

**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. Suite 110, Costa Mesa, California 92626**

**June 2, 2017  
9:00 AM**

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**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Karen Larsen — *State Water Resources Control Board*  
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 (Chair) — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Bob Ghirelli — *Orange County Sanitation District*  
Peter Vroom — *City of San Diego*  
Arne Anselm — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*  
Paul Alva — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*  
Amanda Carr — *County of Orange*  
Jo Ann Weber — *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*  
Keith Maruya — *Principal Scientist*  
Eric Stein — *Principal Scientist*  
Martha Sutula — *Principal Scientist*  
Nabiul Afrooz — *Scientist*  
Rebecca Glaser — *Laboratory Assistant*  
Scott Martindale — *Communications Coordinator*  
Raphael Mazor — *Senior Scientist*  
Susanna Theroux — *Scientist*

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Phil Friess — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Nikos Melitas — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Hassan Rad — *City of Los Angeles*

Commission Chair Robert Ferrante called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

### **1. Minutes of Meeting Held March 3, 2017**

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the March minutes with minor revisions, and Commissioner Carr seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

### **2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended March 31, 2017**

### **3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at March 31, 2017**

### **4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held May 4, 2017**

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve Consent Items 2-4, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

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

Commissioner Ghirelli, Chair of the Personnel and Finance Committee, reported that SCCWRP remains in a strong position financially and will likely finish fiscal year 2016-17 meeting our fiscal goal of small, net positive revenue. Ghirelli said the committee was briefed on a SCCWRP plan to boost the number of full-time staff by about four scientists to a total of 45, which is the staffing level that the Commission has determined is the optimal size for SCCWRP. Ghirelli said the committee reviewed the 2017-18 salary resolution and recommends Commission approval (Agenda Item 10). Ghirelli said the Committee reviewed a SCCWRP proposal to invest in Los Angeles County's Pooled Surplus Fund, which will earn higher yields and diversify SCCWRP's investment portfolio, and recommends Commission approval (Agenda Item 6). Commission Chair Robert Ferrante thanked staff for researching the investment option.

### **6. Investment Fund Resolution**

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the investment fund resolution and Commissioner Larsen seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

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

Executive Director Weisberg welcomed Paul Alva and Jo Ann Weber as one-time replacements for this Commission meeting. Weisberg thanked Commissioner Kurt Berchtold and former Alternate Commissioner Phillip Friess, who are retiring, for their dedication to the Commission. Berchtold was appointed an Alternate Commissioner in the early 2000s and became a Commissioner in 2010; Friess served as an Alternate Commissioner from 2010 to 2016.

Weisberg reported on SCCWRP's progress in boosting the number of full-time employees to 45, which the Commission identified during strategic planning as the target size for the organization. SCCWRP has made three strategic hires: (1) Dr. Nabiul Afrooz, an environmental engineer who was hired as a result of interactions with CTAG that indicated member agencies are interested in evaluating the effectiveness of BMPs; Afrooz will work with a CTAG subcommittee to develop a strategic plan for BMP research going forward; (2)

Dr. Nina Bednarsek, a top ocean acidification biologist, who will develop biologically relevant thresholds for interpreting acidification monitoring and modeling data; and (3) Dr. Bowen Du, a chemist and postdoctoral researcher from the University of Washington who will enhance SCCWRP's ability to perform measurements of various classes of toxins, and to share these methods with member agencies. Weisberg said SCCWRP is continuing to interview for additional positions.

Weisberg provided four updates for projects that reflect the breadth and high-profile impact of SCCWRP research: (1) SCCWRP is preparing to launch an international "superbug" study exploring how wastewater treatment processes can potentially affect antibiotic resistance; Weisberg noted that in his 21 years at SCCWRP, this study is only the second to be generated through a request from the Commission, and has developed into an international study with collaborations involving partners in Australia . (2) An expert panel convened by SCCWRP on behalf of the State Water Board will meet in July to begin developing recommendations for emerging contaminants in recycled water; the meeting will include an opportunity for public participation. (3) SCCWRP has been working with CTAG to assemble historical Southern California Bight data from POTW member agencies dating back to the 1970s, and has begun work on a preliminary benthic infauna analysis to explore changing Bight conditions. (4) SCCWRP in April was invited to make four presentations and demonstrations to the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board on next-generation solutions for improving monitoring, including bioanalytical screening and 3D visualizations; Weisberg said SCCWRP was honored to be asked to present to the board. Commissioner Gibson thanked SCCWRP and said the presentations and demonstrations to the San Diego Regional Board were well-received.

## **8. CTAG Report**

CTAG Chair Paul Alva reported that CTAG reviewed and is recommending approval of SCCWRP's 2017-18 Research Plan. CTAG is exploring the possibility of creating a 10th research theme centered around trash, and will hold an intersessional research planning workshop on July 13 to flesh out a long-term research vision for this research. If CTAG recommends that trash become a SCCWRP research theme, it would be articulated in a research plan that would come before the Commission in about six months.

## **9. Fiscal Year 2017/2018 Research Plan and Budget**

Executive Director Weisberg introduced the 2017-18 Research Plan Executive Summary by noting that it is an executive version of a much longer Research Plan consisting of nine separate documents, one for each SCCWRP research theme. CTAG already has reviewed and endorsed the nine full Research Plan documents.

Asked by Commission Chair Ferrante about how member agencies can be involved in the studies mentioned in the Research Plan, Weisberg said member agencies three opportunities for identifying collaboration: (1) SCCWRP delivers a five-minute presentation to CTAG on all new projects, and includes an overview of opportunities for member agency involvement, (2) a CTAG representative can ask to get involved in any SCCWRP project, and (3) Commissioners can request a briefing on any SCCWRP project at any time.

Commissioner Vroom motioned to approve the research plan and budget, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

#### **10. Resolution Establishing Rules Governing Compensation, Benefits, and Personnel, Policies and Procedures**

Executive Director Weisberg introduced the salary resolution by noting that it is almost identical to last year's, with salary ranges adjusted upward for cost of living, and an increase in the state minimum wage affecting some part-time employees.

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

#### **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 contracts:

- 1) Ocean Protection Council (\$800,000)  
Trash Measurement Methods
- 2) Ocean Protection Council (\$400,000)  
Ocean Acidification Modeling Support
- 3) State Water Resources Control Board (\$350,000)  
Influence of Dissolved Organochlorines on Bioaccumulation in San Diego Bay.

Commissioner Carr asked about how trash will be quantified under the state's new trash assessment methodology. Weisberg said the State Water Board and Ocean Protection Council are in the process of developing, standardizing and validating these methods, which SCCWRP will be participating in as part of the OPC contract under consideration. The upcoming July 13 CTAG intersessional research planning workshop for trash will be an opportunity to get insights into the State's plans. Carr expressed support for a plan to potentially adapt unmanned aerial systems (drones) for trash assessments.

Commissioner Carr motioned to approve the three contracts requiring Commission approval, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioners Larsen abstaining.

Weisberg presented seven contracts, all of which have values of \$250,000 or less and thus do not require Commission approval. All seven contracts were presented to ensure consistency of the agency's directions with the Commission's intentions. Two of the contracts (Contracts 4 and 5) require a Commission resolution of acceptance.

- 4) State Water Resources Control Board (through SJSURF) (\$120,000)

## Sediment Chemistry Analysis

- 5) State Water Resources Control Board (\$158,043)  
CEC Expert Panel for Recycled Water

The Commission approved the two contracts requiring a resolution of acceptance.

- 6) County of San Diego (through Brown Caldwell) (\$30,000)  
County of San Diego (through Brown Caldwell) (\$10,000)  
County of San Diego (through Brown Caldwell) (\$5,000)  
Human Marker Wet Weather
- 7) San Francisco Estuary Institute (\$17,880)  
Dissolved Oxygen Workshop Support
- 8) State Water Resources Control Board (\$100,000)  
Low Impact Development BMPs
- 9) State Water Resources Control Board (\$100,000)  
Implementation Guidance for Sediment Quality Objectives
- 10) State Water Resources Control Board (through UC Davis) (\$12,863)  
Stream Mapping

The Commission did not raise any objections to the contracts.

### **12. Bioassessment And Application In A Management Setting**

Deputy Director Ken Schiff opened his presentation by describing the evolution of bioassessment to date, from its early days as a means to achieve “balanced indigenous populations” to the State Water Board’s ongoing development of a statewide stream biointegrity/biostimulatory plan. Schiff described four main applications for bioassessment: (1) NPDES permitting, which currently requires every SCCWRP member agency to perform bioassessment monitoring, (2) 303(d) listings, which defines impairments that result in Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) – a process that is currently not well-developed for biology, but for which SCCWRP is trying to improve by developing rapid causal assessment methods, (3) watershed management plans, which are just beginning to incorporate bioassessment and for which it is unclear the role that bioassessment will play vs. the role that chemistry and toxicity currently play, and (4) the State Water Board biointegrity/biostimulatory plan currently under development, which will focus on protecting high-quality streams, restoring degraded streams, and utilizing numeric guidance instead of narrative guidance. One challenge facing the upcoming plan is the issue of biological expectations in modified channels.

Commissioner Carr noted that newly released draft 303(d) listings for streams are based on stream bioassessment data from 2010; Schiff agreed that older bioassessment tools

have evolved since that time and the results may be different than with the current generation of bioassessment tools.

The Commission discussed their respective concerns about potentially setting alternative biological goals for highly modified channels. For example, setting lower bioassessment goals for hardened channels would lessen the ability of managers in the future to convert hardened channels to nonhardened channels. On the other hand, setting alternative goals for hardened channels may be appropriate if these highly modified systems (even with clean water) will never meet biological expectations.

### **13. Bioassessment And Environmental Flows**

Principal Scientist Eric Stein opened his presentation by describing the complex relationship between stream flow and the integrity of biological communities. Flow management will become increasingly important as dry-weather, effluent-dominated flows are redirected for recycling/reuse applications, and as climate change fundamentally alters hydrologic flow patterns. This will become particularly poignant when the State Water Board promulgates its biointegrity/biostimulatory plan. Stein explained that the state's approach to flow management has historically been uneven, with individual agencies developing methodologies independently, even when working within the same regions of the state. Partly to improve coordination, SCCWRP has helped convene a group of technical experts who've worked extensively on California flow management issues. This technical group has reached consensus, classifying stream flow regimes in California into one of nine hydrologic classes. The biggest ongoing challenge is to get the state and federal agency partners integrated into the technical group, to effectively leverage data and build the appropriate tools and models to most effectively inform management decisions.

### **14. California Ocean Science Trust's Condition Assessment For The South California Coast**

Deputy Director Schiff provided an overview of the South Coast Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) baseline monitoring program and SCCWRP's efforts to improve coordination with the Southern California Bight Regional Monitoring Program. The first cycle of MPA monitoring was conducted from 2011 to 2015, with the findings used to establish a baseline against which to assess MPA condition into the future. Consequently, the findings of the baseline monitoring cycle have no immediate management implications. Schiff said the MPA and Bight monitoring programs are complementary, with limited areas of overlap in terms of what each program measures. The Bight program, dating back to 1994, provides the best historical baseline for MPA-focused water quality data. SCCWRP and the California Ocean Science Trust, which managed the baseline MPA monitoring program, are hiring a joint post-doctoral researcher to help bridge the MPA-water quality divide.

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

Commissioner Ghirelli thanked Commissioner Berchtold and former Alternate Commissioner Friess, who are retiring, for their dedication to the Commission, as well as all of the other organizations they've served during their careers.

#### **16. Future Meeting Agenda Items**

The Commission reviewed the list of tentative topics proposed for the September Commission meeting: Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment in California, rapid microbiological measurement methods, EPA's consideration of coliphage as a fecal indicator for REC1, a cost-benefit analysis of San Diego wet-weather bacteria TMDL implementation, and a CTAG update on historical data capture. The Commission agreed to start its September 8 meeting at 9 a.m. instead of 9:30 a.m. to accommodate all of the agenda items.

Commissioner Mas Dojiri requested that a member of his staff be able to make a short presentation to the Commission in December, during a proposed Commission agenda item on climate change research. Dojiri said the presentation would focus on climate change resiliency adaptation planning.

#### **17. Public Comments**

No public comments were raised.

#### **18. Adjournment**

Commission Chair Ferrante adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM until the next Commission meeting on September 8, 2017 at 9:00 AM.

Attest:

Bryan Nece  
Secretary