to try and resolve the issues. The County requested to lower pumping in Taibut-Sawmill to 12,800 and Taboose-Aberdeen to 10,000 acre feet. Dr. Harrington explained the process in detail if the issue is not resolved and moves forward to the Water Agreements dispute resolution process.

Public Comment – Sally Manning – Ms Manning stated the Big Pine Tribe and the public have been denied the opportunity to make public comment at the previous Technical Group meetings because the meetings were continued, public comment is at the end, hence their inability to provide comment. Ms Manning said she didn't know why the County is asking what they are asking for from LADWP, it is only a small reduction in two wellfields and insignificant. Ms. Manning also stated that most of the pumping in the Owens Valley is coming from Big Pine (1/3); the Tribe argues that the Technical Group meetings are subject to the Brown Act and there is no constructive process at these meetings or at the Standing Committee meetings; Ms. Manning believes the decision making process of the Water Agreement is broken and the environment is suffering because of it. Ms Manning provided her interpretation of the drought recovery policies purpose, the green book, and the procedures for on/off and why the drought recovery policy is not being used.

Public Comment – Daris Moxley – Ms. Moxley inquired as to why we don't have a management policy if it has expired. Commissioner Red Owl provided an explanation on the term of the interim management plan and its purpose. Ms. Moxley expressed her displeasure in the County not having a management policy in effect.

**The Chairperson recessed the meeting at 7:30 p.m. for a break and reconvened the meeting at 7:40 p.m.**

### **Report on vegetation conditions in the Owens Valley**

Meredith Jabis, Vegetation Scientist gave a presentation in detail and in great length regarding the vegetation conditions in the Owens Valley. She provided detail on wellfield perennial cover, the increase in shrubs, and decline in grass cover. Ms. Jabis explained in detail the vegetation goals and changes within the Owens Valley.

### **Public Comment**

Harry Williams - Mr. Williams stated the Long Term Water Agreement has never been enforced and the master plan is a waste of time. Mr. Williams said the Owens Valley Committee is interested in water in the river and not recreation. Mr. Williams expressed his views on pumping and the vegetation damage in the Owens Valley. He thanks Ms. Jabis for providing a great presentation on the Owens Valley vegetation conditions.

### **Schedule Next Water Commission Meeting**

The next Water Commission meeting was scheduled for October 10, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. in Bishop, CA.

## **Adjourn**

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:54 p.m.