

MINUTES

County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

January 16, 2020

The Vice Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Inyo County Water Department conference room, Independence, CA. Commissioners in attendance were Vice Chairperson, Teri Red Owl, Mark Nechodom, Paul Huette, and Commissioner Keller absent. Present from the Water Department were Aaron Steinwand, Laura Piper, and Keith Rainville.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Red Owl led the pledge of allegiance.

The Vice Chairperson announced there are two new Water Commissioners, Paul Huette and Mark Nechodom. She stated at a future meeting, the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will be selected; she wished to acknowledge both Mike Prather and Mike Carrington for their years of service on the Water Commission; Earl Wilson had recently passed; and stated he was a faithful Water Commission attendee and will be missed. Paul Huette and Mark Nechodom provided a brief introduction of their past and present experience.

2. Public Comment

Mary Roper stated on Saturday there will be a celebration of life for Earl Wilson at the Independence Legion Hall from 4-8pm.

3. Approval of minutes from the April 24, 2019 meeting

This item was postponed by the Vice Chairperson to the next meeting stating Commissioner Keller and Commissioner Gratz were the only ones in attendance to approve the minutes.

4. Commissioners' reports

Commissioner Huette inquired if Inyo County Water Commissioners discuss Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority. Dr. Steinwand stated this is a Water Agreement body and that is SGMA related. Dr. Steinwand stated he could provide reports if the Commission so desires and provided a brief update. Sally Manning stated the Water Commission made recommendations to the Planning Dept. for the Coso project because it was a water related project. Dr. Steinwand stated if there is a project to import water across the county line or out of the basin, then the Water Commission would be involved. Commissioner Nechodom stated he and Commissioner Keller had a good conversation and he was provided a brief intro to the Brown Act. The Commission wished to have a training/presentation on the Brown Act provided by Inyo County Counsel.

5. Director's report

- a. Water Trail update**
- b. OVGA update**
- c. LORP annual report update**
- d. Vegetation monitoring update**

Dr. Steinwand stated the Water Trail was a proposed recreational project for a six mile stretch of the Lower Owens River near Lone Pine. He stated the project will clear sections in the channel and construct restrooms and put in and take out facilities in the staging area which will provide people of all abilities access to that stretch of river for non-motorized water craft; the draft EIR released last summer with many comments received; response and modifications to comments

are almost complete; they will be brought to the Water Commission for recommendation to the Board before the final EIR is considered or approval of the project. He stated Inyo/LA staff has begun discussions on a potential lease for the project site, following the completion of CEQA.

Dr. Steinwand stated the Owens Valley groundwater basin priority status was finalized by DWR in December and is officially a low priority basin; due to the delays by the State in providing a final basin status, the OVGA Board and consultant will need to accelerate in 2020 to meet the GSP deadline; and an administrative draft of the GSP should be completed in January 2021; and adoption and submission of the GSP to the state in January 2022. He stated the adoption and submission of the GSP is not a requirement with a low priority basin status.

Dr. Steinwand stated the LORP annual report was released today and a transmittal letter was provided to the Commission. He stated the report contains recommendations to improve projects such as changes to timing in the releases in the delta area; timing and consultation procedures regarding the seasonal habitat flow; and substantial revisions to the Blackrock water fowl area. He stated there will be a public meeting to discuss these on February 10 at 1pm, at LADWP's Bishop office.

Dr. Steinwand stated each year Inyo/LADWP staff monitor approximately 140 parcels to measure vegetation conditions and the results from 2019 are posted to the Water Department website. Sally Manning stated what's missing is an explanation of where the precip data came from; maybe it would be helpful to have a key on the graphs. Mary Roper stated the LORP meeting should be held every other year in a venue other than LADWP, the work is in southern Inyo; the meetings are held in midafternoon when most are working and cannot attend. Nancy Masters suggested possibly utilizing the Independence Legion Hall for the meeting; and the dynamics are different when the Inyo County Water Department is hosting the meeting. Lynn Boulton requested they be evening meetings for those that work. The Vice Chairperson requested that an additional LORP report meeting be added for the southern end of the County this year.

6. Designation of Inyo/Los Angeles Standing Committee Representatives

The Vice Chairperson requested a motion for an additional representative for the tentative upcoming meeting with Commissioner Huette volunteering. Motion by Mark Nechodom to select Paul Huette as the representative contingent on the voting of officers at the next meeting, seconded by Paul Huette. Motion passed.

7. Saltcedar update

Dr. Steinwand stated the Water Agreement includes a provision to provide funding to Inyo County for a Salt Cedar control program in the valley; the funding is insufficient for a full time staff member; the program was previously supported by grant funding and LADWP match funding; LADWP now has a separate Salt Cedar control program; and our field assistant will be cooperating with their program. Sally Manning stated in 2017 LADWP opened many ditches and now they are chasing after salt cedar as a result from dumping all the water on the valley floor, she stated that was a so called emergency so there was no environmental review; now they are doing a big mechanical and chemical removal; and she doesn't remember seeing any CEQA on this program LADWP is doing. Nancy Masters stated there is a lot of vegetation removal in east Bishop and is this part of the Salt Cedar Plan; Dr. Steinwand stated no.

8. Update on well 385W pumping test near Five Bridges

Dr. Steinwand stated in 2014 LADWP modified two production wells near the gravel pit; the wells have not been operated for approximately twenty years due to damage caused to neighboring vegetation caused by those wells; in 2017 LADWP approved a project to test the modified wells; disputes and CEQA challenges were triggered under Water Agreement; Inyo County settled it's dispute in 2018; MOU parties settled in 2019; last month the Technical Group adopted modified procedures and triggers that govern the conduct of the pumping test, and W385 test commenced in December 2019. Keith Rainville provided a detailed presentation on the test results to date for W385 and the history of the well. The Commission and staff discussed this item in detail. Sally Manning stated at the end of the test it was mentioned they are supposed to spread water; can that water be spread elsewhere such as Owens Lake; the water spread in that area counts as Bishop Cone usage which allows them to pump an equal amount to what they use on the Bishop Cone.

9. Future meeting schedule

The next Water Commission was tentatively scheduled for the week of April 27, 2020.

10. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.