

MINUTES

County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

January 21, 2021

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. via videoconference. Water Commissioners in attendance were Chairperson Teri Red Owl, Randy Keller, Nate Gratz, Paul Huette, and Holly Alpert. Present from the Water Department were Aaron Steinwand, Laura Piper, and Zach Nelson.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairperson led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Public Comment

The Chairperson opened up public comment and there was no one wishing to address the Commission.

3. Approval of minutes from the November 16, 2020 meeting

Motion by Nate Gratz, seconded by Randy Keller to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2020 meeting, motion passed.

4. Commissioners' reports

Commissioner Huette requested a Brown Act presentation at the next meeting.

5. Director's report

a. Runoff and operations update

Dr. Steinwand provided the current precipitation conditions; indicators show we are only 22% of normal to date and on track for the driest year on record; and LADWP have proposed 93,000 af of pumping. He reviewed the pumping numbers in the various wellfields. Daris Moxley stated since this is one of the driest years on record, will we have wells going dry, DWP shutting of ditches etc. or do we have a plan of action. Dr. Steinwand stated there is no planning as of yet. Both Commissioner Keller and Alpert suggested another row in the wellfield table to show LADWP's proposed pumping by well field vs Inyo County's pumping recommendation by annual totals for comparison. Commissioner Huette stated the Big Pine well is different because of the hatchery issue. Sally Manning reminded the Water Commission that the LADWP pumping is at 80%, and maybe the table should reflect how the valley is being pumped, not recommendations.

b. Fish Springs Hatchery update

Dr. Steinwand provided an update on the hatchery, CDFW stated the disinfection of the hatchery is complete; new fish eggs are close to arriving both for Fish Springs and Black Rock hatcheries; and one of the supply wells will be turned on. He reviewed specific wells and stated there is no obvious recovery in shallow monitoring wells from the hatchery wells being turned off with the exception of wells directly across from the hatchery. Two deep wells had notable recovery (deep aquifers). Wells in Big Pine are still declining which is normal for winter. The Commission and staff discussed this item in detail and at length. Sally Manning stated there is recovery in the wells from the hatchery being off; a recommendation needs to be made to not have the fish hatchery or reduce pumping at the fish hatchery. Edie Trimmer stated she's concerned about excess water going to LA instead of staying here to accomplish goals of mitigation projects. Lynn Boulton stated a letter should be sent to Ca Dept. of Fish & Wildlife to request exactly how much water is necessary to run a hatchery which Daris Moxley reiterated. Nancy Masters and Philip Anaya also provided public comments.

c. 415W pump test update

Dr. Steinwand provided a brief update on the 415W pump test. Sally Manning, Lynn Boulton, and Philip Anaya provided public comments.

d. Owens Lake Groundwater Project update

Dr. Steinwand provided an update on the Owens Lake Groundwater Project. Sally Manning and Lynn Boulton expressed concerns with the project.

e. Standing Committee schedule

Dr. Steinwand stated the Standing Committee meeting had been scheduled for February 26, 2021

6. 2020 Owens Valley vegetation conditions

Zach Nelson provided a detailed presentation on the Owens Valley vegetation conditions. Sally Manning, Lynn Boulton, and Nancy Masters provided public comment with concerns over the vegetation conditions within the valley.

7. Water Commission roles and responsibility

Dr. Steinwand provided a detailed memo on the roles and responsibilities of the Water Commission. Sally Manning and Philip Anaya provided their concerns and opinion on the role of the Water Commission.

8. Future meeting schedule

The next meeting will be scheduled for late March; agenda item to be a workshop on fish slough w/Supervisors.

9. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.