

**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 6, 2014  
9:30 AM**

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**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

John Kemmerer — *US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*  
Vicky Whitney — *State Water Resources Control Board*  
Catherine Kuhlman — *California Ocean Protection Council*  
Sam Unger — *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Kurt Berchtold (Chair) — *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
Mas Dojiri — *City of Los Angeles*  
Grace Hyde — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Bob Ghirelli — *Orange County Sanitation District*  
Tim Stebbins — *City of San Diego*  
Tully Clifford (Vice-Chair) — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*  
Gary Hildebrand — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*  
Mary Anne Skorpanich — *County of Orange*  
Cid Tesoro — *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 Investigator*  
John Griffith — *Principal Investigator*  
Keith Maruya — *Principal Investigator*  
Eric Stein — *Principal Investigator*  
Martha Sutula — *Principal Investigator*  
Karen Setty — *Science Writer*  
Betty Fetscher — *Senior Scientist*  
Joshua Steele — *Scientist*  
Ashmita Sengupta — *Scientist*

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Phil Friess — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Joe Gully — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Ray Tremblay — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*  
Massood Eftekhari — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*  
Jeff Mosher — *National Water Research Institute*

Commission Chair Kurt Berchtold called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **1. Minutes of Meeting Held March 7, 2014 and May 1, 2014**

### **2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended March 31, 2014**

### **3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at March 31, 2014**

### **4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held February and May 2014**

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the consent items and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

### **5. Change in Commissioner for Los Angeles County Department of Public Works**

Executive Director Steve Weisberg introduced the agenda item, explaining that the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works wished to change their Commissioner from their agency's Director to their Deputy Director. Alternate Commissioner Hildebrand then introduced Massood Eftekhari, who would become the agency's new Commissioner (if approved). Eftekhari briefly introduced himself and described his professional background.

Commissioner Hyde motioned to approve the change in position of Los Angeles County Department of Public Works from the agency's Director to Deputy Director and Commissioner Whitney seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

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

Commissioner Hyde reported on the Personnel and Finance Committee's morning meeting. In review of the proposed Salary Resolution, the committee discussed healthcare cost reduction and agreed with the staff recommendation to provide full coverage for employees, but require a 20% contribution toward the monthly premium for dependent coverage plus providing financial incentive for moving spouses to their employers' plans. Hyde estimated that these changes could save up to \$100,000 annually while still providing the employees with a premium health plan. Commensurate with the new federal law, part-time employee definition in the Salary Resolution was modified from 32 to 30 hours per week.

The Committee also recommended approval of the 2014-15 fiscal year budget in the proposed Research Plan. Finally, they began discussing the larger funding model for SCCWRP. In response to Commissioner Whitney's question, Weisberg indicated very few employees were affected by the change in the salary resolution from a 32-hour to 30-hour cap for part-time workers.

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

Weisberg began his verbal Director's Report by describing the enhanced collaboration with CTAG, particularly in research planning. In the past quarter, SCCWRP hosted two intersessional CTAG meetings focused on developing a 10-year research plan on a specific topic. Eric Stein provided a summary of the long-term research strategy that was mapped out for bio-objectives research.

Weisberg added the meetings provide more context for the Research Plan projects, and Commissioner Skorpanich asked how they will tackle remaining topic areas and incorporate this context into the written Research Plan. Weisberg shared a desire to revise the Research Plan's structure in the future to encompass the 10-year vision, though it may take a while to run through all of the research areas with CTAG. In response to Commissioner Unger's inquiry about how Commissioners could also become more proactively involved in research planning, Weisberg proposed attendance at the intersessional CTAG meetings. Weisberg indicated he was open to discussing many possible forms of interaction, though the Commission historically has chosen not to become actively involved in research planning, leaving that to the SCCWRP Director and CTAG. The Commission decided to add this topic to the next meeting agenda.

Lastly, Weisberg reported on two recent awards received by SCCWRP, one to Dr. Steinberg from ESRI for his role in creation of the West Governor's Alliance Ocean Data Portal. The other was Orange County Sanitation District honoring their long-term partnership with SCCWRP.

## **8. CTAG Report**

CTAG Chair Joe Gully reported on their May 15 meeting. CTAG selected Bram Sercu to serve on the Commission's Mission Statement Development committee formed during the May 1 Commission strategic planning meeting. In response to Commission request, CTAG also revised their charter, refined their operating guidelines, and initiated discussion regarding guidance to Commissioners about CTAG member qualifications. Gully next presented his goals for CTAG in 2014-15, which he will self-evaluate when he becomes past chair. Gully reiterated the points Weisberg made about the value of the intersessional research planning meetings, though he stated that some CTAG members indicated concern about their ability to attend so many meetings.

Gully described CTAG's four recommendations for the Commission:

- Approve the 2014-15 Research Plan,
- Approve contracts 1-8,
- Approve the revised CTAG Charter, and
- Approve retaining the California Coastal Commission (CCC) representative on CTAG pending a formal commitment letter from the CCC.

Commissioner Ghirelli asked about the changes to the CTAG Charter from the version the Commission saw at their last meeting. Gully explained that the new version removed authority to add members and softened language on CTAG's role in identifying funding resources. Commissioner Skorpanich asked about whether CTAG had decided to develop a

means for assessing individual CTAG representative performance, to which Gully responded that the CTAG Charter subcommittee felt that should continue as a conversation between Weisberg and the Commissioners, as that has worked well in the past. However, Gully indicated that CTAG as a whole will revisit the topic in August.

At Wesley Beverlin's suggestion, the Commission tabled a vote to approve the new CTAG Charter since the vote had not been noticed on the agenda.

#### **9. Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Research Plan and Budget**

Weisberg presented an overview of the 2014–15 Research Plan and budget. Of the 43 projects, all are multi-year, 97% have collaborators, and 89% have external or match funding. Four new initiatives include wet weather epidemiology, a portable technology for rapid microbiological methods, relative marker degradation for microbial source identification, and mobile data devices (as applied within a San Diego Bay fish consumption study). He added that the Research Plan includes all topics that CTAG identified as their consensus priorities at the November CTAG meeting.

Commissioner Skorpanich motioned to approve the 2014-15 Research Plan and Commissioner Kuhlman seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

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

Weisberg introduced the agenda item, describing four changes from the previous year's salary resolution:

- Approximately 1% increase in allowable salary ranges to adjust for inflation,
- Minimum wage increase for part-time workers, corresponding to the new State minimum wage requirements
- Definition of part-time worker set at a maximum of 30 hours per week (instead of 32), and
- Two new healthcare provisions for sharing costs with employees.

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the resolution and Commissioner Hildebrand 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 with a value in excess of \$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. Weisberg asked the Commission to approve one contract:

- 1) State Water Resources Control Board (\$200,000)  
Review Panel for Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program

Commissioner Stebbins motioned to approve the contract and Commissioner Kuhlman seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioners Whitney and 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, he presented them to ensure consistency of the agency's directions with the Commission's intentions.

- 2) State Water Resources Control Board (\$100,000)  
Storm Water Dashboard
- 3) County of San Diego (through AMEC) (\$96,444)  
City of San Diego (through AMEC) (\$32,589)  
San Diego River Post-CADDIS
- 4) Orange County Sanitation District (\$95,000)  
Bight'13 Water Quality Nutrient Analyses
- 5) Orange County Sanitation District (\$37,000)  
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (\$20,800)  
City of Oxnard (through ABC Labs) (\$28,800)  
Bight'13 Water Quality Acidification Analyses
- 6) King County, Washington (\$25,000)  
Technical Review Panel Member
- 7) UC San Diego (\$5,800)  
Prevalence of Microcystins in Coastal Watersheds
- 8) Moss Landing Marine Laboratory/San Jose State University (\$7,500)  
Assessment of Condition of California Estuaries

The Commission did not raise any objections to these contracts.

## **12. Outcomes from the Internal Staff Meetings in Response to the Expert Panel Review**

Weisberg reported that he had held a "players only" meeting following the external review of SCCWRP, asking staff below the Department Head level to identify the things they would do differently if they were the SCCWRP Executive Director. He reported on their six recommendations, along with changes he would make in response to the recommendations. The six recommended changes were:

- 1) Refine the performance review process
- 2) Increase opportunities for junior staff involvement in research planning
- 3) Increase the number of research technicians
- 4) Restructure the bonus system
- 5) Revise the grievance process

6) Increase the level of training for junior scientists

### **13. Outcomes from the Commission's May 1 Strategic Planning Meeting**

Chairs of three subcommittees formed at the May 1 strategic planning meeting gave progress reports. First, Commissioner Berchtold shared a recommendation that the SCCWRP Director hold annual sector-based Commission meetings (i.e., stormwater, wastewater, and regulator) over lunch following regular Commission meetings. These informal gatherings would be held to provide informal feedback on agency performance and to identify topical areas of interest for him to consider when developing the agency's future research initiatives. This could be done as a pilot effort to see if the group lunches provided any additional value relative to the individual lunches that the Director currently holds periodically with each individual Commissioner. The stormwater sector volunteered to meet first, to be held in September immediately following the next Commission meeting. In response to questions about the structure of the meetings and expected attendance, Commission legal counsel Wesley Beverlin expressed interest in ensuring that such meetings don't conflict with the Brown Act. He offered to investigate the issue and share his findings with Director Weisberg ahead of the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Hyde next reported on the Mission Statement development subcommittee, who scheduled their first meeting (via teleconference) for late July and would likely present its recommendations at the September Commission meeting. Hyde also reported on the Funding Model subcommittee, who initiated their discussions at the Personnel and Finance Committee meeting that morning, and would likely report their deliberations to the Commission at their December meeting.

Next, Commissioner Berchtold asked for feedback on the potential State Water Board meeting to discuss research needs for recycled water and whether there is a role for SCCWRP. Commissioner Whitney announced that the State Board will move forward with activities regardless, but hopes the other SCCWRP member agencies choose to become involved. Commissioner Stebbins reported his agency would move forward quickly with recycled water applications and is seeking long-term, permanent research funding for SCCWRP in this area. Commissioners Berchtold, Ghirelli, Hyde, Whitney, and Dojiri reported significant interest in attending an exploratory research meeting among the agencies they contacted. At Commissioner Ghirelli's request, Jeff Mosher with the National Water Research Institute presented his perspective. Mosher stated that his agency and collaborators would like to see expanded recycled water use and greater public acceptance. To achieve this, there was additional need for expanded research on direct potable reuse, especially the environmental impediments such as brine impacts, emerging contaminants, and reduced in-stream flows. This group of researchers would like to discuss potential areas of overlap with SCCWRP, making sure to avoid duplication of effective research entities that are already in place.

Based on Commission consensus, Weisberg offered to interact with the other research entities mentioned by Mr. Mosher and assist Commissioner Whitney in developing a program for the State Board's meeting. Lastly, Commissioner Skorpanich asked Dr.

Weisberg and Commissioner Hyde's subcommittee to consider how recycled water research would fit into SCCWRP's new funding model strategy.

#### **14. Annual Report**

Weisberg indicated that one of the topics to be considered by the Funding Model subcommittee was which, if any, non-technical activities presently requested by the Commission could be eliminated or down-sized and then redirect these resources towards research. He indicated that the largest such expenditure was for the annual report, which costs \$238K last year. Unlike most other Commission-requested activities, decisions about the Annual Report needed to occur now because the Annual Report is due in about six months and time for getting underway is near. He suggested that, in addition to saving money, a revised format would provide an opportunity to refocus the document on a different audience. Annual Report articles in recent years typically target fellow scientists rather than Commissioners and almost all are published in another format such as a scientific journal or technical report. Weisberg suggested reshaping the Annual Report to focus on a few highlight features for a management audience, plus a compendium of published abstracts. He presented an alternative outline and requested feedback on the value the Commission places on the present Annual Report in relation to its cost of preparation and printing.

In response to a question from Commissioner Skorpanich, Weisberg estimated a revised format would cut costs in half, saving about \$75,000 in printing costs alone. Commissioner Dojiri commented many people in his organization do not read the Annual Report because they have seen these articles in earlier versions during CTAG review or because of their overlap with scientific journal publications. He preferred to see a format more geared toward the Commissioner and their Boards, which helps to prove the benefit of funding SCCWRP. Commissioners Kuhlman, Stebbins, and Tesoro agreed a more streamlined version of the Annual Report would create a helpful tool for communicating SCCWRP activities to managers and legislators. Commissioner Skorpanich preferred to have electronic access rather than hard copies, and the group agreed it would be sensible to limit hard copy distribution to a core audience, utilizing electronic distribution for a wider audience. Skorpanich also suggested tying it back to the research topic's status within SCCWRP's longer-term research strategy.

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve re-formatting the SCCWRP Annual Report and Commissioner Skorpanich seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Kemmerer abstaining.

In response to a question from Commissioner Stebbins about the number and type of thematic features he envisioned, Weisberg indicated he would seek feedback from staff in the coming months and propose a more detailed outline of the report in September for Commission discussion.

#### **16. Wet Weather Epidemiology Study**

This agenda item was moved before item 15. Ken Schiff initiated this item by describing the enormous scope and potential costs of resolving wet weather bacterial contamination at

southern California beaches, despite a nearly complete lack of research on the true health effects in beach-goers following rainfall. As a first step towards gathering this information, staff conducted a pilot-scale wet weather epidemiology study at Ocean Beach and Tourmaline Surfing Park in San Diego. The Pilot Study tested the feasibility and applicability of using surfers, the largest and most exposed group of winter beach-goers. After illustrating sampling success and preliminary indications of potential health effects, Schiff concluded that a wet weather epidemiology study using surfers was logistically and scientifically feasible. Next, Schiff will be meeting with the City and County of San Diego about launching the full study during the 2014-15 wet season.

In response to Commissioner questions, Schiff explained they were open to adding additional beach sites and that there was value in doing so if the goal was to extrapolate the findings beyond the two existing study sites. When asked about anticipated outcomes, Schiff and Weisberg explained the study will help determine whether the present beach water quality standards, which were developed in dry weather, are appropriate for wet weather conditions. Additionally, the study will evaluate if EPA's newest approach, quantitative microbial risk assessment (QMRA), is a useful tool for developing site-specific objectives, should that be appropriate.

#### **15. Nutrient Effects Science**

Martha Sutula presented a status update on research to support nutrient policies in wadeable streams. She indicated that nutrients are a special regulatory challenge because they are a normal part of ecosystem function and their quantity is not monotonically linked to ecosystem condition (like toxics). Instead of the traditional water quality limits imposed for other constituents, nutrient management will rely on an ecological response approach utilizing biological indicators and models that relate these biological response indicators back to nutrients loads when there is poor biological condition. SCCWRP's research is focused on three indicators highly correlated to aquatic life effects: benthic chlorophyll a, organic matter dry mass, and total nitrogen and phosphorus.

Sutula encouraged the Commissioners to read a report that SCCWRP had recently published in partnership with EPA's Office of Research and Development on this topic. She also encouraged the member agencies to participate in the first statewide stakeholder meeting to be held by the State Water Board on June 13 in Sacramento. In response to a question from Commissioner Skorpanich, Sutula explained that while her presentation today was focused on stream systems, SCCWRP is also serving as the state's primary source of scientific support in estuarine nutrient research. Commissioner Ghirelli similarly asked about nutrients in oceans. Weisberg responded that SCCWRP is also invested in nutrient research in the oceans, particularly through the Bight regional monitoring program, but that research is in earlier stages of development and that habitat was not yet a focal point for the State's criteria development. Joe Gully mentioned CTAG will hold a research planning meeting on nutrient effects science in early July and encouraged Commission participation.

#### **17. Future Meeting Agenda Items**

Several items were raised for future meeting agendas:

- Approval of the CTAG Charter,
- Consideration of Coastal Commission membership on CTAG,
- Technical update on emerging contaminants and bioanalytical method research,
- Consideration of the revised Annual Report format, and
- Strategic planning subcommittee reports.

Commissioner Skorpanich asked if Weisberg would like to receive feedback about the value of providing the Commission hard copy versions of journal articles and technical reports. He suggested they provide feedback to Commissioner Hyde, as her subcommittee will be considering the cost:value equation of all items prepared for the Commission.

#### **18. Other Business and Communications**

No other business was raised.

#### **19. Public Comments**

No public comments were raised.

#### **120 Adjournment**

Commission Chair Berchtold adjourned the meeting at 1:05 PM until the next Commission meeting on September 5, 2014.

Attest:

Bryan Nece  
Secretary