

Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)

Regular Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2022

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

ATTENDANCE

Directors Present:

Dana Merrill (by videoconference)
Lee Nesbitt (by videoconference)
Jerry Reaugh (joins at 3:06PM by videoconference)
Hilary Graves (by videoconference)
Herb Rowland (absent)

Others present:

Brett Stroud, Young Wooldridge
Blaine Reely, SLO County
Tom Berg, DWR
Willy Cunha, SSJWD
Guests (by phone, in person, videoconference)

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:02 PM by Dana Merrill.

ITEM 2: CONSIDER MOTION TO REINVOKE AB361 TO CONTINUE HOLDING TELECONFERENCE MEETINGS (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54953(e) FOR THE REASONS STATED IN RESOLUTION 2022-003.

MOTION TO REINVOKE AB361 TO CONTINUE HOLDING TELECONFERENCE MEETINGS (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54953(e) FOR THE REASONS STATED IN RESOLUTION 2022-003 made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, roll call vote:

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

Motion passed 3-0.

ITEM 3: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 8, 2022 MEETING

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 8, 2022 MEETING made by Lee Nesbitt, seconded by Hilary Graves, roll call vote:

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

Motion passed 3-0.

ITEM 4: PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was presented.

Jerry Reaugh joined the meeting at 3:06PM.

ITEM 5: UPDATE ITEMS

a. **Governor's Executive Order #N-7-22 regarding new wells in the Paso Basin**

Jerry Reaugh recounted one member's story of trying to obtain a replacement-well permit. Blaine Reely reported that there are currently two to three non-exempt permit requests currently. He also reiterated that the County must comply with the Executive Order. Additionally, a comparison of readings from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022 monitoring wells in the County network show a loss of 80,000 AF in groundwater storage.

b. **Water Neutral New Development ordinance status (Paso Basin Land Use Management Area Planting Ordinance)**

Blaine Reely explained that the existing ordinance has been extended to August 31, 2023. Public comment on the draft EIR closed last week and it will be brought to the Supervisors, likely in November. The 25AF exemption in the proposed ordinance could be significant, and possibly inconsistent with the GSP and sustainability goals. Patricia Wilmore told the Board that the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance had submitted a comment letter that expressed some of the same concerns outlined in the SLO County Farm Bureau's letter. The Planning Commission will be the first to hear the new ordinance, in November.

c. **Groundwater Levels Monitoring program**

Jerry Reaugh reported the next readings are scheduled for August 17 and November 16.

d. **Continuous Monitoring program status**

Jerry Reaugh reported that one of the two wells offered will not work for the continuous monitoring program, so there is a second well actively being sought out.

e. **State Water Consulting project**

Dana Merrill reported that the engineer's study is in process, in part looking at where to put supplemental water to best use if/when it is obtained. Would untreated water be an option? It would be less expensive but would require a parallel pipeline to the existing pipe which can only carry treated water, which is generated at the Polonio Pass treatment plant. Blaine Reely reported that current allocations are at 5%, which means the County is using water in storage to meet demand. The Board of Supervisors has extended the contract with DWR for 40 years so that projects can be funded over that longer timeframe. There is a contract under consideration whereby the Central Coast Water Authority would swap 1000AF in storage for 1000AF in the pipeline, an example of the new flexible tools available. The county currently has 15,000AF in storage in the San Luis Reservoir.

f. **Board of Supervisors Meetings 6/21/2022 and 7/12/2022**

Blaine Reely updated the Board on the Supervisors' adoption of the updated GSP during the July 12 meeting, with its submission to DWR immediately following. There will be another public comment period. A decision by DWR on the revised Plan is expected by year's end.

ITEM 6: DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS FOR INCREASING LANDOWNER ENGAGEMENT ON PASO

GROUNDWATER BASIN TOPICS

Dana Merrill opened the discussion of engagement and consensus, describing Madera County’s mix of GSA jurisdictions, difficulties and new restrictive regulations. Jerry Lohr described a working group that would include new faces in the Basin conversation, and proposed that EPCWD offer to co-sponsor these meetings. Agriculture needs to be able to help formulate options. Blaine Reely described the conceptual framework for sustainability that is being developed by the County GSA, potentially using tiered pumping fees to incentivize lowering water use. This would be brought to the Paso Basin Cooperative Committee with the recommendation of seven agriculture members to develop a program to be considered. Jerry Lohr updated the Board on the status of the independent Blended Water Project, with meetings in process to consider a mutual water district. The required easements are also being worked on currently. Another project is to establish Best Management Practices for all – currently 24 outside growers for Lohr are using these practices and can show a resulting reduction in water use. Perhaps there might be federal funds for a conservation reserve program. Blaine Reely reiterated that the County is looking at using economics to achieve sustainability rather than cutbacks or allocations. The group Jerry Lohr referred to will next meet on July 26 at 9:30AM at Vina Robles.

ITEM 7: TREASURER’S REPORT

- a. **Monthly Financial Status Report** was presented and received no comment.

ITEM 8: NEW BUSINESS

Laurie Gage mentioned the yellow star thistle article in a recent SLO County Farm Bureau weekly newsletter and the research that shows the amount of groundwater the invasive pest is consuming across the State.

ITEM 9: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING AUGUST 10, 2022

ITEM 1: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Jerry Reaugh, roll call vote:

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

Motion passed 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 4:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

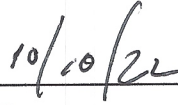


Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:



Dana Merrill, President



Date