

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Oroville Dam Citizens Advisory Commission**  
**Meeting 2: November 20, 2019**

**Part 1: 8:45am – 10:00am**  
**Oroville Dam Overlook Parking Area**  
**Oroville, CA 95966**

**Part 2: 10:30am – 1:00pm**  
**Southside Oroville Community Center**  
**2959 Lower Wyandotte Road, Oroville, CA 95966**

This meeting summary provides an overview of the November 20, 2019 Oroville Dam Citizens Advisory Commission meeting. After briefly describing Part 1, this document focuses primarily on Part 2— capturing the comments and questions posed by Commissioners and members of the public. It is organized by agenda topic to assist readers in cross-referencing the meeting materials. This document is not intended to serve as minutes of the meeting or a transcript of the discussion. A transcript prepared by a court reporter and materials from Part 2 of the meeting are available on the Oroville Dam Citizens Advisory Commission website: <http://resources.ca.gov/oroville-dam-citizens-advisory-commission/>

**PART 1 MEETING AGENDA**

- Welcome and Introductions
- DWR Overview of Facilities
- Q&A

At 9:00 a.m. Department of Water Resources’ Director Karla Nemeth welcomed Oroville Dam Citizens Advisory Commissioners and members of the public at the Oroville Dam Overlook Parking Area. This facilities site visit was an outcome of the first Commission meeting in September 2019. Employees from Department of Water Resources, including Ted Craddock, John Yarbrough, Kevin Dossey, and Eric See discussed the dam facilities and answered questions throughout the site visit. Topics covered included a facilities overview, reconstruction update, reservoir operations overview site rehabilitation, and recreation improvements. Matt Teague, California State Parks, also addressed the visitors and answered questions about site rehabilitation and recreation improvements. The site visit adjourned at 10:00 a.m. to allow attendees to travel to the Southside Community Center for Part 2 of the Commission meeting.

**PART 2 MEETING AGENDA**

- Welcome and Roll Call
- Adopt Commission Charter
- Winter Operations and Safety Discussion
- Review of Topics for Future Commission Meetings
- Public Comment

## ACTION ITEMS

1. Meeting facilitation consultants, Kearns & West, to produce meeting summary. California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), Asm. Gallagher, Sen. Nielsen, Sup. Flores (Sutter County), and Sup. Bradford (Yuba County)'s offices to review summary prior to posting on the Oroville Dam Citizens Advisory Commission website.
2. Kearns & West to gather remaining Commissioner signatures to finalize Charter adoption.
3. Kearns & West/CNRA to confirm meeting for February 21, 2020.
4. CNRA and DWR will follow up immediately after the meeting with interested stakeholder about next steps to address his concerns about the Palermo Tunnel.

## AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

Secretary Wade Crowfoot welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the meeting's primary topic of winter operations and safety. He noted that a summary and presentations from the meeting will be posted online for those unable to attend in-person or interested in reviewing meeting documents in more detail. He also reminded attendees that comments made at the morning's site visit were not recorded so anyone who wanted their comments on the record should restate them during the comment period. Senator Nielsen and Assemblyman Gallagher thanked the commissioners and attendees for taking part in the Commission meeting.

As mandated by the requirements set forth in Senate Bill 955 (2018, Nielsen), the Commission consists of representatives from the following agencies and public bodies. Attendance at the November 20, 2019 meeting is noted in the table below.

Agency or Public Body	Commissioner (or Alternate)	Present
CA Natural Resources Agency	(Chair) Secretary Wade Crowfoot	X
California State Senate	(Vice Chair) Senator Jim Nielsen	X
Department of Water Resources	Director Karla Nemeth	X
Department of Parks and Recreation	Director Lisa Mangat (represented by Matt Teague)	X
Office of Emergency Services	Director Mark Ghilarducci	
Department of California Highway Patrol, Butte County Division	Assistant Chief Steve Dowling	X
California State Assembly	Assemblyman James Gallagher	X
Oroville City Council	Councilmember David Pittman	X
Oroville City Council	Mayor Chuck Reynolds	X

Butte County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Steve Lambert	
Butte County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Bill Connelly	X
Butte County Board of Supervisors	Genoa Widener	X
Yuba County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Gary Bradford	X
Yuba County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Doug Lofton	
Sutter County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Mat Conant	X
Sutter County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Dan Flores	X
Butte County Sheriff's Office	Lieutenant Steve Collins	X
Yuba County Sheriff's Office	Lieutenant Joe Million	X
Sutter County Sheriff's Office	Deputy Andre Licon	X

**AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPT COMMISSION CHARTER**

Kearns & West described clarifying language related to Commissioners’ term of office which was added to Section E of the Charter in response to questions at the September Commission meeting. Secretary Crowfoot invited the Commissioners to adopt the Charter. The Charter was adopted through a unanimous voice vote with no abstentions then circulated for Commissioners’ signatures.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: WINTER OPERATIONS AND SAFETY DISCUSSION**

*Presentation 1:* Gary Lippner, DWR’s Director of Flood Management and Dam Safety, presented an overview of Feather River Flood Management Operations. Topics included:

- Yuba-Feather Flood Management System history as well as roles and responsibilities for local, state, and federal agencies,
- The coordinated use of infrastructure to serve water supply and flood management needs,
- Recent flood risk reduction projects and maintenance, focusing on levee maintenance,
- Flood preparedness essentials including agency partnerships and flood insurance,
- The importance of improved and better coordinated forecasts to maximize the efficacy of current flood control infrastructure in managing larger or more frequent storms.

Following the presentation, Commissioners asked for clarification or provided feedback on the presentation and related topics; input included:

- Secretary Crowfoot asked whether DWR or the Office of Emergency Services (OES) is responsible for executing emergency planning exercises. Mr. Lippner explained that emergency preparedness and training are a partnership between DWR, OES, and local agencies. Every year, the State agencies reach out to their local partners in September and October to confirm contact information and ensure the appropriate materials are stockpiled for flood response needs in the winter. The Flood Operations Center at the Joint Operations Center is also activated

during high water events and has six incident command teams throughout the State that can help localities handle flood events.

- Assemblyman Gallagher noted that the proposal to use bypasses as a means of flood management originated from a local Colusa man who had observed the river and its flooding for years. He urged locals to share their experiences and observations with their representatives who can use that information to craft more effective policies. He also reminded participants that massive inflows have historical precedent in the Sierra foothills and that no one should underestimate the amount of water the system can produce. The better forecasts are, the better prepared residents and agencies can be to ensure public safety.
- Senator Nielsen voiced his concern that levees and bypasses are being degraded due to use outside their intended flood control purpose. He cited the interest in using bypasses as sites for recreation and habitat that impede flood flows and the use of levees as campsites by homeless populations. Local commissioners pointed to recent county ordinances that outlaw encampments on levees and requested State support.

*Presentation 2:* John Leahigh, DWR's State Water Project Operations Manager, presented on Lake Oroville Flood Operations. Topics included:

- How the reservoir works as a flood management tool, including how to determine the amount of "flood pool" space that must be left vacant to absorb potential inflows and how DWR plans for seasonal precipitation changes,
- The shared flood attenuation responsibilities of reservoirs across the Yuba and Feather Rivers in order to limit impacts on downstream levees,
- DWR interim flood control planning, including measures intended to be more protective during construction and prior to completion of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment,
- Forecast-informed reservoir operations (FIRO) as a coordinated partnership effort to improve the quality of information about incoming storms and watershed conditions and the synthesis of that information to understand impacts at state-wide, regional, and local levels.

Following the presentation, Commissioners asked for clarification or provided feedback on the presentation and related topics; input included:

- Supervisor Connelly suggested that graphs showing the required flood storage in the reservoir over the course of the year or demonstrating how the reservoir would attenuate large floods should use units easily understandable by the public. For instance, rather than only labeling in thousands of acre feet, the graph should also indicate the equivalent reservoir elevation.
- Secretary Crowfoot asked if DWR anticipates maintaining the enhanced flood pool implemented during the spillways reconstruction indefinitely. John Leahigh explained that the larger flood pool was calculated to enable the reservoir to pass the standard project flood without activating the emergency spillway and while maintaining downstream flood protection. John noted that the spillways reconstruction included significant improvements to the emergency spillway; the efficacy of those and other potential additions are being assessed as part of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. DWR plans to continue to maintain additional flood pool space until that analysis is complete. Supervisor Connelly observed that Oroville was designed with the assumption that it would work in coordination with Marysville Dam to provide water supply and

flood control. Since Marysville was never constructed, all the water supply pressures fall on Oroville, resulting in the desire to maximize water held in the reservoir.

- Secretary Crowfoot asked whether the FIRO effort would have improved DWR's ability to anticipate the size and duration of the 2017 storm. John Leahigh explained that it will improve DWR's forecasting in similar situations, but clarified that 2017 did not reflect a normal flood management situation. Rather, it was an emergency situation: because of the collapse of the spillway, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) gave approval for DWR to encroach into the flood space so as not to send outflows over a broken spillway.
- Director Nemeth articulated DWR's commitment to investing now in new technology for both data collection and forecasting. DWR will provide the information gleaned from these tools to USACE as USACE initiates the process of revising the flood control manual and developing a new flood curve. Supervisor Connelly volunteered to cooperate with DWR in their efforts to inform USACE about changing hydrologic conditions and the potential need to operate more conservatively in order to protect public safety from devastating floods.
- Commissioner Widener asked for more information on how flood control releases may be shaped by water supply needs. She noted that the community was very concerned about lake levels last spring and did not understand why releases were not made before the lake was on the verge of encroaching into the flood space.

*Presentation 3:* Erin Mellon, DWR's Assistant Director of Public Affairs, gave a presentation on overall Oroville Dam-related operations communications. She highlighted:

- The Oroville Public Information Officer, the email and phone hotline, the weekly email updates, and the ads in the *Chico Enterprise Record* as ongoing resources for residents.
- The DWR communications team's current efforts to identify activities related to winter operations that should trigger communications and outreach to the public. For instance, how snow surveys and allocation decisions relate to the amount of water in the reservoir, or how changing forecasts impact decisions about releases.

Commissioners underscored the importance of DWR working on timely, proactively communication with the public; one commissioner found current email updates too promotional and asked DWR to provide more facts and how they directly relate to operational decisions. Secretary Crowfoot highlighted the work of the Citizens Advisory Commission to hold the agencies accountable to maintain open, frequent, and transparent communication.

In the course of the question and answer period, Commissioners suggested several topics for future meetings; those are included as part of the list compiled under Agenda Item 4 below.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: REVIEW OF TOPICS FOR FUTURE COMMISSION MEETINGS**

Secretary Crowfoot identified several topics of interest discussed in the meeting and at the site visit:

- **Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) flood control manual update:** a discussion with USACE on the process to revise the flood control manual and how they will construct an updated curve. Secretary Crowfoot will ask USACE to join the February meeting for a conversation about their role.

- **State water infrastructure funding decisions:** a presentation to better understand the relationship between DWR and the State Water Contractors, particularly how funding decisions for state water infrastructure are made and their impact on Oroville Dam; explanation of the current budget for operations and maintenance, as well as projections for long-term funding needs for the system as a whole and Oroville specifically.
- **CNA Ad Hoc Group and Forensic Team recommendations:** updates on how recommendations from both groups are being considered and integrated into DWR planning and decision-making
- Standing item on **Oroville Dam-related communications** and feedback from the community
- Standing item on **operations** (e.g. winter operations for February meeting)

Commissioners proposed the following as additional items as agenda topics for future meetings:

- **Tour of the Joint Operations Center:** Director Nemeth proposed that DWR host a visit to the JOC in Sacramento for Commissioners, focusing on the Flood Operation Center and its functions.
- **Balancing flood control and water delivery priorities:** Commissioners requested more information on how flood control releases are determined and how much water supply needs are weighted in decision-making.
- **Oroville Dam Powerhouse Tour:** Commissioners requested to tour the powerhouses (Hyatt and Thermalito) to provide a better understanding of operations. It was suggested this could be done by video to avoid legal and logistical issues.
- **Public Safety:** Commissioners are interested in learning about public safety challenges and potential solutions in relation to the dam. Supervisor Conant is interested in learning more about alternate spillway options.
- **Recreation Update:** Commissioner Widener requested a presentation on future recreation improvements included in the license. Commissioner Connelly acknowledged that recreation is an important but also a divisive topic and requested that the group discuss safety-related issues first and defer recreation to future meetings.
- **Cross-Jurisdictional Coordination:** Councilmember Pittman requested a presentation on how public safety issues are dealt with in various cities and each county, how jurisdictional issues complicate solutions, and how communication and coordination across the region could be improved.
- **Homelessness Impacts:** Commissioners are interested in having a discussion regarding the impacts of homelessness on infrastructure and public safety as well as potential solutions, including the recent local ordinances outlawing camping on the levees.
- **Siltation:** Commissioners are interested in learning more about siltation issues below the dam and potential solutions.

#### AGENDA ITEM 5: PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were invited to provide comments or ask questions of the Commissioners and/or DWR and to share specific topics they would like to see addressed at future meetings. Remarks are summarized and shared without attribution below; for a full transcript of the exchanges, see transcription prepared by the court reporter and posted online.

- Comment (C): The Feather River Center provides water safety training, boating, equipment rentals, and summer camps. The Center has collaborated with DWR, State Parks, the City of

Oroville, and the County Board of Supervisors on education and recreation development. The Center is excited to work with this Commission on recreation projects going forward.

- C: Will this commission address restoration of the river downstream and river corridor?
  - Response (R): Yes, if the Commissioners express interest in that topic.
- C: The 2017 incident was caused by poor maintenance. DWR has had several life-threatening events in last few decades because they are making decisions for the benefit of the State Water Contractors, rather than local residents. DWR staff need a new attitude toward their jobs.
- C: During the 2017 incident, we were told the turbines were not working and there was flooding in that area. Have the turbines been fixed and will they continue to be maintained? This is important for all of us. I am concerned we will have more catastrophic events due to DWR's secrecy. Before 2017, we did not have all the barbed wire up at the dam. It is a blight on our city. Public safety is important but so are aesthetics.
  - R (Ted Craddock, DWR): In regard to turbines and Hyatt, when the water reaches a certain level in the diversion pool, it results in a higher tailwater level in which the turbines cannot operate. That is what happened during the incident. Right now, DWR is undertaking a long-term process to refurbish the turbines one by one. There are currently five turbines in operation with the sixth coming back online this coming spring. Regarding the comment on aesthetics, post-September 11<sup>th</sup> there has been increased attention to protecting infrastructure from terrorists; DWR is working with the Department of Homeland Security to identify and protect those facilities.
  - C (Secretary Crowfoot): I heard the desire to institutionalize the recommendations of the third-party experts since the incident. Will DWR do this?
  - R (Ted Craddock): It is important to have third party experts look at the facility. DWR currently has a panel of experts undertaking this as part of a five-year review process for Oroville and the State Water Project (SWP). As part of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) process, we are bringing in another panel separate from the five-year review to look at facility comprehensively.
  - C (Genoa Widener): The CNA Ad Hoc Group is appreciated, but the CNA is a one-time process. It would be nice to have an Ad Hoc Group as part of all the five-year reviews.
  - R (Ted Craddock): This Commission will be a vehicle for providing that kind of information to the public.
- C: We have traded regular controllable floods for occasional complete inundations. We need to balance safety and the water supply, but the State Water Contractors (SWC) have powerful lobbies that fight for storing more water. This Commission has the opportunity to reconcile that balance—to push back against the pressure of SWC, rather than act as a public relations exercise. The SWC should be formally involved in this Commission.
  - R (Secretary Crowfoot): Water management is a balance and we are working to move away from an "us versus them" mentality. We would like to have the SWC here to have conversations.
  - R (Karla Nemeth): We could provide a presentation on how decisions are made in relation to Oroville and the water supply.
- C: First, I adamantly disagree with the Senator's comments about flood management facilities not being able to be used for recreation. Second, I believe safety of children and other residents accessing the downstream areas is an issue to be addressed by this Commission; high releases

flush trash and debris down the river. There is now heightened security at the dam; I suggest having those California Highway Patrol officers stop by the parks to help with safety issues and vandalism. Butte, Yuba, Sutter counties and the state should coordinate to help on this.

- R (Secretary Crowfoot): As a new Commission, we are still defining the scope of issues addressed. If it is appropriate to address safety issues in flood control space below the dam, we can consider that.
- R (Deputy Licon): These issues are not unique—we are struggling downstream too.
- R (Lieutenant Million): Our county recently passed an ordinance to prevent encampments on levees to improve safety for infrastructure and citizens. This ordinance is not intended to target homeless people. The homelessness issue is a flood control issue – more than 700 people live in the levee area. During winter, we need to allocate personnel to go remove them.
- C: As a long-time fisherman, I have seen the Yuba and Sutter ruined from silt accumulation. Could the river be dredged out to enhance the flow? I have been told this cannot be done due to environmental restrictions.
  - R (Supervisor Connelly): I serve on the Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency (SBFCA) board, and they are looking for funding to act on this issue. The silt is restricting and inhibiting flood protection. I would call SBFCA for update.
  - R (Gary Lippner): Channel maintenance is a partnership between the state, local, and federal agencies with DWR maintaining 10% of the system. Due to jurisdictional issues, if channel capacity is not impaired, then we do not have authority to act.
  - R (Karla Nemeth): Senator Nielsen and Assemblyman Gallagher secured \$5 million in the budget for sediment removal. DWR and CNRA are currently working on utilizing this funding.
  - R (Senator Nielsen): Another aspect of the sedimentation issue is snags, which catch the sediment and dam up the river. There is elevated attention to this issue now.
- C: I appreciate the efforts DWR has made since the 2017 incident including the CNA Ad Hoc Group. Public communication and transparency are DWR's biggest hurdles yet to cross. The following would help alleviate these issues: when communicating CNA plan selections, share both what is and is not selected and why, particularly any options that are ruled out due to fiscal infeasibility; include public representatives in fiscal discussions and plan selection; explain why maintenance issues are not funded and addressed annually; provide the public with the two year operations and maintenance (O&M) budgets and capital expenditures plan; explain when recommendations were originally made and why there were delays in addressing the issues; and explain the terms of the original state water contract and the contractors' obligations in terms of timely O&M. Before reinvesting in the State Water Project (SWP) and renewing contracts, there needs to be more clarity about their maintenance and improvement obligations.
  - R (Karla Nemeth): I agree that the SWP is not as transparent as it needs to be. There are changes underway including the role that the State Water Commission plays as an oversight body for the SWP--- that is going to be a really important place to provide transparency about reinvestment in the SWP. I think we can address the financial picture of the SWP and the water supply.
- C: Oroville's economy is strong, and tourism is a growing industry. A safe dam is essential to fostering this burgeoning industry.



- C: The Palermo tunnel could cause potentially catastrophic damage to the power plant. I brought this issue up at the last meeting and spoke with Ted Craddock about it but have not heard anything about next steps. I would like us to look at the legal requirements that allowed the Oroville Wyandotte Irrigation District to put that tunnel through for a benefit of only 40 cfs.
  - R (Secretary Crowfoot): We need to provide an update on this item. We can connect directly after this meeting to talk next steps.

#### CLOSING COMMENTS

Secretary Crowfoot announced that the next meeting will be held on February 21, 2020, and that a vetted summary of this meeting will be posted on the Commission page of the CNRA website.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.