



**Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday December 13, 2023**

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

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 3:09PM by Dana Merrill.

Directors Roll Call:

Dana Merrill – present
Lee Nesbitt - present
Jerry Reaugh – present
Hilary Graves – present
Herb Rowland – absent (joins by teleconference at 3:38PM, non-voting)

Others present: Blaine Reely – SLO County Director of Groundwater Sustainability
Guests (in person and by videoconference)

ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8, 2023 MEETING

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE NOVEMBER 8, 2023 MEETING made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Hilary Graves, passed 4-0.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was presented.

ITEM 4: CONSIDER FOR APPROVAL DRAFT AMENDMENT #2 TO MOA DATED NOVEMBER 14, 2023 FOR THE PASO BASIN COOPERATIVE COMMITTEE

Blaine Reely explained that this Amendment allows the City of Paso Robles and the County to act as contracting agents for all the PBCC agencies. Jerry Reaugh explained that the prior Draft Amendment, which called for all the GSAs to act in these roles did not receive unanimous approval, required for GSP approval and all MOA amendments. MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT AMENDMENT #2 TO MOA DATED NOVEMBER 14, 2023 made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, roll call vote:

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

Motion passed 4-0

ITEM 5: UPDATE ITEMS

a. Groundwater Levels Monitoring

2) EPCWD Groundwater Monitoring Network – most recent reading November 16 (taken out of order)

Jerry Reaugh updated the Board on the program status. This most recent reading completes three full years of records. A comparison of November 2022 to November 2023 shows increased levels in 18 of 20 wells in the network. Hilary Graves asked if we need more wells in the network to which Jerry Reaugh replied that the PBCC and the County are looking at a significant expansion of the official list of wells which could incorporate the EPCWD monitoring wells.

1) Real-Time Groundwater Monitoring

Jerry Reaugh reported that the submersible pressure sensors installed in May 2023 in the two-non pumping wells near the airport used for real-time monitoring show a dramatic effect when nearby wells stopped pumping. He is working on how to display this information. A third well in the El Pomar area is more stable with less up and down activity. The Bubbler equipment installed in one of the airport wells is tracking very closely with the submersible sensor. Both technologies use telemetry to allow for easy access to readings. The Bubblers are less expensive than the submersible sensors. Hilary Graves reported that there are Bubblers installed on multiple wells where she has access to the information and that the dashboard is easy to use, with good customer service. There are something like 30-40 local wells currently using the Bubbler systems. Adding them to the network is complicated by the question of how to protect the data.

b. SLO County Board of Supervisors meetings

Dana Merrill reported that there was a return to some discussion about raising the de minimis from 5 AF/Y to 25AF/Y in the Ag Offset program. There was some discussion of the recall of Bruce Gibson effort.

c. WRAC meeting December 6, 2023

Lee Nesbitt reported on the various presentations and agenda items which included an update on the Master Water Report by the County. The County is working to bring data on all basins and water resources into a “one-stop” website.

d. State Water Subcontractors Committee project

Dana Merrill and Jerry Reaugh have been attending the various meetings and subcommittee meetings of the Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA), comprised of the agencies who purchase State Water in the Central Coast. He further updated the Board that the Provost & Pritchard contract is completed and ready to hand off the project to the PBCC. Apparently several of the CCWA contractors have expressed an interest in helping with the 500 AF projected to be needed for the project.

Herb Rowland joins the meeting at 3:38PM.

Jerry Reaugh reported that the EIR for the Delta Bypass Tunnel project is out. He also said that allocations for 2024 are starting at 10% (they finished up last year at 100%).

e. Paso Basin Cooperative Committee regular and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings

1) PBCC special meeting in December was cancelled, next regular meeting is in January 2024

2) PBCC Staff report (topics taken out of order)

a) Outreach RFP

The Draft RFP is with the PBCC staff and would include a standalone PBCC website. It is on the PBCC agenda for January.

b) Expanded Monitoring Network RFP

Blaine Reely reported that the draft RFP will be coming to the PBCC staff in January and to the full PBCC in the same month.

c) PBCC Budget

The PBCC/GSAs will be funding the Master Water Report. The EPCWD already has \$25,000 earmarked in its current budget for this expenditure.

d) Evapotranspiration extractions methodology

Jerry Reaugh reported that the PBCC staff needs to develop an RFP for extraction monitoring. Evapotranspiration (ET) is one strategy and can map to parcel and field level using Land IQ. This would cost approximately \$10,000/month for three years, would cover the entire Basin and would result in a monthly report. Land IQ now has “significant precipitation” stations to help adjust for rainfall. Any proposal to use ET technology to monitor extractions could include an “offramp” for those wishing to provide metering data.

e) Rate Study RFP

The RFP for the Rate Study is out and responses are due by December 22, 2023.

Jerry Reaugh added that the Blended Water Project has an engineering firm in place with a report due in approximately six months.

Dana Merrill reiterated the need to transition the State Water project initiated by EPCWD into the hands of the PBCC. Jerry Reaugh will be bringing it to the PBCC staff and then the PBCC. Dana Merrill asked Blaine Reely to include it as an agenda item in an upcoming PBCC meeting, perhaps in January.

3) Groundwater Monitoring Network TAC (on call)

No report

4) Multi-Benefit Irrigated Land Repurposing (MILR) Program TAC (on call)

No report

5) Blended Water Project: Engineering Report contract signed, study underway

See above #2e)

ITEM 6: TREASURER’S REPORT

a. Monthly Financial Status Report

There were no questions or comments on the report.

Jerry Reaugh reported that the EPCWD current budget has a total of \$173,000 and compared it to the Shandon-San Juan Water District’s budget. EPCWD currently has approximately \$135,000 in bank account funds, while SSJWD has over \$500,000. The “lights on” budget for the PBCC would require Basin water users to pay a fair share and how can that be accomplished? An extraction charge? A per-acre charge? Lee Nesbitt asked about the fact that EPCWD (and other non-County GSA) members are paying for the County and their own GSA, essentially paying twice. Once the PBCC budget is in place, everyone will pay their fair share. Hilary Graves asked if the RFPs will be discussed at the January PBCC meeting. Blaine Reely confirmed that the RFP Review Committee will select and recommend the firm best meeting the RFP criteria. If two or more are close, the PBCC will choose between.

ITEM 7: NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented at this time.

ITEM 8: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – JANUARY 10, 2024

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Jerry Reaugh, motion passed 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:

Dana Merrill, President

Date