

**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 3, 2016
9:30 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

John Kemmerer — *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*
Karen Larsen — *State Water Resources Control Board*
Deborah Halberstadt (Vice-Chair) — *California Ocean Protection Council*
Sam Unger — *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Kurt Berchtold — *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*
David Barker — *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Mas Dojiri — *City of Los Angeles*
Robert Ferrante — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Bob Ghirelli — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Peter Vroom — *City of San Diego*
Arne Anselm — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*
Gary Hildebrand — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*
Chris Crompton — *County of Orange*
Todd Snyder — *County of San Diego*

STAFF PRESENT

Stephen Weisberg — *Executive Director*
Bryan Nece — *Administrative Officer*
Wes Beverlin — *Legal Counsel*
Ken Schiff — *Deputy Director*
Steve Bay — *Principal Scientist*
John Griffith — *Principal Scientist*
Keith Maruya — *Principal Scientist*
Steve Steinberg — *Principal Scientist*
Martha Sutula — *Principal Scientist*
Meredith Howard — *Senior Scientist*
Scott Martindale — *Editor*
Emily Lau — *Laboratory Assistant*

OTHERS PRESENT

Joe Gully (CTAG Past Chair) — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Bobbi Larson — *California Association of Sanitation Agencies*
Phil Markle — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*

Commission Vice Chair Deborah Halberstadt called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM.

Robert Ferrante of the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County introduced himself as a one-time substitute for Commissioner Grace Hyde. CTAG Representative Arne Anselm of the Ventura County Watershed Protection District introduced himself as a one-time substitute for Commission Chair Tully Clifford. Anselm indicated that Clifford requested a permanent member of the Commission fill his Chair duties; hence, Commission Vice Chair Deborah Halberstadt chaired the meeting.

On behalf of the Commission, Halberstadt presented Executive Director Steve Weisberg with a 20-year service award for his stewardship and guidance of SCCWRP. Weisberg was hired on July 1, 1996 as Executive Director. Commissioner Bob Ghirelli commented that he was on the Commission when Weisberg was hired and that the decision to hire Weisberg was one of the best decisions Ghirelli has ever made.

1. Minutes of Meeting Held March 4, 2014

2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended March 31, 2016

3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at March 31, 2016

4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held May 5, 2016

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Berchtold seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Personnel and Finance Committee Report

Commissioner Ghirelli reported that the Personnel and Finance Committee reviewed SCCWRP's finances three-fourths of the way through the year and that the agency's financial position remained strong. Two of the four signatory agencies already have signed the next SCCWRP Joint Powers Agreement that goes into effect July 1, 2017, and the other two are on track to get it signed in the coming months. Ghirelli said the Committee also reviewed the 2016-17 salary resolution, which includes a 0.9% increase in salary ranges and updates to the career track for communications staff. Ghirelli said the Committee is recommending approval to the Commission.

6. Executive Director's Report

Weisberg thanked Commission Vice Chair Halberstadt for stepping into the chair role during her first Commission meeting. Weisberg also noted that Jim Colston of the Orange County Sanitation District has been named an Alternate Commissioner.

Weisberg said SCCWRP is continuing to demonstrate its effectiveness as a national leader and consensus-builder for the greater scientific community. He cited multiple recent examples: (1) Deputy Director Ken Schiff was asked to lead a special session on regional monitoring at the National Water Quality Monitoring Council's biannual conference, (2) the Bight regional monitoring program was featured in a special issue of a scientific journal as one of the top four marine regional monitoring programs in the nation, (3) Weisberg was asked to lead a session on developing coliphage as a beach water-quality indicator at the

EPA's national beach conference, as well as to attend a strategic planning conference with top NOAA executives, (3) Senior Scientist Raphael Mazor was asked to co-chair the Society for Freshwater Sciences' annual meeting. He also mentioned that he was pleased to have Bobbi Larson, Executive Director of the California Association of Sanitation Agencies, visiting from Sacramento to observe the Commission meeting and learn more about how SCCWRP operates.

7. CTAG Report

CTAG Chair Greg Gearheart reported that CTAG's research planning workshop for coastal/estuarine nutrients, held on May 4, showed that there is close alignment between SCCWRP and CTAG research priorities.

Gearheart reported that an ongoing toxicity intercalibration study by the Southern California Stormwater Monitoring Coalition is continuing to make progress, including demonstrating significant improvements in the reliability of freshwater toxicity testing methods.

Gearheart said CTAG has formed a subgroup to evaluate whether SCCWRP and CTAG should explore developing a new research theme called Regulatory Program Effectiveness Evaluation, which would look at how water-quality managers can better assess the effectiveness of regulatory compliance-related activities.

Gearheart said CTAG is recommending approval of SCCWRP's 2016-17 Research Plan Executive Summary and Contracts 1-2.

Commissioner Chris Crompton arrived at 9:55 AM.

8. Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Research Plan and Budget

Executive Director Weisberg described the agency's proposed research plan for the next year and reported that there is strong alignment between CTAG research priorities and the projects that SCCWRP is planning for 2016-17.

Commissioner Ghirelli asked if SCCWRP could examine whether antibiotic-resistant bacterial components that escape wastewater treatment processes could be posing an environmental risk. Ghirelli and Commissioner Mas Dojiri noted that recent media coverage has renewed interest in understanding the potential risks posed by antibiotic-resistant bacteria and its breakdown components. CTAG Past Chair Joe Gully said the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County already has been examining this issue, including looking at carbapenem-resistant bacteria. Weisberg said SCCWRP staff will discuss the issue and develop recommendations on how to proceed at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Berchtold motioned to approve the 2016-17 Research Plan and Budget, and Commissioner Unger seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

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

Executive Director Weisberg reported that there are two main proposed changes from the previous year's salary resolution: (1) A 0.9% increase in allowable salary ranges to adjust for inflation, and (2) an expansion of the agency's communications career track.

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the resolution, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

10. 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 contracts:

- 1) State Water Resources Control Board (\$368,000)
Wadeable Streams Biological Condition Gradient
- 2) State Water Resources Control Board (\$282,000)
Wadeable Stream Nutrient Objective Technical Support

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) Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (\$200,000)
Bight Deep Water Benthos
- 4) Santa Monica Bay Restoration Authority (\$15,000)
Estuary Phase II
- 5) CASQA (\$25,000)
Spatial Representativeness of Bioassessment Results
- 6) Cost Benefit Analysis Technical Advisory Committee (\$23,000)
County of San Diego (through Geosyntec)
- 7) Morena Outfall Source ID Analysis (\$20,400)
City of San Diego (through AMEC)

Commissioner Unger asked for more information about Contract 6. Weisberg responded that this contract asks SCCWRP to facilitate a technical review committee to advise San Diego County, City and Regional Board on their joint project to conduct a cost-benefit analysis for improving wet-weather beach water quality. The cost benefit analysis will

quantify both the potential benefits and costs to society of potential management actions. SCCWRP's role will be to advise the County, City and Regional Board on the technical adequacy of the work conducted by their economics contractor. Deputy Director Schiff said SCCWRP will host the first meeting of the project's technical advisory committee in July. Commissioner Unger expressed concern about SCCWRP undertaking economic analysis projects.

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the two contracts requiring Commission approval, and Commissioner Berchtold seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioners Larsen and Unger abstaining.

11. Bacteriophage as an Alternative Beach Water Quality Criteria

Executive Director Weisberg explained that this bacteriophage presentation, and the HABs presentation following it, would focus less on a specific SCCWRP project and more on the state of the science, a type of presentation that Commissioners have asked for. Principal Scientist John Griffith provided an overview of why USEPA is moving toward approving coliphage, a type of virus that infects bacteria, as a new beach water quality criterion. Griffith said that because it is a virus, phage is considered more likely to mimic the behavior of viruses that cause human illness than is *Enterococcus*, a bacterium that is the currently-used beach indicator. He mentioned that coliphage is already being used by the Food and Drug Administration to assess safety of shellfish consumption. Griffith added, however, that a recent study integrating numerous epidemiologic studies found that coliphage only offered about the same level of correlation with gastrointestinal illness as *Enterococcus*.

Asked by Commissioner Ghirelli if coliphage would be used in addition to or in place of *Enterococcus*, Executive Director Weisberg responded that it would most likely be developed as an additional indicator to be used primarily at beaches where there were concerns about the performance of *Enterococcus*.

12. Harmful Algal Bloom Events

Senior Scientist Meredith Howard provided an overview of the challenges associated with managing harmful algal blooms, or HABs, in freshwater and marine environments, and the research and monitoring efforts underway to better understand HABs. Howard said that HABs events are breaking records along the West Coast for severity and duration, and pose an increasing threat to marine-dependent industries. HABs researchers believe that anomalously warm West Coast ocean waters, combined with nutrient upwelling, create optimal conditions for HABs events. Researchers, however, don't know why the Southern California Bight has so far eluded the severe HABs events that have plagued more northern coastal waters. Howard also reported that SCCWRP is investigating the relationship between algal toxins that originate in freshwater systems and flow into marine environment, and involved with a variety of site-specific assessments in freshwater systems.

13. Toxicity Intercalibration Study

Deputy Director Ken Schiff provided an update on an ongoing Southern California Stormwater Monitoring Coalition intercalibration study to improve comparability of toxicity testing for combining data sets. Initial results indicated low comparability for two commonly tested freshwater species; the water flea *Ceriodaphnia* and the amphipod *Hyalella*. Laboratory improvements in later rounds of testing showed dramatic improvements for *Hyalella*, but comparability of *Ceriodaphnia* reproduction tests remained moderate. A guidance manual for Stormwater Monitoring Coalition member agencies is being prepared for the two freshwater species, as well as two marine species that showed high comparability. Schiff emphasized it was premature to say the *Ceriodaphnia* test was an inherently flawed testing method. Commissioner Dojiri suggested that the study examine other factors, including water hardness and the organisms' diet. Commissioner Larsen suggested that the study normalize for differences in *Ceriodaphnia* reproductive output. Commissioner Unger indicated that he was considering the SMC suggestion that regulators temporarily ease *Ceriodaphnia* compliance testing requirements to free up resources for further method evaluation work, but that idea will require further discussion.

14. Future Meeting Agenda Items

Commissioners agreed to hold an extended Commission meeting on Sept. 9, 2016 (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) so they can devote additional time to hearing presentations on the key findings of the Southern California Bight 2013 Regional Monitoring Program.

Executive Director Weisberg said he would make a presentation in response to Commissioner Ghirelli's request for more information about antibiotic-resistant bacterial components that potentially are escaping wastewater treatment processes.

Commissioner Vroom requested that SCCWRP provide a presentation on the effects of California's drought on wastewater volumes and flows, wastewater treatment processes, and associated environmental impacts.

There was discussion about whether the Commissioners liked presentations that transcended specific SCCWRP research and provided information about timely topics in which SCCWRP has expertise to provide perspective, such as the bacteriophage and HABS presentations from today. The Commission agreed these presentations should be continued, looking to achieve a balance between these overview presentations and technical presentations about SCCWRP research.

15. Other Business and Communications

Commissioner Kemmerer announced he is retiring from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX, in July 2016; he said it had been a real pleasure serving on the Commission. Weisberg thanked him for his contributions to SCCWRP.

16. Public Comments

No public comments were raised.

17. Adjournment

Commission Chair Halberstadt adjourned the meeting at 12:02 PM until the next Commission meeting on September 9, 2016.

Attest:

Bryan Nece
Secretary