



## **Meeting Minutes**

Meeting of the California Water Commission

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

California Natural Resources Building

715 P Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Auditorium

Sacramento, California 95814

Beginning at 9:30 a.m.

### **1. Call to Order**

Commission Chair Fern Steiner called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

### **2. Roll Call**

Commissioners Bland, Curtin, Gallagher, Makler, Matsumoto, Solorio, and Steiner were present, constituting a quorum.

### **3. Acknowledgement of California Native American Tribal Governments**

This is an opportunity for elected Tribal leaders and formally designated Tribal representatives to identify themselves and to specify the agenda item(s) on which they will comment, as described in the Commission's California Native American Tribal Leadership Comment Policy.

Donna Miranda-Begay, representative of the Tübatulabal Tribe, invited the Commission to participate in two upcoming events: the California Native American Tribal Geographical Information Systems Summit on July 31 and August 1, and California Native American Day on September 26 at the State Capitol Building. Ms. Miranda-Begay also said she looked forward to working with the Commission and the Governor's Office on climate change resilience.

### **4. Approval of May 21, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Curtin motioned to approve the May 21, 2025, meeting minutes. Commissioner Bland seconded the motion. All Commissioners present voted to approve the minutes.

### **5. Executive Officer's Report**

Executive Officer Laura Jensen reported on the engagement and participation numbers from the May Commission meeting and provided brief remarks on how the presentations at the meeting connect to the Commission's Strategic Plan and its white paper on drought strategies.

### **6. Commission Member Report**

Commissioner Matsumoto reported that she would be leaving the meeting at 3 p.m.

## **7. Public Testimony**

Public comment from Ben King, who said he supports the Sites Reservoir Project, but is opposed to the project's proposal regarding the Dunnigan Pipeline. Mr. King said utilizing the Dunnigan Pipeline will have significant impacts on water quality and salmon. He referenced written comments he submitted to the Commission that report that the Colusa Basin Drain is the largest single source of water for the Sacramento River. Mr. King said the current proposal for the Dunnigan Pipeline would take water from the Sites Reservoir that is known to have contaminants, including mercury and chromium, and could lead to the generation of methylmercury in local water systems. Mr. King urged the Commission to study the effects of utilizing the Dunnigan Pipeline before awarding final funding to the Sites project.

## **8. Water Supply Strategy: Overview and Update**

Department of Water Resources (DWR) Drought Coordinator Anthony Navasero provided an overview of the Water Supply Strategy and summarized the strategy's goals for water supply and capture.

State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) Division of Water Quality Assistant Deputy Director Annalisa Kihara provided an update on the implementation of the Water Supply Strategy, including recent and upcoming milestones.

Mr. Navasero also provided an update on actions related to groundwater recharge, groundwater desalination, investments, data collection, and forecasting.

Public comment from Donna Miranda-Begay, who asked how much outreach had been done to Tribes regarding the 30x30 Initiative. Ms. Miranda-Begay said many coastal areas are now being co-managed by Tribes and asked about their opportunities to provide input regarding desalination efforts.

Executive Officer Jensen clarified that the Commission is not directly responsible for implementing the Water Supply Strategy and therefore is not involved in outreach efforts to Tribes. Ms. Kihara added that the SWRCB is committed to implementing Assembly Bill (AB) 2108 which requires them to do an enhanced level of Tribal consultation. She also said there will be additional targeted outreach to Tribes as the SWRCB begins the regulatory process. Mr. Navasero encouraged Tribes to reach out to DWR regarding questions on desalination.

Commissioner Makler asked for clarification regarding DWR's utilization and goals for expanding the state's above and below ground water storage. Mr. Navasero said the goal set for the expansion of the state's above and below ground storage is a combination of additional storage provided by the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) and increased groundwater storage by 2030. Commissioner Makler asked if the goal had been updated since the Los Vaqueros project withdrew from the WSIP. Mr. Navasero said it had not been updated. Commissioner Makler asked what the cost per acre-foot of water would be, how much difficulty is involved in obtaining those permits, and what feedback the Departments are receiving from the permitting processes. Ms. Kihara said the difficulty would depend on what type of permit is

requested and offered to work with Commission staff and Mr. Navasero to provide an answer regarding what feedback the Departments have received.

Commissioner Gallagher asked if the implementation of the California Water Accounting Tracking and Reporting System will result in water savings. Mr. Navasero said equating the implementation of the system to water savings will be challenging but the system should decrease the timeline for permitting.

Commissioner Bland asked if the goal to have 84,000 acre-feet of water as a result of desalination production by 2040 includes brackish groundwater and how the Departments hope to achieve that goal. Mr. Navasero confirmed it does include brackish groundwater and said that it will require more funding, planning, and permitting to reach the 2040 goal.

Commissioner Curtin said the fundamental issue is how the State will adapt to changing snowpack conditions and asked what was happening at the planning level to address that issue. Ms. Kihara said the SWRCB's Storm Water Program works on identifying urban areas and possible infrastructure that could capture stormwaters to offset changing snowpack conditions. Commissioner Curtin said he hopes DWR will look carefully at the potential for groundwater storage in the Central Valley. Mr. Navasero said in addition to other planning efforts, DWR is also utilizing the Basin Characterization Model, which maps out areas where the potential to store groundwater can be maximized.

Commissioner Solorio asked if the Water Supply Strategy can be carried over to the next state administration and what impact the federal administration will have on its implementation. Mr. Navasero said the Water Supply Strategy sets goals that will help the next administration realize the work that will need to be done. He added that each administration develops a Water Plan, and he hopes that the next administration's plan builds upon the Water Supply Strategy.

#### **9. California Salmon Strategy: Overview and Update**

California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) Salmon Strategy Implementation Coordinator Sheena Holley, SWRCB Chief Deputy Director Erik Ekdahl, and DWR Statewide Restoration Initiatives Branch Manager Marc Commandatore provided an overview of Governor Newsom's California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future, including the strategies priorities and progress toward implementation.

Public comment from Peter Van Dyke, who said coastal communities like Santa Cruz are highly urbanized and the manipulation of flood channels only benefits developers. He asked if there were any ongoing efforts to restore local watersheds and rivers such as the San Lorenzo River or the Pajaro River. Mr. Van Dyke also asked what efforts were being taken to restore impacted fish species such as steelhead and salmon.

Mr. Ekdahl recommended that Mr. Van Dyke speak to Santa Clara Valley Water and other local water agencies to get more information on those efforts. Mr. Ekdahl also mentioned the Fish and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort program, which seeks to improve conditions for fish

species in watersheds in the Santa Cruz region. Mr. Commandatore added that DWR manages the Urban Streams Restoration Program, which will be soliciting for projects in the next few years, and the program has restored more than 350 miles of urban streams since 1985.

Public comment from Donna Miranda-Begay, who said she appreciated the inclusion of California Native American tribes in the California Salmon Strategy and said salmon play a vital role in indigenous culture, subsistence fishing, and tribal ecological knowledge.

Commissioner Solorio asked how the State will incorporate non-traditional data types, such as artificial intelligence (AI), into its work. Mr. Ekdahl said one of the challenges the State will face is separating good data from bad data and avoiding mixing up data sets. He said systems that have built in quality assurance and quality control tools will help and utilizing AI will create opportunities for things like faster permitting and the ability to look at real time telemetry water diversion data.

Commissioner Matsumoto asked what role the Commission could play in sharing information regarding water rights and the impact of climate change on fish species to help educate the public and water rights users. Mr. Ekdahl said the Salmon Strategy does hope to produce products from their ongoing efforts to complete supply-demand assessment projects and offered to work with Commission staff to figure out ways to share that information on a broader scale.

#### **10. Drought Update: Drought Resilience Interagency and Partners Collaborative**

DWR Drought Coordinator Anthony Navasero provided an overview of the Drought Resilience Interagency and Partners (DRIP) Collaborative, its work and recommendations thus far.

Public comment from Manny Bahia, who spoke on behalf of the State Water Contractors (SWC) and said that the State Water Project (SWP) regulations use the best available science and in some cases are using adaptive management as well. Mr. Bahia said the SWC supports the flood water recharge efforts but the efforts should avoid impacting existing water rights holders, such as the SWP. He said the SWP provides water to more than 27 million Californians and is vital infrastructure to the state. Mr. Bahia said there are two major efforts that are being implemented to ensure water reliability, one being the Delta Conveyance Project and the other being mitigation for subsidence impacts. He said the latest SWP Delivery Capability Report paints an ominous future for conveyance capability and that subsidence in the Central Valley was not caused by SWP water users, but those users are paying for it. Mr. Bahia urged the Commission to consider those factors and advocate for funding when appropriate.

Commissioner Steiner asked how the non-state members of the DRIP Collaborative were chosen. Mr. Navasero said that members were solicited for in 2022 and were chosen based on their experience and knowledge related to the DRIP Collaborative's work.

### **11. Water Storage Investment Program: Harvest Water Tour**

Erik Ringleberg, Regional Vice President of California of the Freshwater Trust, summarized the ecological highlights of the Harvest Water EcoPlan, including benefits to endangered species, crane habitats, vernal pools, and riparian and wetland areas. He also talked about the importance of the project's partnerships and how critical WSIP funding is to the project.

Bryan Young, SacSewer Environmental Program Manager, provided an overview of environmental compliance related to the construction of the Harvest Water Program and the project's approach to conservation and enhancement.

John Nurmi, SacSewer Senior Civil Engineer, led the tour of the EchoWater Facility and the Harvest Water Pump Station and provided an overview of each facility's operations and how the treatment process works.

Scott Parker, Senior Vice President with Carollo Engineers, talked about pipeline construction and highlighted methods for construction and connections with recycled water customers.

### **12. Adjourn**

The Commission adjourned at 3:01 p.m.