

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

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

**December 7, 2012  
9:30 AM**

---

---

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

David Barker - *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Kurt Berchtold (Vice-Chair) - *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Grace Chan - *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Mas Dojiri - *City of Los Angeles*  
Robert Ghirelli - *Orange County Sanitation District*  
Gerhardt Hubner - *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*  
Catherine Kuhlman - *Ocean Protection Council*  
Steve Meyer (Chair) - *City of San Diego*  
Darrin Polhemus - *State Water Resources Control Board*  
Mary Anne Skorpanich - *County of Orange*  
Cid Tesoro - *County of San Diego*  
Sam Unger - *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*

**STAFF PRESENT**

Stephen Weisberg - *Executive Director*  
Bryan Nece - *Administrative Officer*  
Paul Beck - *Legal Counsel*  
Ken Schiff - *Deputy Director*  
Steve Bay - *Principal Investigator*  
John Griffith - *Principal Investigator*  
Keith Maruya - *Principal Investigator*  
Eric Stein - *Principal Investigator*  
Steve Steinberg - *Principal Investigator*  
Meredith Howard - *Scientist*  
Karen McLaughlin - *Scientist*  
Karen Setty - *Science Writer*

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Rich Breuer - *State Water Resources Control Board*  
Phil Friess - *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Joe Gully - *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
George Robertson - *Orange County Sanitation District*  
Tim Stebbins - *City of San Diego*

Commission Chair Meyer called the meeting to order at 9:38 AM.

## CONSENT AGENDA

1. Minutes of Meeting Held September 7, 2012
2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended September 30, 2012
3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at September 30, 2012
4. Minutes of CTAG Meeting Held August 9, 2012
5. 2012 Financial Audit

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the consent items. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kuhlman and unanimously approved.

## REGULAR AGENDA

### 6. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Steve Weisberg began by explaining that he judges success of the organization in several ways, such as publications, partnerships, consensus building, and achieving management applications. He was proud to report the agency is doing well in all four of these areas this quarter.

- A. *Publication* – Four volumes of scientific journals in recent print or in progress that have been dedicated to SCCWRP science, which is an exceptional amount. These include: contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) in *Environmental Science and Technology*, sediment quality assessment in *Integrated Environmental Assessment and Management*, microbial source identification in *Water Research*, and Mussel Watch monitoring in *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. In addition, SCCWRP has been producing new types of management-oriented publications in response to Commission interest. Weisberg showed how the recently released thematic document "Forty Years After the Clean Water Act: A Retrospective Analysis of the Southern California Coastal Ocean" was being used in the scientific community and by member agencies. He asked if Commissioners had used it in other ways and several indicated they had distributed it to their Board members. Commissioner Kuhlman commented it was helpful in introducing a different audience to SCCWRP as an organization.
- B. *Partnerships* – Weisberg showed a "Partners in Conservation" plaque from the US Department of the Interior honoring SCCWRP for its role in the Multi-Agency Rocky Intertidal Network (MARINe). He next described two budding partnerships. First, the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Monitoring Enterprise (MME) will be placing a full-time employee at SCCWRP to help link monitoring efforts and produce joint publications. In addition, SCCWRP has offered to jointly sponsor a postdoctoral scholar with UCLA to investigate the extent to which anthropogenic nutrient sources affect hypoxia.

- C. *Consensus Building* – SCCWRP recently hosted, or is planning to host, several consensus-building workshops. SCCWRP hosted a workshop on passive sampling devices that was held in partnership with the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) and will be documented in a series of articles in that society's journal. Second, SCCWRP coordinated a state-of-the-science workshop on microbial source identification tools, their current potential uses, and needs for further development. Third, a conference on sea level rise will be held at SCCWRP on December 19, for which a flyer was distributed to the Commissioners.
  
- D. *Management Applications* – SCCWRP's research has recently been applied in several management arenas. The US Environmental Protection Agency issued new recreation water quality criteria, which open the door to using qPCR for beach water quality monitoring, have substantially different threshold guidance, and allow the use of quantitative microbial risk assessment (QMRA) for developing site-specific standards. Second, the State of Washington Blue Ribbon Panel on Ocean Acidification released recommendations on November 27 in conjunction with an Executive Order to begin addressing six themes of the report. Weisberg highlighted one aspect of that report, the contribution of nutrient loading to local ocean acidification, which had the potential to most closely affect the SCCWRP member agencies. The California Ocean Protection Council is also forming an advisory panel to make recommendations on ocean acidification. As a result of increasing management interest, Weisberg explained SCCWRP was looking to accelerate efforts in three areas: increasing involvement with the California Current Acidification Network (C-CAN), revisiting pH monitoring programs among member agencies, and developing models to characterize the relationship between local nutrient loading and acidification.

Weisberg invited questions on the written and verbal Director's Reports. Commissioner Kuhlman added seven states were sued by the Center for Biological Diversity for failing to list ocean waters as impaired for acidification, and felt the management community needs to get ahead of the listing process by having science available on which to base their response. Based on the overlay of timing for a peak in both scientific and government interest, she supported SCCWRP taking a leadership role in ocean acidification issues. Commissioner Ghirelli agreed the issue was quickly coming to the forefront. Commissioner Unger suggested CTAG consider this question and offer a recommendation to the Commission about the importance of this issue.

Others agreed to charge CTAG with making an assessment about the importance of the acidification issue to the SCCWRP member agencies. Commissioner Dojiri indicated the City of LA is determining what special studies should be done to unify nutrient-related issues (e.g., harmful algal blooms, ocean acidification, and hypoxia) in their permit. Commissioner Meyer noted having a basis for resource allocation decisions is of prime importance to his agency. Commissioner Skorpanich suggested CTAG weigh in on the importance of this area versus other research priorities in their evaluation of the Research Plan, since it held less interest for some member agencies. Commissioner Kuhlman commented the Ocean

Protection Council's expert panel has also been charged with collating broad background material and offered to coordinate with SCCWRP to avoid duplicating effort.

## **7. CTAG Report**

Commissioner Meyer announced agenda item 12 would be considered together with the CTAG Report, since both were being presented by CTAG Chair Tim Stebbins. Stebbins first reviewed activities from the November 1, 2012 CTAG meeting. He is following up with the San Francisco Estuary Institute to potentially organize a joint meeting between their Regional Monitoring Program Technical Review Committee and CTAG. A CTAG subcommittee will meet December 13 to discuss the methodology for CTAG's review of the SCCWRP Research Plan. CTAG did not have time to hear the Bight '13 update presentation, but Stebbins was informed all the planning committees have met and are moving forward. CTAG recommended two items to the Commission: approval of contracts included on the contract memo in November (several others were added later), and approval of the HAB fact sheet. Since election of new officers will take place at the February CTAG meeting, Commissioners Unger and Skorpanich thanked Stebbins for his service and presentations to the Commission.

## **8. Historical Monitoring Data (formerly item #12)**

Regarding the Commission's request for CTAG to consider how to capture historical monitoring data, Stebbins outlined several tasks and the status of those tasks. A subcommittee has been formed to address this issue and a partial data inventory is available.

## **9. Contract Review**

The Executive Director requested the Commission approve a resolution regarding four contracts offered to the Authority. Some require Commission action under SCCWRP's Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) because the value exceeds \$250,000. For those exceeding a value of \$100,000 offered by the State or Regional Water Boards, a resolution of acceptance is requested by the State of California.

- 1) County of San Diego (\$669,447) / County of San Diego (through Geosyntec Consultants) (\$253,512)  
Reference Watersheds Study
- 2) San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (\$180,000)  
Non-perennial Streams
- 3) State Water Resources Control Board (\$350,000)  
Technical Support for Nutrient Numeric Endpoint Development in California Estuaries
- 4) State Water Resources Control Board (\$200,000)  
Assess Eutrophication in San Francisco Bay

Commissioner Meyer asked about the geographical focus for contract #3 and Weisberg replied it included support for estuaries statewide. Commissioner Meyer also asked about whether Commission approval is needed for supplemental contracts, in which the original contract may not have required approval but the supplement brings the total above the \$250,000 amount requiring approval. Weisberg suggested SCCWRP legal counsel look into interpreting the JPA bylaws with regards to serial contracts and Meyer asked for a report back at the next Commission meeting. Weisberg also indicated that most of the contracts referred to as supplemental funding in the contract memo were actually for funding coming from a new entity for similar work. He indicated that he would develop new wording to differentiate contract amendments from new funds from another contract to supplement that project area. Commissioner Ghirelli asked if SCCWRP often received additional funding on a contract because of cost overruns and Weisberg responded that had not yet happened during his tenure, with all contract amendments having been for additional work.

Commissioner Kuhlman motioned to approve the first set of contracts and was seconded by Commissioner Ghirelli. The motion was unanimously approved with Commissioner Tesoro abstaining. Commissioner Kuhlman motioned to approve the three remaining contracts and was seconded by Commissioner Dojiri. The motion was unanimously approved with Commissioners Polhemus and Barker abstaining.

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

- 5) San Francisco Estuary Institute (\$50,000)  
Development of Benthic Indices for Mesohaline Environments in San Francisco Bay
- 6) UC Davis (\$3,000)  
Training for California Rapid Assessment Method
- 7) County of San Diego (through Geosyntec Consultants) (\$50,000)  
Study of Toxicity in Reference Streams
- 8) Wildlife Conservation Board (\$70,000)  
Coastal Wetland Change Assessment
- 9) Moss Landing Marine Laboratory/San Jose State (\$29,750)  
SWAMP Special Studies
- 10) San Francisco Estuary Institute (\$30,120)  
Analysis of Sediment Quality Assessment Data in San Francisco
- 11) San Francisco Estuary Institute (\$15,000)  
Tijuana River Historical Ecology Study

No objections were raised to any of these contracts.

#### **10. Hydromodification**

Eric Stein gave a presentation updating the Commission on SCCWRP's hydromodification research. Stein also showed the Commission SCCWRP Technical Report 667, which outlines a roadmap for addressing hydromodification management questions, including development of geospatial and field-based risk assessment tools, monitoring program approaches, modeling tools, and decision-making guidelines. He indicated that SCCWRP and is currently seeking partners to conduct demonstration projects and case studies.

Commissioner Unger inquired about member agency staff training opportunities. Stein indicated willingness to do so and that it usually takes about a half-day in the office and half-day in the field. Other agencies also expressed interest in participating. Unger will have a staff member contact Stein to coordinate logistics. Commissioner Hubner asked Stein what type of sites are typically included in field monitoring programs and Stein described an approach utilizing reference, receiving water, best management practice, and ambient sites for regional context. These are often nested with sites monitored by other programs so the additional parameters can be added to existing sites to minimize expenditures. Commissioner Tesoro asked if multi-year data is gathered to account for the effect of weather patterns, and Stein replied affirmatively. Monitoring is implemented in the context of single and multiple permit cycles to include some long-term trend sites.

#### **11. CEDEN**

Steve Steinberg summarized the agency's work to support the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN). To date, much of the work has focused on building a base of data providers to support the CEDEN as the source of readily available data for the 303(d) impaired waterway listing process. Regional data centers have been established to support providers from throughout the state. The next efforts within the program will focus on improving the data output tools, which will enhance data transparency in the regulatory process.

Commissioner Barker asked about interplay of multiple data storage systems such as the California Integrated Water Quality System (CIWQS). Steinberg indicated they are working to make the systems interoperable, but did not have an estimated completion date. In response to additional questions, Steinberg clarified CEDEN contains some marine data but the focal point to date has been freshwater data. The system is now primed to accept other types of data. Commissioner Hubner asked about quality assurance and control (QA/QC) activities as data is submitted. Steinberg explained all data must meet minimum requirements to enter CEDEN, while additional fields that provide additional QA information can also be filled in. In the future, tools will be created for users to filter data based on information captured in these additional QA/QC fields. In response to a question from Commissioner Dojiri, Steinberg indicated that the grant to initiate the program is near its end, but that the regional data centers have funding to continue in a lower level support mode into the foreseeable future. Steinberg was asked about whom to contact if people wanted to add data to the system. He replied that information about data submission is

available on CEDEN's website or by contacting the southern California regional center contact (Marlene Merchain). For overarching requests regarding CEDEN, Commissioners should contact Steinberg and or the State Water Board's Project Manager, Rich Breuer.

## **12. Bight'13 Planning**

Ken Schiff gave an update on planning for the 2013 Southern California Bight Regional Monitoring Program (Bight '13). Schiff outlined the planning process timeline and highlighted some new areas of work that are drawing excitement. These included: bird bioaccumulation monitoring for wildlife risk assessment, nutrient effects on hypoxia and acidification, impacts to reefs and Marine Protected Areas from fishing versus water quality, and linking debris from land (based on regional watershed monitoring) to ocean accumulation. Since some components will require added investment, Schiff encouraged the Commissioners to entertain these requests from their staff. Commissioner Meyer added he has received positive feedback on how smoothly the process is going so far.

## **13. Fact Sheet**

Karen Setty presented a fact sheet on Harmful Algal Blooms for Commission consideration, along with a memo from the CTAG Chair highlighting changes requested by CTAG. Setty asked for any specific comments from the Commission and a few were raised:

- Commissioner Skorpanich and others suggested adding text at the top of the first page to clarify HABs occur in both fresh and marine waters.
- Within the red tide box, Commissioner Dojiri suggested clarifying red tides occur in coastal marine waters.
- Commissioner Unger suggested revisiting the terminology referring to nutrients from land-based discharges as a potential contributing factor to HABs.
- Commissioner Skorpanich suggested moving the "Physical Effects" box to flow after the "Why are HABs a Concern?" section.

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the fact sheet with the mentioned edits and was seconded by Commissioner Unger. The motion was unanimously approved.

Weisberg asked if the Commissioners were using the fact sheets. Several Commissioners indicated they do hand them out to their Boards, and Commissioner Dojiri commented the handouts were helpful in the JPA approval process to demonstrate the kind of work SCCWRP is doing.

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

Commissioner Meyer asked for a report on the approval process for series of contracts totaling over \$250,000. Commissioner Ghirelli asked for a briefing on the new EPA beach water quality criteria.

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

Commissioner Dojiri asked for an update on the status of the JPA. Weisberg indicated all of the full members except the City of San Diego had approved the JPA. All of the associate member approvals were still in progress.

The Commission Chair reminded the Commission that he had requested a volunteer from the stormwater agencies to serve on the Personnel and Finance Committee. Commissioner Hubner volunteered and was appointed.

Weisberg asked if any of the Commissioners would be willing to provide brief opening remarks at the January 2013 SCCWRP Symposium, describing the relationship between SCCWRP and its member agencies. Commissioner Ghirelli volunteered.

**16. Public Comments**

No public comments were raised.

**17. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 PM until the next Commission meeting on March 8, 2013.

Attest:

Bryan Nece  
Secretary