



**Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday April 12, 2023**

Windfall Farms Conference Room, 4710 Flying Paster Lane, Paso Robles

**ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 PM by Hilary Graves.

Directors Roll Call:

Dana Merrill - absent  
Lee Nesbitt - present  
Jerry Reaugh - present  
Hilary Graves - absent  
Herb Rowland - present

Others present: Guests (videoconference)

**ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MARCH 8, 2023 AND MARCH 22, 2023 MEETINGS**

Motion to approve the minutes for March 8, 2023 and March 22, 2023 meetings made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, roll call vote:

Dana Merrill – absent  
Hilary Graves – yes  
Jerry Reaugh – yes  
Lee Nesbitt – yes  
Herb Rowland - abstain

Motion passed 3-0.

**ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was presented.

**ITEM 4: LONI LYTTLE OF ADVANCED VITICULTURE CONSULTING, INC. TO PRESENT INFORMATION ON THE UPCOMING STATE WATER EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (SWEET) BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is making SWEET block grants available to qualifying agencies to distribute in amounts up to \$200,000 for projects that can show water and/or energy savings. Things such as flow meters, irrigation overhaul, conversion to drip, etc. would be included. Jerry Reaugh asked if groundwater measuring devices would be included and the answer appears to be “yes.” Well monitoring devices would not be included, not frost alert/prevention devices. The CDFA is eager to disperse the \$110M in funds available for these grants. To qualify, the entity must partner with another entity such as the Resource Conservation District, and the block grant amounts will be between \$2M and \$5M to qualifying agencies/entities. Because of the Basin overdraft, ours would be considered a competitive application. If successful in obtaining a block grant, the District would have to determine the administration – who would qualify? District members only or open to the public? Qualifying basis for distribution? First come, first served? Lottery? Hilary Graves suggested considering hiring a specified administrator should a grant application for the District be approved. Loni Lyttle offered to assist in writing the block grant application as well as the individual project applications. Regular reports to CDFA

on how the funds are disbursed and that the disbursed-to projects qualify are required. Jerry Reaugh asked about the cost for Loni to write the grants and the response was that if her firm can be a secondary contractor used by the District to effect the various projects' needs, there would be no cost to the District for the grant writing process. Hilary Graves asked if re-drilling a well would qualify for the grant funds and the answer is "no" although there are other grants available specifically for that. Loni expects the grant window to open in the next few months. The grants have a two-year timeframe for disbursement of funds to appropriate projects. An ad hoc committee of Jerry Reaugh and Hilary Graves was formed to pursue the grant application idea.

#### **ITEM 5: UPDATE ITEMS**

**a. Continuous Monitoring project**

The equipment is due to be installed on April 13, 2023

**b. SLO County Board of Supervisors meetings March 7, March 21, and April 4, 2023**

Jerry Reaugh reported that the redistricting question is scheduled to be taken up in the next Supervisors meeting. Brent Burchett, SLO Farm Bureau, mentioned the replacement of the current County Administrative Officer.

**c. Groundwater Levels Monitoring program**

The next scheduled readings will be next week.

**d. State Water Consulting project Subcontractors meeting March 3, 2023**

State water allocations have been increased from 5% to 75%, and are likely to go to 100%. The State may declare a "spill", which would cause the County to lose the 14,000AF currently in storage. The loss per year is around 4000AF, potentially equivalent to \$10M. If that unallocated unused stored water could be sold by the County, it would go a long way towards implementation programs.

**e. WRAC meeting April 5, 2023**

Lee Nesbitt reported that there were discussed about the water year schedule, desalination possibilities, the increase in Tule Lake and other items.

**f. GSA ad hoc committee and equity statement**

Brent Burchett reported that edits have been proposed to the Gibson first draft of the equity statement. The need for another SSJWD/EPCWD joint meeting to work on the statement was discussed. The Paso Robles Wine County Alliance has expressed a strong desire to be part of the equity statement development process. Hilary Graves would like to see included the idea that no user would be precluded from access to water due to lack of financial resources and that issues of equity in water use between crops and/or crop production sites should be included in the statement. Bruce Gibson is aware that the District is working on the equity statement and is committed to working with him to develop a statement that works for all.

#### **ITEM 6: TREASURER'S REPORT**

**a. Monthly Financial Status Report**

Jerry Reaugh presented and there were no questions. Jerry Reaugh will be developing a proposed preliminary budget for 2023-2024 and expects increased costs for GSI (GSA work) and legal fees.

**b. Approve Resolution 2023-001 to submit past due assessment accounts to the County for collection**

The resolution is required annually by the County in order for the District to submit past due assessment accounts to the County for collection through the property tax rolls.

MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2023-001 TO SUBMIT PAST DUE ASSESSMENT ACCOUNTS TO THE COUNTY FOR COLLECTION made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, roll call vote:

Dana Merrill – absent

Hilary Graves – yes

Jerry Reaugh – yes

Lee Nesbitt – absent

Motion passed 3-0

**ITEM 7: NEW BUSINESS**

Jerry Reaugh reported that Bruce Gibson continues to support the District’s application to become a GSA. The issue is tentatively scheduled to come before the Board of Supervisors on May 16. There has been contact made with DWR regarding the GSA application, with a new submission in the works (as opposed to resubmitting the original application), with GSI working on the technical documentation. If approved by the Board of Supervisors, they would withdraw their control of those parcels enrolled in the District, the District would then apply to the DWR, followed by an approximate 90-day period before GSA status would be confirmed.

Jerry Reaugh asked that an item for the 2023-2024 budget be included in the May 10 agenda.

Patricia Wilmore (PRWCA) reported that the WRAC has two open seats for at large representatives with two associated alternates. Hilary Graves asked if there are any at large ag representatives currently on the Committee.

**ITEM 8: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – MAY 10, 2023**

**ITEM 9: NEW BUSINESS**

Dana Merrill would like to investigate further what steps are necessary to become a GSA, likely including a resolution of the Board. Relinquishment by the County of authority over parcels enrolled in the District is the last step.

**ITEM 10: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – APRIL 12, 2023**

**ITEM 1: ADJOURNMENT**


MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Lee Nesbitt, seconded by Jerry Reaugh.

Motion passed 3-0. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dana Merrill, President

5-10-23  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date