

**Minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting of the  
Southern California Coastal Water Research Project Authority (SCCWRP)**

**Held at the offices of the Authority:  
3535 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, California 92626**

**March 6, 2015  
9:30 AM**

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**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

John Kemmerer — *US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*  
Vicky Whitney — *State Water Resources Control Board*  
Sam Unger — *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Kurt Berchtold (Chair) — *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
David Gibson — *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Mas Dojiri — *City of Los Angeles*  
Phil Friess — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Bob Ghirelli — *Orange County Sanitation District*  
Peter Vroom — *City of San Diego*  
Gerhardt Hubner (Vice-Chair) — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*  
Angela George — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*  
Mary Anne Skorpanich — *County of Orange*  
Todd Snyder — *County of San Diego*

**STAFF PRESENT**

Stephen Weisberg — *Executive Director*  
Bryan Nece — *Administrative Officer*  
Wesley Beverlin — *Legal Counsel*  
Ken Schiff — *Deputy Director*  
Steve Bay — *Principal Scientist*  
John Griffith — *Principal Scientist*  
Keith Maruya — *Principal Scientist*  
Eric Stein — *Principal Scientist*  
Steve Steinberg — *Principal Scientist*  
Martha Sutula — *Principal Scientist*  
Scott Martindale — *Editor*

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Bruce Posthumus — *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Bram Sercu (CTAG Chair) — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*  
Joe Gully — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*

Commission Chair Kurt Berchtold called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- 1. Minutes of Meeting Held December 5, 2014**
- 2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended December 31, 2014**
- 3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at December 31, 2014**
- 4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held February 5, 2015**

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve Consent Items 1-4 with a minor edit to the minutes, and Commissioner Whitney seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

#### **REGULAR AGENDA**

##### **5. Personnel and Finance Committee Report**

Commissioner Ghirelli, Chair of the Personnel and Finance Committee, reported that the agency is anticipated to post a net surplus for fiscal year 2014-15. Ghirelli also reported that the Committee provided guidance to Weisberg about the agency's annual salary resolution, which will be brought to the Commission for approval in June.

##### **6. Funding Model Subcommittee**

Commissioner Ghirelli provided an update on behalf of Grace Hyde, Chair of the Funding Model Committee, who was unable to attend the Commission meeting. He reported that the Funding Model Committee had reached agreement on a number of issues, and had a few more issues to work through, all of which will lead to a recommendation regarding the next Joint Powers Agreement, which is scheduled for Commission discussion in June.

##### **7. SCCWRP Mission Statement**

Weisberg reminded the Commission that, based on its Strategic Planning Meeting held in May 2014, the Commission decided to update the Agency's mission statement and organization goals, which had not changed since 1990. The Mission Statement Committee brought a draft mission statement and organizational goals to the Commission at its last meeting in December and, after incorporating changes reflected during that meeting's discussion, the Committee was recommending Commission adoption. After discussing the language of the new draft mission statement ("To enhance the scientific foundation for management of Southern California's ocean and associated coastal watersheds"), Commissioner Skorpanich motioned to approve the Mission Statement with the word "associated" removed, and Commissioner Hubner seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining. Executive Director Weisberg congratulated the Commission for writing a stronger mission statement for the organization.

##### **8. Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Weisberg reported that SCCWRP continues to build strong relationships with other science organizations and noted that building scientific consensus is one of the Agency's organizational goals. For example, Weisberg said he had an encouraging meeting with the new director and senior staff of the Water Environment Research Foundation

(WERF), an organization with a similar research mission to SCCWRP, but with a national focus. Likewise, Weisberg reported that he recently spent two days with the new Executive Director of the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI), Warner Chabot. Both WERF and SFEI are looking forward to collaborative, mutually beneficial relationships with SCCWRP.

Weisberg indicated that he also has been building relationships with organizations involved in water reuse research. He reported that he and the directors of the National Water Research Institute and the Water Reuse Research Foundation participated in a joint presentation to the State Water Board about the recycled water research needs workshop that was held at SCCWRP in October. He indicated that those presentations were well-received and that SCCWRP staff was looking forward to working with the other research institutes to further assist State Board staff in developing its research agenda around recycled water. Commissioner Whitney remarked that the State Board reacted positively to the presentations, which is indicative of a considerable interest in using Proposition 1 funds to address the research needs outlined in the workshop report.

Weisberg reported that SCCWRP was asked to facilitate an Expert Review Panel to conduct a program review of the State's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program. Weisberg stated he has recruited five of the foremost U.S. authorities on environmental laboratory accreditation to serve on the Panel, which will meet for the first time March 17-19 at SCCWRP.

Weisberg next reported on several important contributions that SCCWRP is making in the area of ocean acidification (OA). He reported first on progress of the West Coast Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Panel on which he and Martha Sutula serve. He said that the Panel was planning to complete a series of documents this fall. One of the products that will be of greatest interest to the SCCWRP member agencies will focus on how to make a 303(d) listing assessment for OA; this document was motivated by recent legal challenges to the scientific validity of such assessments in the states of Oregon and Washington. In a related technical advancement, Weisberg reported that SCCWRP and its four POTW member agencies will soon begin testing the technologically advanced pH sensors developed as part of the XPRIZE competition. The goal of the XPRIZE competition is to develop pH sensors that are sensitive, accurate, durable, and easy-to-use. These criteria will be evaluated by the member agencies when tested side by side with the OA monitoring technologies that the member agencies are currently using.

## **9. CTAG Report**

CTAG Chair Bram Sercu reported that he had been elected Chair at the last CTAG meeting and that Greg Gearheart had been elected Vice Chair, with Joe Gully moving into the role of Past Chair. Past Chair Wanda Cross rotated off the CTAG leadership team.

Sercu had four items to report. First, he stated that the CTAG review process for the redesigned 2014 Annual Report articles had gone well. Second, he said CTAG was satisfied with the structure of the new 20-page thematic write-ups around which SCCWRP's new Research Plan is organized. CTAG has reviewed two of the 20-page documents thus far (Sediment Quality and Contaminants of Emerging Concern), plus the Research Plan

Executive Summary, and has made only minor comments. Along these same lines, the Information Technology and Visualization intersessional research planning meeting held in January had successfully identified alignment of CTAG and SCCWRP research priorities. A key outcome of the meeting was that CTAG and SCCWRP decided to establish user groups to facilitate transfer of new information technologies to member agencies. The next intersessional research planning meetings will be on wetlands (in April) and climate change (in May). Third, Sercu reported that a CTAG subcommittee tasked with capturing historic monitoring data has been given a deadline of November 12, 2015 to file a status report. Fourth, CTAG reviewed the contract memo and recommended technical endorsement of Contracts 1-2.

The CTAG report was completed by Past Chair Joe Gully, who provided his assessment of CTAG's progress over the past year while he was Chair. CTAG's primary 2014-15 goal was to establish an effective and collaborative research planning process, which he felt had been successfully achieved, in large part due to the participation and collaboration between CTAG and SCCWRP staff at the intersessional research planning meetings. Gully thanked the Commission for trusting CTAG to figure out how to restructure the research planning process, and urged the Commission to help CTAG maintain the momentum, as the first cycle of the research planning process – which involves an additional CTAG meeting each quarter – will take approximately three years to complete.

Commissioner Ghirelli expressed his appreciation for all of the work that CTAG has done; Executive Director Weisberg echoed this sentiment.

#### **10. Contract Review**

Executive Director Weisberg explained that this contract review item was in response to a request from the Commission's Funding Model Committee to report on the ratio of funding that SCCWRP receives from each of four main sectors – wastewater, stormwater, regulatory, and other sources – and how this ratio will change if the Commission endorses all the contracts under present consideration. Weisberg reported that if all of the contracts are endorsed/accepted, the regulatory sources will account for 48% of SCCWRP funding, stormwater 31%, and wastewater 18%; other sources of funding include nonprofits and foundations. He remarked that SCCWRP is now close to the Funding Model Committee's goal of an equal balance of funds from regulatory and regulated sources, which the Committee feels is important for maintaining perception that the agency is free from scientific bias.

SCCWRP's Joint Powers Agreement requires Commission approval of contracts in excess of \$250,000 and the State of California requests a resolution of acceptance for contracts exceeding \$100,000 offered by the State or Regional Water Boards. Weisberg recommended approval of the following contracts:

- 1) State Water Resources Control Board (\$1,713,184)  
SWAMP Special Studies

- 2) State Water Resources Control Board (\$200,000)  
Sediment Stressor Identification Study Interpretation

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve Contracts 1-2, and Commissioner George seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioners Whitney and Kemmerer abstaining.

As an informational item, Weisberg also presented contracts with a value of \$250,000 or less, which SCCWRP has accepted or indicated a willingness to accept. While SCCWRP's governing agreement requires no Commission action on these, the contracts were presented to ensure consistency of the agency's directions with the Commission's intentions.

- 3) California Coastal Conservancy (\$50,000)  
Wetland Recovery Program Science Panel
- 4) US Environmental Protection Agency (\$30,000)  
Database Analysis of Water Quality Monitoring
- 5) Resources Legacy Fund Foundation (\$20,000)  
Stormwater Plume Mapping
- 6) Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (through University of St. Thomas) (\$34,700)  
Fish Gene Expression Analysis

The Commission did not raise any objections to the contracts.

#### **11. SCCWRP Symposium**

Executive Director Weisberg reported that SCCWRP's 7th Biennial Symposium on February 26, 2015 was a success by all measures, with 112 guests in attendance representing more than 20 organizations, including all 14 member agencies. SCCWRP maintained its consistently high attendee satisfaction ratings, with average scores higher across all criteria compared to the 2013 Symposium. The recent decision to switch the Symposium from an annual to a biennial event appeared to be the right choice, reducing repetition of scientific content and maintaining attendee engagement.

#### **12. Annual Report**

Executive Director Weisberg reported that he had received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the redesigned 2014 Annual Report. In particular, he said the Commission's request for summaries of key accomplishments in each of the agency's thematic research areas had been particularly effective. Weisberg thanked the Commission and CTAG for their support and valuable suggestions throughout the redesign process.

Commissioner Friess commended staff on the new design, saying it made more of SCCWRP's research accessible to a wider audience. Commissioner Whitney said she planned to hand out copies of the Annual Report to all five State Water Board members.

Commissioner Skorpanich said she especially liked the mix of spotlight feature articles and accomplishments summaries organized by thematic research areas. Commissioner Snyder said the report was very user-friendly; he suggested printing SCCWRP's mission and/or vision statement in next year's Annual Report.

Commissioner Ghirelli left at 10:50 AM.

### **13. Wetlands**

Eric Stein, Principal Scientist for the Biology Department, opened his presentation by indicating that SCCWRP has historically focused on assessing the extent and condition of wetlands, but is moving more toward understanding key stressors on wetlands and quantifying the beneficial uses of wetlands, including their role in flood protection, improving water quality, erosion protection, and recreation. SCCWRP also is working to understand effective, strategic ways to restore wetlands and to better integrate wetlands research into ongoing management activities that impact wetlands.

Commissioner David Gibson stated that the San Diego Regional Board has replaced its "no net loss" approach to wetlands restoration – a policy paradigm that had been used for nearly two decades – in favor of "meaningful net gain." Gibson stated that the Board intends to use all of the tools at its disposal to maintain momentum, including 401 certifications and discharge permits. Gibson also stressed the importance of educating communities about essential benefits provided by wetlands – for example, the wetlands exhibit at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. As Gibson described the San Diego Regional Board's ambitious goals and initiatives for wetlands restoration, he stated that the Board will be looking to partner with agencies like SCCWRP.

Asked about how transformative the San Diego Regional Board's approach will be statewide, Commissioner Whitney replied that the State Water Board is working with the U.S. EPA to tie all of its non-point source programs together to more accurately document water-quality improvements, including in wetland areas. Commissioner Hubner commented that once these programs start rolling out, they start a positive momentum that builds over time. Whitney echoed this point, noting that smaller, patchwork-style programs aren't as effective.

### **14. Future Meeting Agenda Items**

Executive Director Weisberg described three items Commissioners had asked to be included on the June agenda. First, the Commission will be asked to approve the 2015-16 Research Plan Executive Summary and accompanying research budget. Second, the Commission will receive a briefing of the SCCWRP's 10-year research agenda on climate change, based on the May 21 intersessional research planning meeting with CTAG. Third, the Funding Model Committee will make its recommendations for changes to the upcoming Joint Powers Agreement. A draft Joint Powers Agreement will be brought to the Commission in September for discussion, hopefully followed by a final draft in December, which would initiate an 18-month signature process (the current JPA expires June 30, 2017). Weisberg also mentioned that CTAG had mapped out its preferences on which thematic research areas will be reviewed in the near future, which will result in

Commission presentations on microbial water quality in September and regional monitoring in December.

#### **15. Other Business and Communications**

Commissioner Hubner expressed appreciation for the Annual Report's insightful, concise summaries of SCCWRP research accomplishments and asked if the Commission could receive this type of information before it is published in the Annual Report. Executive Director Weisberg said the new Research Plan's emphasis on thematic areas will pave the way for a re-design of the quarterly Director's Report that will debut in August. The new Director's Report will focus less on the incremental progress being made on individual projects and contracts, and move toward providing outcome-oriented accomplishments similar to those found in the 2014 Annual Report. Commissioner Skorpanich expressed support for this strategy, emphasizing that the newly redesigned Director's Report should focus primarily on the key questions asked by the study and the high-level conclusions reached.

Executive Director Weisberg reminded the Commission that the next sector-based lunch meeting with him will focus on the Regional Water Board regulators and is scheduled immediately following today's Commission meeting. The state and federal regulators went to lunch with Weisberg in December; the wastewater member agencies will go to lunch with Weisberg in June.

#### **16. Public Comments**

No public comments were raised.

#### **17. Adjournment**

Commission Chair Berchtold adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM until the next Commission meeting on June 5, 2015.

Attest:

Bryan Nece  
Secretary