

**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**

**June 5, 2015
9:30 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

John Kemmerer — *US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*
Darrin Polhemus — *State Water Resources Control Board*
Catherine Kuhlman — *California Ocean Protection Council*
Deborah Smith — *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Kurt Berchtold (Chair) — *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*
David Barker — *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Mas Dojiri — *City of Los Angeles*
Grace Hyde — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Ed Torres — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Peter Vroom — *City of San Diego*
Gerhardt Hubner (Vice-Chair) — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*
Gary Hildebrand — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*
Chris Compton — *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*
Yiping Cao — *Senior Scientist*
Wayne Lao — *Senior Research Technician*
Scott Martindale — *Editor*
Joao Paulo Medeiros — *Ph.D. Student*
Alvina Mehinto — *Scientist*
David Tsukada — *Senior Research Technician*
Xinping Yang — *Visiting Scientist*

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeff Armstrong — *Orange County Sanitation District*

Joe Gully — (CTAG Past Chair) *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*

Janet Hashimoto — *US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*

Commission Chair Kurt Berchtold called the meeting to order at 9:31 AM.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Minutes of Meeting Held March 6, 2015

2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended March 31, 2015

3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at March 31, 2015

4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held May 7, 2015

Commissioner Kuhlman motioned to approve Consent Items 1-4 with a minor edit to both minutes, and Commissioner Hildebrand seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining to all items and Commissioner Kuhlman abstaining to Item 1.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Personnel and Finance Committee Report

Commissioner Torres reported that SCCWRP anticipates revenue exceeding expenses by \$150,000 for the fiscal year. Torres said that the Personnel and Finance Committee had reviewed the proposed 2015-16 budget and is recommending Commission approval. Torres also stated that the Committee recommends Commission approval of the proposed salary resolution for the agency, which is the Commission's next agenda item.

6. Resolution Establishing Rules Governing Compensation, Benefits, and Personnel Policies and Procedures

Weisberg introduced the agenda item, highlighting three proposed changes from the previous year's salary resolution:

- 1.3% increase in allowable salary ranges to adjust for inflation.
- Minimum wage increase for part-time workers, in accordance with the new State minimum wage requirements.
- Addition of paid sick leave benefit for part-time employees, in accordance with the new State law.

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the resolution with a minor edit, and Commissioner Torres seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

7. Funding Model Subcommittee

At the request of the Committee Chair, Executive Director Weisberg summarized recommendations the Funding Model Committee developed over the past year, which include the following: (a) the optimal size for SCCWRP is about 45 full-time employees; this makes good use of the present space, plus provides critical mass for the range of topical research areas the member agencies need covered, (b) the optimal ratio of contractual:base funding is 4:1, up from the previous target of 3:1; this ratio provides the member agencies good leverage for their membership contributions, while still providing the agency sufficient base to establish its own research directions, rather than being overly dependent on the needs of external funders, and (c) the optimal ratio of regulator:regulated funding for ensuring scientific neutrality of the organization is 1:1. Also, the portion of funding from any sector should not exceed two-thirds of total funding at any time.

The Committee also discussed how these recommendations will affect the next Joint Powers Agreement. The Committee concluded that the member agency fees, which have remained static since 2009 and are scheduled to remain so through 2017, will need to increase to achieve the desired staff size without the agency becoming too dependent on outside funds. To achieve these dual goals, the Committee recommended raising member agency contributions by 25% over a four-year period commencing in 2017 (to \$2.5 million). The Committee further recommended that the percentage increase should be the same for both full members and associate members, but that the stormwater agencies should increase their base funding by the full 25% in 2017, while wastewater treatment agencies should increase their base funding incrementally over the four-year period (in \$25,000 annual increments from 2017 to 2020).

In response to a question from Commissioner Crompton, Weisberg said contract employees and post-doctoral employees are included in the full-time staffing total, but visiting scientists (who are not paid by SCCWRP) are not included.

Commissioner Hyde, Chair of the Funding Model Committee, explained that the Committee entered its deliberations with extreme sensitivity to any base funding increases. Hyde said that although the member agency dues paid by her agency to SCCWRP eclipse other external association dues, the Committee feels that the recommended base funding increase is a good compromise, given the Committee's preference to not shrink the organization or to give up control of the agency's research agenda.

No Commissioners expressed concerns with the committee's recommendations. Weisberg agreed to incorporate the recommendations into a draft of the next Joint Powers Agreement that would become effective July 1, 2017. He was asked to distribute this draft to the Commission intersessionally for comment, and bring it forward to the Commission for consideration at its next meeting. Weisberg indicated that the Commission needs to approve the four-year JPA no later than its December 2015 meeting, as several member agencies feel they need at least 18 months to obtain signatures within their organizations.

Commission Chair Berchtold thanked the Committee for its diligence and thought in developing the funding model recommendations.

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Weisberg opened his verbal Director's Report by stressing the staff's dedication to SCCWRP. In particular, he introduced David Tsukada, a senior research technician in the Chemistry Department, who is retiring June 30 after 37 years with SCCWRP. Weisberg indicated that Tsukada was the longest-tenured employee at SCCWRP, but that there are four other employees who have been at SCCWRP for more than 30 years. Weisberg praised Tsukada as a shining example of the behind-the-scenes energy that supports SCCWRP's scientists. Tsukada, who has worked under seven department heads and four executive directors, told the Commission he considers himself fortunate to have worked for an organization that has made his job so consistently challenging and rewarding.

Weisberg next highlighted recent examples where SCCWRP has been recognized externally. First, he commended Principal Scientist Steve Steinberg, head of the Information Management & Analysis Department, for receiving the Advancement in Collaboration award from the California Geographic Information Association; Steinberg led a collaborative geospatial visualization project to map the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. Second, Weisberg noted that the Biogeochemistry Department, headed by Principal Scientist Martha Sutula, had received an exemplary review from an expert panel brought in to review SCCWRP's freshwater nutrient science plan supporting the development of State nutrient objectives. Third, Weisberg noted that one of the premier journals in the world, *Nature Methods*, selected SCCWRP as one of three organizations to profile in a feature article about pioneering work to develop a mobile quantitative polymerase chain reaction device, which in our case is to rapidly detect microbial contamination in the field. Fourth, Weisberg noted that SCCWRP was recognized for its contributions to the Los Angeles County Flood Control District during the District's 100th anniversary celebration in May.

Weisberg also reported on how SCCWRP is leveraging external talent to add strength to its scientific staff, in ways that do not increase payroll costs. In particular, he noted that SCCWRP recently welcomed scientists visiting from two countries: Joao Paulo Medeiros, a Ph.D. student from the University of Lisbon in Portugal who is studying genetic barcoding at SCCWRP for four months, and Dr. Xiping Yang, a microbiologist from Nanjing Agricultural University in China who is studying molecular contaminant detection techniques at SCCWRP for one year. Both visiting scientists introduced themselves to the Commission.

9. CTAG Report

Past CTAG Chair Joe Gully presented the CTAG report on behalf of Chair Bram Sercu, who recently stepped down from CTAG when he took a hydrologist position with the United Water Conservation District. Gully thanked Sercu for his contributions as CTAG chair for the past five months.

Gully said CTAG had reviewed and was recommending Commission endorsement/approval of Contracts 2-7; Contracts 1 and 8 did not come through until after CTAG's May 7 meeting, although CTAG was briefed verbally on Contract 1 and expressed no concerns, Gully said.

Gully said CTAG had only minor comments and edits on the 2015-16 Research Plan Executive Summary and was recommending Commission approval.

Gully said the CTAG intersessional planning workshops on wetlands (April 9) and climate change (May 21) had been well-attended and that CTAG had made meaningful contributions to the long-range research visioning process. Gully said CTAG had strong alignment with SCCWRP staff on research prioritization and resource allocation. Asked by Commissioner Polhemus about how SCCWRP will work to ensure that managers make wetland restoration decisions in an informed, strategic manner, Principal Scientist Eric Stein said SCCWRP will be looking at restoration issues from a regional planning perspective and will be incorporating historical studies into its decision-support tools.

Gully said the Commission will receive an update on CTAG's efforts to capture historical monitoring data at the Commission's December meeting.

10. Fiscal Year 2015/2016 Research Plan and Budget

Executive Director Weisberg announced that SCCWRP has moved into a new era of collaboration and coordination with CTAG that has dramatically improved the research planning process, and that the revised structure of the annual Research Plan is a reflection of this change. The new Research Plan will become a living document that will focus less on individual projects and more on what staff and CTAG envision for SCCWRP's research over the next decade across nine thematic research areas. CTAG now plays a more proactive role in research planning, including being asked to vote on research priorities within thematic areas as well as priorities across thematic areas. Weisberg presented an analysis of CTAG voting patterns and explained that there are strong correlations between the agency's research priorities and CTAG's priorities. The projects that SCCWRP is moving forward with are managerially relevant, scientifically robust and maintain SCCWRP's position at the cutting edge nationally, Weisberg said.

Commissioner Torres motioned to approve the 2015-16 Research Plan and Budget, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

11. Contract Review

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 contract:

- 1) NOAA (\$379,200)
Modeling of Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia

Commissioner Torres motioned to approve the contract, and Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioner 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.

- 2) County of San Diego (\$220,000)
Nutrient-Stream Algae
- 3) San Francisco Estuary Institute (\$14,923)
Nutrient Science for San Francisco Bay
- 4) City of San Diego (through AMEC) (\$20,000)
San Diego Reference Beach Bacteria Study
- 5) State Water Resources Control Board (\$10,000)
California Stream Condition Index Scoring Tool
- 6) County of San Diego (through AMEC) (\$15,000)
Hydromodification Watershed Study
- 7) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (through MWH) (\$11,882)
Delta LTMS Program Review
- 8) Moss Landing Marine Laboratory/San Jose State University (\$19,000)
Bar-built Estuary Monitoring System

The Commission did not raise any objections to the contracts.

12. Annual Report

Editor Scott Martindale reported that the Commission and CTAG indicated via an anonymous poll that they are overwhelmingly supportive of the overhaul of the 2014 Annual Report, with 85% to 95% of survey takers reporting they agree or strongly agree the Annual Report is an improvement over the prior year and is an effective document written at the appropriate level. Martindale said SCCWRP staff will continue to make refinements to the Annual Report and refine its messaging in response to Commission and CTAG feedback. In particular, the accomplishments-oriented executive summaries that the Commission helped conceptualize will be placed more prominently in the 2015 Annual Report.

Asked by Commissioner Torres about the possibility of creating a two-page executive summary fact sheet summarizing the Annual Report that could be shared with his governing board, Executive Director Weisberg said SCCWRP could produce such a document for the 2015 Annual Report.

Commission Chair Berchtold said he appreciated seeing the results of the survey.

13. Climate Change

Executive Director Weisberg provided an overview of SCCWRP's present research portfolio related to climate change and the agency's future research priorities. Weisberg emphasized that climate change is unlike other stressors in that it is a global phenomenon that is permanently shifting baseline metrics. SCCWRP considers increased levels of atmospheric CO₂ to be the driver of four main pressures: Changing water pH, sea level rise/storm surge, changing rainfall and weather patterns, and changing water temperature. Weisberg explained that each pressure is projected to grow in intensity and summarized the physical, chemical and biological impacts triggered by each pressure. Then, he outlined what research SCCWRP is doing and plans to do across all of these areas. In particular, Weisberg chronicled ongoing and planned assessments of historical Bight data, evaluations of ocean pH sensor technologies, development of tools to assess wetland vulnerability, reevaluation of bioassessment thresholds and indices, and coupled physical-biogeochemical models to quantify the relative impacts of local nutrient inputs on global processes.

Principal Scientist Martha Sutula provided a more detailed overview of SCCWRP's physical-biogeochemical modeling work. The modeling work will seek to understand the relative contributions of three factors on ocean acidification and hypoxia: natural climate variability, anthropogenically induced climate change and local anthropogenic inputs. Sutula said SCCWRP will be looking to CTAG to help set appropriate climate change-induced scenarios to evaluate with the model. The first set of products is expected to be released in 2018. Asked by Commissioner Hashimoto how transportable the model will be to the San Francisco Bay Area, Sutula said SCCWRP is already helping the San Francisco Estuary Institute to develop a model for this region in tandem with the development of SCCWRP's models.

Weisberg then led a discussion on the possibility of SCCWRP producing a management-level climate change document. Several Commissioners voiced strong support for this document. Among the comments from Commissioners: Commissioner Polhemus said that he had always viewed climate change as unrelated to the water quality work he does, but the presentations he just heard convinced him otherwise. Commissioner Smith said the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board is writing a climate change document centered around water quality standards for freshwater systems and that the different focus SCCWRP is proposing to take will be of value. Commissioner Crompton said municipal land-use planners also will be interested in the document if it can encompass more than just a focus on water quality.

Weisberg said CTAG was also supportive of such a document, but felt it was a big undertaking that required external funding to accomplish. Weisberg indicated he will move forward with attempting to secure funding for workshops and other collaborative activities that will be required to produce such a document.

14. Future Meeting Agenda Items

Executive Director Weisberg reminded the Commission that they had previously requested a presentation on SCCWRP's portable microbiology measurement device, as well as other advances in microbiology, at the Commission's September meeting. Also in September, a draft of the next Joint Powers Agreement will come before the Commission for consideration.

15. Other Business and Communications

Executive Director Weisberg said that following his lunch meeting today with the wastewater discharger member agencies, he will have taken each of the sectors out to lunch once since the Commission initiated these lunches a year ago. Commissioners expressed support for making the rotating lunches a permanent fixture following each Commission meeting.

16. Public Comments

No public comments were raised.

17. Adjournment

Commission Chair Berchtold adjourned the meeting at 12:08 PM until the next Commission meeting on September 11, 2015.

Attest:

Bryan Nece
Secretary