

**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**

**December 4, 2015
9:30 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

John Kemmerer — *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IX*
Vicky Whitney — *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*
Grace Hyde — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Bob Ghirelli — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Peter Vroom — *City of San Diego*
Gerhardt Hubner (Chair) — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*
Gary Hildebrand — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*
Mary Anne Skorpanich — *County of Orange*
Jo Ann Weber — *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 Scientist*
John Griffith — *Principal Scientist*
Keith Maruya — *Principal Scientist*
Eric Stein — *Principal Scientist*
Steve Steinberg — *Principal Scientist*
Martha Sutula — *Principal Scientist*
Scott Martindale — *Editor*
Ashmita Sengupta — *Scientist*
Emily Lau — *Laboratory Assistant*

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeff Armstrong — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Joe Gully (CTAG Past Chair) — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Phil Friess — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*

Commission Chair Gerhardt Hubner called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM. He introduced Jo Ann Weber as a single-meeting substitute Commissioner for the County of San Diego.

1. Minutes of Meeting Held September 11, 2015

Approval of the September 11 Commission meeting minutes was removed from the consent agenda. Commissioner Kemmerer requested a revision to the minutes pertaining to EPA's nonvoting technical advisory role on the Commission. Commissioner Dojiri requested a revision to the minutes pertaining to the status of the 2017-21 draft JPA.

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to approve the minutes with the two revisions, and Commissioner Skorpanich seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended September 30, 2015

3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at September 30, 2015

4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held November 12, 2015

Commissioner Berchtold motioned to approve Consent Items 2-4, and Commissioner Whitney 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 recommends Commission approval of the agency's 2017-21 draft JPA. Ghirelli reported that SCCWRP recently made four hires – a full-time scientist, two joint postdoctoral researchers, and a Sea Grant Fellow – which brings SCCWRP close to being fully staffed again.

6. 2015 Financial Audit

Commissioner Ghirelli reported that the Personnel and Finance Committee met with the agency's auditor that morning and that SCCWRP had received a clean 2015 financial audit, with no exceptions, for the 15th year in a row. Weisberg added that the auditor noted that a clean audit 15 years in a row places SCCWRP in the top 1% of the top 1% of financial audits. Commissioner Skorpanich commended Administrative Officer Nece and staff.

Commissioner Ghirelli motioned to receive and file the 2015 financial audit report, and Commissioner Skorpanich seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously.

7. Joint Powers Agreement

Executive Director Weisberg reported that SCCWRP's Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) must be periodically renewed, with the existing agreement ending in June 2017. The Commission previously formed a Funding Model Committee that was charged with developing a funding strategy for SCCWRP and incorporating that strategy into a draft Joint Powers Agreement. The Committee met several times and reported their recommendations to the Commission

in June 2015, after which staff were requested to develop a draft JPA for Commission consideration based on the Committee's recommendations. That version was circulated in June for review by the legal departments of each of the signatory agencies, none of which had objections to the document. The Ninth JPA was presented at the last Commission meeting for approval as the version which would be forwarded for signature by the signatory agencies. The Commission tabled its vote on the JPA to the December meeting, to allow the EPA time to research issues associated with its role on the Commission.

Weisberg reported that the EPA has addressed those issues by indicating that they will abstain on the following administrative activities afforded to SCCWRP Commissioners: 1) Hiring an Executive Director and establishing his or her responsibilities 2) Approving the SCCWRP's annual operating budget, 3) Reviewing and approving, on an annual basis, the salaries and benefits for the Executive Director and other staff, and 4) Conducting a performance review of the Executive Director on an annual basis. With those abstentions recognized, EPA indicated that they are now in favor of voting on the JPA.

Commissioner Whitney motioned to approve the Ninth JPA and to receive and file an EPA letter clarifying EPA's role on the Commission, and Commissioner Hyde seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with EPA abstaining. Weisberg said the Ninth JPA will be forwarded to the signatory agencies for signature.

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Weisberg reported on the outcomes of a State Water Board two-day workshop at SCCWRP in October focused on emerging contaminant research needs for recycled water. The workshop, which included participation by the Water Reuse Research Foundation and the National Water Research Institute, identified three research areas that participants prioritized: (1) Improved measurements of targeted chemicals that are of emerging concern or that serve as surrogates of effectiveness of treatment processes, (2) nontargeted chemical analysis that captures a broader range of emerging chemicals, and (3) cell line assays that evaluate toxicity endpoints. Regardless of whether participants voted for targeted methods and cell line assays, participants consistently voted for nontargeted analysis. Weisberg said participants also agreed that improving treatment effectiveness will be less about developing new engineering approaches and more about optimizing application of existing approaches. The final workshop report will be released in early 2016.

Commissioner Whitney thanked SCCWRP for hosting such an insightful workshop and said the takeaway was that the research community needs to focus on improving pretreatment. Asked by Commissioner Skorpanich about research needs associated with releasing recycled water into aquatic ecosystems, Weisberg said it was part of the discussion at the workshop, but the workshop was more focused on constituents of emerging concern in a reuse capacity.

Weisberg reported that SCCWRP is trying to take advantage of the extreme El Nino conditions that are occurring this year to provide insights about how climate change will affect local conditions. First, SCCWRP is working to assess potential increases in pathogenic

Vibrio bacteria in Southern California coastal lagoons associated with the warmer water temperatures. Second, SCCWRP is working to document how predicted El Nino-fueled storm surges this winter affect coastal geomorphology and hydrology across coastal Southern California, which may portend conditions that occur more frequently with sea level rise.

9. CTAG Report

Past CTAG Chair Joe Gully presented the CTAG report on behalf of CTAG Chair Greg Gearheart. Gully reminded the Commission that the former CTAG Chair had departed mid-term, which caused CTAG to determine procedures for replacing a mid-term departure. He said CTAG decided that leadership roles will not be attached to individual CTAG agencies, which means that if a CTAG leader vacates their post in the middle of a term, the Vice-Chair will ascend to Chair and election of a new Vice-Chair will occur within the vacated sector to fill that seat.

Gully reported that CTAG is continuing to make progress on digitally capturing member agencies' historical data sets, although logistical and funding challenges remain.

Gully reported that CTAG's intersessional research planning sessions are going well and that CTAG is exploring how to refine the written, full thematic research plan documents that are prepared by SCCWRP staff. Gully said that SCCWRP is considering removing Wetlands as a research theme and adding Climate Change in the 2016-17 Research Plan.

Asked about this, Executive Director Weisberg explained that SCCWRP is engaged in a number of climate change-related projects and that member agencies have consistently ranked Wetlands as the lowest-priority SCCWRP research area. Weisberg said that if Wetlands is removed as a research theme, SCCWRP will continue to conduct wetlands-related projects as opportunities arise, but would be less proactive in seeking such projects; such projects would be folded into other thematic areas, such as Bioassessment, Regional Monitoring and Climate Change. Weisberg urged Commissioners to speak with their CTAG representatives if they have feedback about the proposed changes to the 2016-17 Research Plan.

Gully said CTAG recommends approval of Contracts 1-4.

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 contract:

- 1) County of San Diego (\$1,073,331)
Santa Margarita River Nutrient Management

Commissioner Berchtold motioned to approve the contract, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioners Weber 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, the contracts were presented to ensure consistency of the agency's directions with the Commission's intentions.

- 2) Sea Grant (through UC San Diego) (\$10,000)
Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (\$5,000)
- 3) U.S. Navy (\$50,000)
Algal Biomass Monitoring Methods in Estuaries
- 4) USC Sea Grant (\$65,000)
Development of Digital PCR for Coliphage Detection

The Commission did not raise any objections to the contracts.

11. Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program Expert Review Panel

Executive Director Weisberg reported on the completion of the Year One findings and recommendations of an Expert Review Panel convened by SCCWRP to examine the State of California's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP). SCCWRP was asked to convene the five-member Panel in spring 2015 after responsibility for ELAP transitioned from the California Department of Public Health to the State Water Board. The Year One report, released in October 2015, contained five main recommendations for improving ELAP: (1) ELAP should establish a personnel management system and use it to hold staff accountable, (2) ELAP should adopt laboratory accreditation standards, (3) ELAP should update its list of analytical methods by which labs are assessed to ensure relevant methods are being assessed, (4) ELAP should invest in staff development, revise its fee structure to fully recover costs, and accept third-party accreditation, and (5) ELAP should develop a communication plan to improve responsiveness and etiquette. Weisberg said ELAP will begin holding webinars quarterly beginning in early 2016 to brief the stakeholder community about its progress; the Expert Review Panel will formally assess ELAP again in 2017.

12. Toxicity Intercalibration Study

Deputy Director Schiff discussed the results of a toxicity intercalibration study conducted by the Southern California Stormwater Monitoring Coalition to examine the comparability of stormwater toxicity data being generated by nine accredited laboratories. Each lab received four stormwater samples – nontoxic, runoff and duplicates of spiked lab water – and was scored based on test acceptability, intra-laboratory precision and inter-laboratory precision. The results showed considerable variability among labs. Schiff said study

participants are working to identify possible reasons and to begin retesting in January. A guidance manual also will be published.

Phil Friess of the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County commented that the false positives and negatives were a critical issue for the regulated community, and commended SCCWRP for facilitating these intercalibration studies. When asked by the Commission, Schiff responded that this study was not fully designed to address these key issues about the Toxicity Policy currently pending at the State Water Board. However, he was glad to provide a project summary to the Commission upon study completion to see if a follow-up study to address these key issues was desired.

13. Ecohydrology

Principal Scientist Eric Stein provided an overview of SCCWRP's work in ecohydrology. He opened his talk by explaining that the past focus in Southern California has been on understanding the physical changes to streams associated with increased runoff. Ecohydrology aims to connect the physical effects to the biological endpoints that we manage for. Ecohydrology research allows managers to more effectively achieve the biological endpoints that are increasingly being used in regulatory programs, from biointegrity policies to hydromodification management to stormwater compliance. SCCWRP's conceptual model for ecohydrology research starts by understanding drivers, including climate change and changing uses of both land and water. SCCWRP then works to understand the effects of these drivers – namely, the changing hydrology that impacts habitats and ultimately ecosystems. Finally, SCCWRP develops tools and actions that can be used by managers, including facilitating the establishment of target thresholds and improvements to BMPs.

Asked by Commissioner Unger how SCCWRP is weighing the economic cost-benefit component, Stein said SCCWRP is partnering with collaborators who have expertise in resource economics. Asked by Commission Chair Hubner about quantifying the value to the environment from improving ecosystem hydrology, Stein said that this issue has traditionally been addressed from a fisheries point of view. In southern California, we focus on benthic invertebrates, which is a more appropriate endpoint for assessing ecological condition.

14. Future Meeting Agenda Items

Commissioner Hubner asked Weisberg about the process for establishing future meeting agendas. Weisberg responded that the agenda are established by the Commission Chair, but for the last few years the Commission has been planning its primary agenda items around the thematic research planning that CTAG was conducting with SCCWRP staff. He said that the thematic focus of the next CTAG meeting will be on Marine and Estuarine Nutrients, followed by Regional Monitoring.

15. Other Business and Communications

Commissioners Skorpanich and Whitney announced that they will be retiring from their jobs in early 2016 and that this will be their last Commission meeting. They both emphasized how much they've enjoyed working with the Commission and the quality of

the science produced by SCCWRP. Commission Chair Hubner thanked the two Commissioners for their years of service to the Commission.

16. Public Comments

No public comments were raised.

17. Adjournment

Commission Chair Hubner adjourned the meeting at 12:02 PM until the next Commission meeting on March 4, 2016.

Attest:

Bryan Nece
Secretary