



Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)
Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EPCGSA)
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday October 9, 2024

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 3:01PM by Hilary Graves.

Directors Roll Call:

Dana Merrill – joins at 3:04PM

Lee Nesbitt - present

Jerry Reaugh – present

Hilary Graves – present

Ryan Scott - present

Others present: Guests (in person and by teleconference)

ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF AUGUST 21, 2024 REGULAR MEETING

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES OF AUGUST 21, 2024 REGULAR MEETING made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, voice vote:
Motion passed 4-0.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was presented.

ITEM 4: UPDATE ITEMS

a. Groundwater Levels Monitoring

1) EPCWD Groundwater Monitoring Network

Jerry Reaugh reported that the November readings, fourth of the year, will complete four years of data.

2) EPCWD/GSA Real-time Groundwater Monitoring Program using Continuous Monitoring Devices

The EPCWDGSA real-time network, currently composed of four wells, is in parallel with the County's program (non-GSA aligned). Jerry Reaugh expects six more wells to be added to the EPCWDGSA network in upcoming months. One consideration is whether data collected by the District/GSA can be shared with the County and/or State, at which point it becomes subject to FOIA. A new agreement would need to be developed if the PBCC turns to a JPA as a management structure. Dana Merrill pointed out the confusion around so many different contracts and monitoring networks; Hilary Graves pointed out the benefit of standardizing the data sharing.

b. SLO County Board of Supervisors meetings (comments)

Jerry Reaugh reported that at the October 8 meeting, the supervisors approved using Land IQ as the contractor to develop the MILR program. Hilary Graves suggested inviting supervisor-elect

Heather Moreno to a meeting. John Peschong requested an item for a future Board of Supervisors meeting to revise the Ag Offset ordinance from five to 100 acres for the exemption, and was voted down.

c. State Water Subcontractors Advisory Committee meeting September 13, 2024

This program is now in the hand of the PBCC, with engineering in process.

d. Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) meeting October 2, 2024

Lee Nesbitt reported that the WRAC has set up an ad hoc committee to look at uses for State water. SB552 (Drought planning) was discussed, along with how integrate it into SGMA.

e. Paso Basin Cooperative Committee

1) PBCC meeting September 25, 2024

a. Expanded Monitoring Network

Dana Merrill reported on discussions to add more wells to the Network.

b. Alluvial Well Installation

The County's network of nine alluvial wells is one of the top in the State.

c. Land IQ and ET usage

Five weather stations are in place with data collection in process. There is still an open question as to who will review and curate that data. There is a monthly report generated of ET for every field boundary in the District, also called out by parcel. This data will be part of the Rate Study and MILR projects. Dana Merrill would like to see a comparison of the data to any meter data available, which might have to hold for an annual cycle to get a more complete data set. Ryan Scott asked about error rates, with Land IQ indicating accuracy within 10-15%.

d. Blended Water Project

Dana Merrill spoke to the options of using blended water, as well as the significant costs for each, even without any idea of the cost of the actual water from the City. Jerry Reaugh asked what the management structure of the program would be.

e. MILR Program

Jerry Reaugh reported that the District's letter to the PBCC developed at the August 21 EPCWD meeting was read aloud to the PBCC board and attendees and seemed to have some impact. There was a discussion at the PBCC about shifting the focus to more clearly define the program and elicit more input from stakeholders and the PBCC members, which was what the District's letter had suggested.

f. Grant Spending Plan

The funds will conclude in April 2025, with all projects using grant monies needed to be concluded by April 30. Researching future grant opportunities have a budget line item in the EPCWD budget.

2) PBCC Staff Report

Dana Merrill referred to the above-referenced letter to the PBCC having a recommendation to have the PBCC staff more involved in that program's development, as well as all future projects/programs. Jerry Reaugh pointed out the need for clarity as to what is "PBCC staff" and what is "GSA staff".

f. Outreach efforts – Tripepi Smith meetings September 3 and October 3, 2024

Hilary Graves reported on the first newsletter generated by Tripepi-Smith. Lee Nesbitt suggested using the website to be the focus for information.

ITEM 5: DISCUSSION OF BASIN MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Jerry Reaugh explained that there is a fundamental restructuring of the grape industry in the Basin, and that it is not growing at the same rate as in prior times.

a. Rate Study

The Study includes “Keep the Lights On” funding as well as project, the discussion was about whether looking at projects at this stage, with much in flux, is premature and that getting administrative funding in place is the better place to focus. Dana Merrill asked who composes the Rate Study group, which is the contractor and the PBCC staff. Analysis continues on whether administrative funding should be extraction-based or some other method such as by acreage. The question of how de minimis users would be considered came up and was discussed. The question of developing a water budget for the Basin was discussed. The consensus was that there needs to be equality in charges for administrative funding across the Basin.

b. Basin Management approach

The examination of using a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) structure for Basin management was discussed. A report from the attorneys working on the JPA draft agreement is expected. At this point, the discussion turned to holding a special meeting, provisionally on October 28, to elicit input from District landowners on the direction of the Rate Study and on Basin management. The results of the special meeting would be reported to the PBCC via a letter of the District’s position. An ad hoc committee of Jerry Reaugh and Hilary Graves will work on that letter.

ITEM 6: TREASURER’S REPORT

a. Monthly Financial Status Report

No comment was presented on the Report.

ITEM 7: NEW BUSINESS

No new business was requested.

ITEM 8: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – NOVEMBER 13, 2024

Dana Merrill asked what it would take for the Board of Supervisors to change the offset ordinance to replace the 5-year lookback to another, longer, date so people wouldn’t feel forced to irrigate when they don’t want to in order to preserve their right to pump.

ITEM 9: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, voice vote, motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:

Dana Merrill, President

Date

DRAFT