

**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 7, 2013
9:30 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Grace Chan — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Mas Dojiri — *City of Los Angeles*
Robert Ghirelli — *Orange County Sanitation District*
David Gibson — *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Catherine Kuhlman — *Ocean Protection Council*
Janet Hashimoto — *US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*
Gary Hildebrand — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*
Gerhardt Hubner — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*
Mike Lyons — *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Steve Meyer (Chair) — *City of San Diego*
Mary Anne Skorpanich — *County of Orange*
Cid Tesoro — *County of San Diego*
Vicky Whitney — *State Water Resources Control Board*

STAFF PRESENT

Stephen Weisberg — *Executive Director*
Bryan Nece — *Administrative Officer*
Wesley Beverlin — *Legal Counsel*
Ken Schiff — *Deputy Director*
Steve Bay — *Principal Investigator*
John Griffith — *Principal Investigator*
Eric Stein — *Principal Investigator*
Steve Steinberg — *Principal Investigator*
Karen Setty — *Science Writer*

OTHERS PRESENT

Chris Beegan — *State Water Resources Control Board*
Phil Friess — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Joe Gully — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Wanda Cross — *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Todd Snyder — *County of San Diego*

Commission Chair Meyer called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM. He announced that Gary Hildebrand was the new Alternate Commissioner for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and that Mike Lyons would be a one-time alternate for the Los Angeles

Regional Water Quality Control Board. Meyer also mentioned that the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works may request a vote to change its named Commissioner in the Joint Powers Agreement, due to agency re-organization and personnel changes, at the next Commission meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Minutes of Meeting Held March 8, 2013

2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended March 31, 2013

3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at March 31, 2013

4. Minutes of CTAG Meeting Held February 6, 2013

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the consent items. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitney and unanimously approved by the Commission.

Commissioner Gibson arrived at 9:40 AM.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Personnel and Finance Committee Report

Personnel and Finance Committee Chair, Grace Chan, reported on the outcome of their morning meeting. The Committee discussed the Agency's salary resolution and recommended a 2% increase in staff salary ranges. The Committee also discussed the Executive Director's draft contract. The draft contract included a salary adjustment based on a salary survey conducted by the Committee and incorporation of a vacation accrual cap. The Committee reviewed the Agency's budget for the coming year. Finally, the Committee endorsed the Director's proposal for an outside panel of former and current Laboratory Directors to conduct an Agency review as a prelude to the Commission's next strategic planning meeting.

6. Executive Director's Report

Dr. Weisberg started his Director's Report by commenting that SCCWRP's role is not only to publish scientific research, but to also help translate its scientific findings into management actions. He cited hydromodification research as an area where SCCWRP had been successful bridging the gap between science and management, calling out efforts in San Diego where staff were working with both the Regional Board and the County to aid with implementation. He encouraged the Commissioners to call on SCCWRP if they need help translating science into management action.

Weisberg then reviewed several areas of activity regarding ocean acidification, including placement of two SCCWRP scientists on the Ocean Protection Council's expert panel and progress on California Current Acidification Network objectives. He pointed out that this issue was becoming increasingly important to EPA, passing around a Center for Biological Diversity petition to the US EPA to develop standards for aragonite saturation state.

7. CTAG Report

Commission's Technical Advisory Group (CTAG) Chair, Wanda Cross, reported on the outcome of their May 8th meeting. CTAG established a new three-part rotating leadership structure comprised of regulatory, POTW, and stormwater member agencies. CTAG also received three technical presentations, discussed two new projects dealing with contaminants of emerging concern (CECs), and formed a committee to stimulate capture of historical monitoring data. CTAG recommended the Commission approve: (a) the ocean acidification fact sheet; (b) the new SCCWRP contracts, and; (c) the 2013–14 Research Plan.

8. Contract Review

Weisberg asked the Commission to approve a resolution regarding contracts offered to SCCWRP. Some require Commission action under SCCWRP's Joint Powers Agreement because the value exceeds \$250,000. In addition, the State of California requests a resolution of acceptance for those exceeding \$100,000 offered by the State or Regional Water Boards.

- 1) State Water Resources Control Board (\$1,384,000)
Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA)
- 2) State Water Resources Control Board (\$200,000)
Nutrient Criteria
- 3) State Water Resources Control Board (\$250,000)
Support for Sediment Quality Management Planning

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve these three contracts and was seconded by Commissioner Chan. The motion was unanimously approved with Commissioners Whitney and Hashimoto 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.

- 4) State Water Resources Control Board (\$47,242)
Nutrient Support for Freshwater Nutrient Objectives
- 5) San Francisco Estuary Institute (\$22,000)
Linkage of *In Vitro* Assay Results with *In Vivo* End Points
- 6) San Diego State University (\$15,000)
Non-targeted Analytical Methods for CECs
- 7) County of Los Angeles (\$220,000)

Human Fecal Contamination in Selected Los Angeles County Drainages

- 8) City of San Diego (through AMEC) (\$140,000)
City of San Diego (through AMEC) (\$70,000)
Reference Watersheds Study
- 9) Ashland, Inc. (\$57,000)
Toxaphene Methods Development

No objections were raised to any of these contracts.

9. Fiscal Year 2013/2014 Research Plan and Budget

Ken Schiff presented highlights from the draft 2013–14 Research Plan, which contains 43 projects, 97% of which have collaborators and 87% of which have external or matched funding. Schiff then described major new initiatives, including ocean acidification/hypoxia, stormwater best management practices, and quantitative microbial risk assessment (QMRA). Commissioners Hubner and Meyer asked about the QMRA effort. Schiff and Weisberg clarified that SCCWRP presently has funding to conduct a dry-weather study, but a wet-weather study is also an important management need. Schiff lastly described interactions with CTAG on the Research Plan, which spanned three of the four quarterly meetings. This interaction was recently enhanced with the addition of a survey to ensure greater input from all CTAG members.

Commissioner Skorpanich asked Weisberg to clarify his comments in the CTAG minutes about why SCCWRP might still pursue a project if it did not score highly in the CTAG survey. Weisberg indicated that there were no projects that CTAG rated as inappropriate for the Agency and most were rated as highly relevant. Weisberg then explained that the role of CTAG was to provide feedback, but that he has to temper their input with a variety of other factors including funding, partnership and the skill sets of existing personnel. While he found CTAG feedback valuable, he indicated that it often conflicted with feedback that he received from Commissioners. This was likely because CTAG's survey results were biased toward short-term projects and part of his role as Director was to ensure SCCWRP leadership on scientific issues that have long-term importance that may not yet be on their radar screen, such as ocean acidification.

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the written 2013-14 Research Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dojiri, and unanimously approved by the Commission with Commissioner Hashimoto abstaining.

The Commission next turned its attention to the annual budget for 2013-2014. Commissioner Chan reported that the Personnel and Finance Committee had reviewed the budget and recommended its approval. Commissioner Whitney asked why expenditures for the present year were estimated to exceed income. Weisberg responded that SCCWRP spent approximately \$500,000 to build the new molecular laboratory, which combined with a delay in State-issued contracts and the agency taking on a few new mid-year initiatives, will lead to a loss of about \$700K for the year. He indicated that this was not

reflective of any structural financial concerns and that he would be giving a detailed briefing to the Personnel and Finance Committee about this year's finances at their next meeting.

Commissioner Chan motioned for Commission approval of the next fiscal year budget on behalf of the Personnel and Finance Committee. The Commission unanimously approved the budget with Commissioner Hashimoto abstaining.

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

Commissioner Chan reported the Personnel and Finance Committee had reviewed the Resolution Governing Compensation, Benefits, and Personnel Policies. She motioned for Commission approval on behalf of the Committee. The Commission unanimously approved the resolution with Commissioner Hashimoto abstaining.

11. Employment Contract of the Executive Director

Commissioner Chan reported the Personnel and Finance Committee had reviewed the Executive Director's employment contract. She motioned for Commission approval on behalf of the Committee. The Commission unanimously approved the contract with Commissioner Hashimoto abstaining.

12. Portable Input Devices

Steve Steinberg gave a presentation on SCCWRP's research directions developing mobile phone applications that capture, transmit, and process environmental data. SCCWRP has already built an Android application for use during the 2013 Southern California Bight Regional Monitoring Program (Bight '13) survey, to replace previously used field laptops. These applications have many advantages, including lower cost, lighter weight for field portability, and with the phone's connectivity, managers can see in real time the data as it is being collected.

Steinberg next described his future vision of cell phone applications, which involves taking advantage of existing mobile device capabilities, such as voice recognition, cameras, global positioning systems, and environmental sensors. Steinberg expanded on this vision by showing a cell phone microscope prototype that integrates a cell phone camera with an add-on microscope lens. This allows the cell phone to collect biological specimen images in the field, which can then be transmitted to a trained taxonomist for identification, potentially precluding the need to take the physical sample out of the field. He indicated that in the longer term, automatic image processing might also be possible given a reference library. Development work in this area will begin with algae, since SCCWRP played a role in developing an extensive web-based image library of specimens. SCCWRP scientist Betty Fetscher will collect a number of images using the cell phone microscope later in the month. Finally, with Bluetooth connectivity, linking a cell phone to any number of environmental probes and sensors is possible.

The Commissioners expressed interest in the cell phone microscope, which Steinberg estimated would cost only a few hundred dollars. Weisberg added this technology would

make it possible to improve volunteer monitoring data, and could assist with implementation of the State's bio-objectives program. Commissioner Hubner asked about how soon before such applications would be available, to which Steinberg responded that the hardware technology for most of the items he talked about already exists, but developing things like image recognition software would take years to develop. Commissioner Ghirelli asked whether SCCWRP should consider patenting the new technology. Weisberg indicated that this would be a challenge, since SCCWRP is a public agency and has traditionally made all of its products freely available. Commissioner Meyer cautioned about the legal fees associated with patents. Commissioner Whitney requested a few paragraphs about this technology for the State Board's upcoming Director's Report, which Steinberg and Weisberg agreed to provide.

13. Water Quality Compliance Assessment Algorithm

Dr. Weisberg described a project to develop an algorithm to assess if member agencies were meeting the California Ocean Plan standards for dissolved oxygen, pH, and light transmittance (water clarity). The project was initiated by, and run in collaboration with, both regulated and regulatory member agencies. Currently, each of the member agencies use similar devices for collecting the data (called a "CTD"), but utilize different algorithms to assess compliance. The dissolved oxygen algorithm was near completion. Algorithms for pH were problematic due to imprecision and drift in current probe technology. This is leading SCCWRP to partner with external researchers to improve pH probe technology. Weisberg finished the presentation by indicating that the compliance algorithms developed by SCCWRP focused on identifying out-of-range values with respect to the Ocean Plan, but that there was a next step needed to determine how out-of-range converts to out of compliance, as some of the out-of-range values can be due to physical factors, such as plumes drawing deep ocean waters nearer the surface. Since this is a regulatory and not a scientific issue, regulated and regulatory member agencies are working together towards resolution.

Commissioner Hashimoto commented that the analysis Weisberg presented was based on a spatial comparison with reference areas, but that temporal comparisons with reference were an alternative. She recommended further discussion with policy makers about which is the more appropriate interpretation. Weisberg replied that, while SCCWRP is doing the technical analysis, the project committee is run by the State Water Board (formerly Dominic Gregorio, now Chris Beegan) and includes an EPA representative (Terry Fleming), so the opportunity for that policy discussion exists. Chris Beegan, who was in the audience, responded that he would make that a point of discussion at the Committee's next meeting. Beegan was asked if he envisioned an Ocean Plan amendment to memorialize the algorithms being developed and to address some of the challenges encountered in the analysis. He responded that an amendment was not a high priority for the State Board at this time. He envisions using this committee to first develop and test the approach for Southern California before applying it to the rest of the state. From a statewide perspective, additional work to address issues specific for smaller, shallower discharges would be necessary for a fully-formed Ocean Plan amendment.

14. Bight '13 Update

Ken Schiff presented an update on the Bight '13 program, which consists of five program elements. Schiff indicated that many of these elements are similar to what has been done in previous years, so his presentation would focus on the new research for Bight'13. For the contaminant impact assessment (CIA) element, the new research includes a list of CECs to be tested, and combining that with the first application of bioanalytical screening tools. The CIA will also include a new causal diagnostic for toxic samples and an unprecedented bioaccumulation survey with birds. The debris assessment element seeks to link debris between the land and the sea and examine biological effects (something not done before in the U.S.). The Marine Protected Area element is also new and will index water quality pressure, fishing pressure (based on aerial photos of fishing vessels), and rocky reef biological integrity to assess the relative importance of fishing pressure and water quality on reef health. Schiff showed the timing of sampling for each element and noted that many of the Bight '13 activities are integrated throughout other parts of the SCCWRP Research Plan.

Commissioner Meyer asked whether Bight '13 would deal with debris from the Japan earthquake and subsequent tsunami. Schiff responded they will address it by including particle classifications and brand names and interacting with scientists who are tracking the movement of debris across the ocean. Commissioner Hildebrand asked if the Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS) element was still active. Schiff explained it is now integrated with the new MPA element and coordinated with the statewide ASBS monitoring program.

15. Fact Sheet

Karen Setty presented a fact sheet on ocean acidification for Commission approval. Commissioner Ghirelli asked if the language about nutrient controls as a potential management action was accurate. Weisberg explained that nutrients were specifically called out as a likely management response by the State of Washington's Blue Ribbon Panel. Commissioner Skorpanich suggested a few wording changes to make the fact sheet more focused on the non-scientific management audience. Setty asked for any other minor changes to be emailed to her in the next several days.

Commissioner Whitney motioned to approve the Fact Sheet with the suggested edits. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chan and unanimously approved.

16. Other Business and Communications

Commissioner Hashimoto announced the EPA Region IX now has a permanent Water Management Division Director, Jane Diamond. Because EPA's conflict of interest rules don't allow their Director to sit on the SCCWRP Commission, her Deputy Director, John Kemmerer, has been assigned as the SCCWRP Commissioner, with Hashimoto remaining as the Alternate Commissioner. Commissioner Whitney announced that former CTAG representative Dominic Gregorio had retired and been replaced by Paul Hann.

17. Public Comments

No public comments were raised.

18. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 PM until the next Commission meeting on September 6, 2013.

Attest:

Bryan Nece
Secretary