

MINUTES

County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

August 26, 2020

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. via videoconference. Water Commissioners in attendance were Chairperson, Teri Red Owl, Randy Keller, Nate Gratz, and Paul Huetter. Present from the Water Department were Aaron Steinwand, Laura Piper, Zach Nelson, Larry Freilich, Keith Rainville, and Meredith Jabis.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Red Owl led the pledge of allegiance.

Commissioner Red Owl announced the resignation of Commissioner Mark Nechodom and stated the vacant position is being advertised.

2. Public Comment

Sally Manning stated that public comment was at the end of every agenda and she would like that brought back; she requested updates on the fish hatcheries and the pumping being done there; and also she stated that nothing is being done about Inyo's comments on the pumping plan by LADWP and needs to be addressed by the County. Devorah Lucas stated she was having issues in west bishop with water flows due to part time residents changing flows at a gate that should be locked with no one having access but the Water Master. Dr. Steinwand stated the Water Department does not have authority to put locks on surface water gates, the system is run by the Water Master and he should be able to lock it.

3. Approval of minutes from the April 23, 2020 meeting

Motion by Paul Huetter, seconded by Randy Keller to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2020 meeting, motion passed.

4. Commissioners' reports

Commissioner Keller expressed disappointment with the previous Standing Committee meeting in which LADWP stated they would cut back on imported water which doesn't include Inyo County, just water they have to purchase. He also expressed displeasure that when Commissioner Red Owl asked why 93,000 af, Richard Harasick stated because they didn't get a lot of water last year and need to keep their average up, no mention of the effect on the ecology of the valley. Commissioner Huetter and Gratz stated they feel the same. Commissioner Red Owl talked about the IWV and their discussions with LADWP about getting water from the aqueduct; she stated they need to be diligent in giving attention to this matter.

5. Director's report

Dr. Steinwand reiterated Teri's announcement of Mark Nechodom's resignation; updated the Commission on the pumping in the individual wellfields through June; reported there was a bacterial disease at Fish Springs and Black Rock hatcheries so CDFW has disposed of the infected fish and will disinfect the facilities. Pumping will be reduced for several months at the Fish Springs hatchery; In April the Technical Group adopted the W415 test plan, the test has not begun yet; a Standing Committee meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2020 at 10am via webex and hosted by LADWP; and a Technical Group meeting will be scheduled in late September. He stated the Water Department staff and two Inyo County Supervisors met with staff and representatives of the Big Pine Paiute Tribe to discuss concerns raised in their May 1 letter regarding the pumping plan including W415. Commissioner Red Owl asked why the pumping in Laws is higher, Dr. Steinwand stated most likely due to irrigation and export. Paul Huetter asked about the groundwater ordinance and Dr. Steinwand stated it's a potential litigation item and can't be discussed. Dr. Steinwand and the Commissioners discussed

LADWP's pumping. Sally Manning stated it's critical to question when LADWP goes outside their pumping plan; she stated W341 doesn't have a pump on it; W415 is pumping; W218 is on; and what is the purpose of the Standing Committee meeting. Commissioner Red Owl stated they may discuss EM projects and possibly the fish hatcheries.

6. Update on field monitoring program.

Water Department staff, Keith Rainville, Zach Nelson, Meredith Jabis, and Larry Freilich all provided updates on the monitoring programs. Keith discussed increased monitoring, compliance monitoring, enhanced monitoring for the W415 test; increased monitoring in the Big Pine area; and the follow up analysis of the 385W test. Zach covered the rare plant monitoring and RAS (rapid assessment survey), linepoint, parcels covered, acquisition of landsat satellite imagery for Type E lands, merging data with LADWP, and the salt cedar program. Meredith discussed the new Type D study; riparian monitoring; and a tree study; she provided detailed information about the new study. Larry stated he takes photo points twice a year for comparison purposes at mitigation projects; and is working on live mapping this year. Sally Manning asked what happened to the new Green Book and better management of the valley through monitoring. Eddie Trimmer inquired how much does LADWP work to take the monitoring data and turn it into a management plan and do they collaborate with Inyo staff.

7. Example of mitigation project portfolios

Larry Freilich stated he is putting together mitigation project portfolios to better inform the public on the projects. He provided a view of a mockup of what the upcoming new mitigation webpage will include and how to maneuver within it. He stated the page has been based on feedback he was provided by outside agencies and the public. Commissioner Red Owl asked when it would go live, Larry stated possibly months. The Commissioners and staff discussed this in detail. Sally Manning stated CEQA plans are needed for these projects and to her knowledge they don't have them; the site needs data, not pictures; and a plan should be formed as to when the projects are not performing; and water allotment criteria.

8. Planning for Water Commission field trips.

Dr. Steinwand stated due to the COVID restrictions and logistics, the field trips will be more difficult to accomplish. Larry Freilich suggested focusing on mitigation projects in Lone Pine, then Independence, etc. for half day field trips; Blackrock area; revegetation project in LAWS; visits to Meredith's tree coring project areas; McNally and Farmers Pond areas. The Commissioners and staff discussed various options to accommodate a field trip, all Commissioners agreed to wait until next year due to the COVID restrictions to schedule field trips. Sally Manning suggested fact sheets, placed on the website that provide directions, map, and information on the various mitigation projects so people can go on their own. Larry stated they could come up with scannable QR codes that link to the website. Commissioner Red Owl stated she likes Sally's suggestion for the self-guided field trips. Lynn Boulton stated she would like a better understanding of the mitigation projects and the problems surrounding them.

9. Future meeting schedule

Commissioner's and staff discussed meeting dates and holidays. The next meeting will be scheduled in early November.

10. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.