

# MINUTES

# County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

February 20, 2019

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. at the Inyo County Water Department conference room, Independence, CA. Commissioners in attendance were Chairperson Mike Prather, Vice Chairperson Teri Red Owl, Mike Carrington, and Randy Keller. Present from the Water Department were Aaron Steinwand, Laura Piper, Zach Nelson, and Keith Rainville.

## **1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Commissioner Prather led the pledge of allegiance.

## **2. Public Comment**

Sally Manning stated item #5 of tomorrow's Technical Group meeting is an action item and she stated it was previously determined that well W385 mitigation has not been achieved.

## **3. Election of Water Commission Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson**

Moved by Commissioner Carrington and seconded by Commissioner Keller to re-elect Mike Prather as Chairperson, and Teri Red Owl as Vice-Chairperson. Motion carried.

## **4. Approval of minutes from the August 29, 2018 and November 7, 2018 meeting**

Moved by Commissioner Red Owl and seconded by Commissioner Carrington to approve the minutes of the August 29, 2018 and November 7, 2018. Motion carried.

## **5. Commissioners reports**

Commissioner Carrington stated he was following an LA Times article regarding Los Angeles County flood control through property tax based on square footage of your property that will now allow water to enter back into the ground. Commissioner Prather asked staff about upcoming runoff. Dr. Steinwand stated the runoff precipitation report states we are at 165% of normal for this time of the year. Commissioner Prather asked how is the Five Bridges work plan in relation to what we already have. Dr. Steinwand stated it is just a description of the work that is going to happen this summer and next summer; this work plan does not evaluate conditions of mitigation goals. Commissioner Carrington stated there was a well out at Nik & Nik that is flowing like an artesian. Keith Rainville provided an explanation regarding the pressure with regard to the wells. Commission Prather announced there was an Owens Lake Bird Festival in April which you can register for online.

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

Dr. Steinwand stated before the Water Commission meets again, a draft EIR will be released on the Lower Owens River Project and the CEQA document for the Big Pine Recycled Water Project.

Nancy Masters stated in 2017, LADWP released an emergency declaration to perform work on ditches and streams due to the extreme runoff; damage was done during that time, and the water was not put down the Owens River to perform the flushing. She also asked if the Water Commission can provide input on where the water is spread if there is extreme runoff. Commissioner Prather asked Ms. Masters for any information from the tribes in which cultural items were damaged. Ms. Masters stated that was a general comment and she doesn't have specific details. Keith Rainville stated there were very high flows in the river that year. Mary Roper stated she can't see things getting better for the Lower

Owens River unless a channel is made mechanically through the islands area. Nancy Masters stated we need flushing flows in the Lower Owens. Philip Anaya asked if there were releases around Lubkin during the big run off in 2016/17.

## **7. 2018 Owens Valley vegetation conditions**

Zach Nelson gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the vegetation conditions in the Owens Valley to include the monitoring program (1600 transects are monitored, 140 parcels), wellfield and control parcel comparisons, and wellfield parcels below baseline, and explained various types of vegetation. The Commission and staff discussed this in detail. Sally Manning asked what the threshold was for C & D conversion. She stated 12 percent grass cover is not sufficient. Dr. Steinwand stated we are narrowing it down to the parcels that are a chronic problem and below baseline in consecutive years. Mary Roper stated in the 1970's in the Hammil Valley, there was an enormous amount of alkali dust, so why isn't Great Basin involved. Dr. Steinwand stated they are. Sally Manning stated what was in the valley prior to the Water Agreement wasn't perfect but much of it is lost in the way of vegetation and exempt well pumping is a problem in the valley. Nancy Masters stated prevention is better than mitigation and there are water management issues for surface water spreading. Philip Anaya stated he was beginning to see from tonight's presentation that the Water Department has a path forward and going through the process scientifically. Nancy Masters asked how deep is the maximum water table to sustain alkali grass lands and what would the trigger be to turn off a well. Dr. Steinwand stated two meters but it depends on the soils, so there is not a fixed number.

## **8. Public Comment**

Philip Anaya relayed to the Commission the OVGA basin priority information, the non-adjudicated and adjudicated, the modifications, basin priority levels, and if somehow our basin ends off with a "low" priority basin then the GSP is voluntary; Sally Manning requested data; Nancy Masters asked if there is type E vegetation on the lands that are going to be developed west of the Wye Road; Mary Roper stated the field trips are popular and if they would consider the BP Recycled Water Project for instance.

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

The next Water Commission was tentatively scheduled for April 24.

## **10. Adjourn**

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 7:48 p.m.