

**TULARE COUNTY WATER COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
February 9, 2015**

Members Present:

Allen Ishida, Board Representative and Chairman
Richard L. Schafer, District 5 Appointee
Dale Brogan, District 2 Appointee
Paul Boyer, District 1 Appointee
Rudy Mendoza, TCAG Representative
Chris Kapheim, District 4 Appointee
Mike Ennis, Board Alternate Representative

Members Absent:

Susana De Anda, At-Large Appointee
Roger Everett, At-Large Appointee
Mark Larsen, District 3 Appointee

Staff Present:

Julieta Martinez, Tulare County Board of Supervisors
Denise England, County Administrative Office
Will Jackson, County Counsel

Members of the Public Present:

Carole Clum
Michael Hickey
Bob Irvine
Kim Loeb
Carole Combs
Shane Smith
W. Dale Sally
Brett Taylor
William Gilmour
Richard Garcia
Michael Tharp

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:03pm.

2. Public Comment Period

Carole Clum of Three Rivers was present to give public comment. She provided the Commissioners with copies of an article from the Scientific American, February 2015 edition.
Please see attached for comments.

Richard Garcia, 1038 E. Lasall Ave, Visalia, was present to thank the Commission for hosting the very informative groundwater workshop along with representatives from the State. He stated, at the last meeting, Chairman Ishida asked for suggestions and he wanted to provide one. Would it be possible to get a report on flood control and how the County is prepared for a possible flood. He thought it would be beneficial for residents

3. Approval of January 12, 2015 minutes

Motion by Commissioner Kapheim, second by Commissioner Schafer. Motion approved.

4. Discussion on Temperance Flat

Chairman Ishida stated that there was an outreach meeting in Fresno last week, put on by State. It was more of a question and answer session. There was a timeline of the Temperance Flat project. Construction is spanning 10 years. He is glad to see something has been started by the State to address the Temperance Flat Project. He does not know when there may be another meeting asking for dialogue.

Commissioner Boyer had a question on Proposition One. Is there competition for funds for surface water storage and groundwater storage that Temperance Flat Project might be competing for?

Chairman Ishida answered that there would be.

Commissioner Boyer asked if there was any indication of how the State would rate the proposals for water storage.

Commissioner Schafer shared that storage in Temperance Flat would be controlled by the Federal government through the Bureau of Reclamation's water right, whatever the increase in yield might be, would become a part of the Central Valley Project water supply.

Commissioner Mendoza asked if there was a reason that Temperance Flat should take 10 years to construct.

Chairman Ishida commented that there was no justification in regards to the timeline. He mentioned that there were a couple hundred people at the meeting but he and Supervisor Tom Wheeler, Madera County, where the only two Supervisors at the meeting.

5. Declining groundwater tables (Discussion and Action Item)

Commissioner Kapheim asked that the item be put on the agenda because it doesn't seem like it wants to rain this year or it isn't raining enough. Our Snow pack should be 50 percent by January and we are well under that on the Kings River. This summer will be difficult and he believes the County should start looking at what other counties are doing in terms of addressing the issue. They need to consider what may need to happen if things continue its course. We will have a difficult time this summer with continual drop in the groundwater table.

Commissioner Mendoza made a request of staff to get a vital numbers report. He would like to see the varying water table levels throughout Tulare County and progression of wells that have gone dry going back to last 24 months if that is possible. He would like to see something readily available to tract the progression of the situation.

Commissioner Kapheim asked if the county knew the horsepower on the pumps when a well permit it pulled.

Denise England stated that it is possible the County does not require the horsepower of the pump.

Commissioner Kapheim shared that one issue is as we get people pumping more capacity we start having more impacts.

Denise England commented that the County has pump test results but not a requirement to come back and redo a permit. Discussion followed.

Chairman Ishida wanted to see the breakdown between domestic and agricultural permits for wells.

Commissioner Brogan stated that it would be helpful to see the location of new well permits for the last year. He is afraid that he already knows where that area is, Delano-Earlimart. It is a good topic for the Commission to keep on top of. Last year the area was able to scoot by but that may not be the case this year. It wouldn't surprise him to see the situation in east Porterville occur all over the County.

Commissioner Kapheim believes it would be good to survey other counties that have similar issues.

Chairman Ishida shared that some Counties have hired outside help to come up with a well drilling ordinance, he believes Stanislaus is one of them.

Commissioner Mendoza urged staff to provide a preliminary report on well drilling by the next meeting or within the next 30 days.

Commissioner Schafer stated that the groundwater assessment reports that are being prepared for the Tule Basin and Kaweah basin, which cover the majority of the County, include history on groundwater in the respective basins and identifies the conditions that prevail as of now. As he recalls from information in the Tule Basin, in the 1920s the groundwater depth average for the basin was about 20 to 25 feet and today it is about 225 feet. So the groundwater level has probably dropped in the realm of 200 feet in that time span but a lot of changes have occurred. That is a source for determining what the current groundwater level conditions are.

6. Subcommittee Reports

None at this time.

7. Staff Reports

a. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Denise England shared that last week Chairman Ishida, Commissioner Larsen and Commissioner Brogan all attended the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act workshop put on the ACWA and CSAC. Commissioner Larsen and herself presented on the Kaweah Sub-basin.

Commissioner Kapheim shared that in the Kings Sub Basin, a large sub basin and they are looking at probably forming several GSA's, at least four. They are determining how to coordinate or if it is indeed one sub basin how that will affect boundary changes. There is a lot of effort going on right now trying to get educated and seeing what options are available. There is active discussion both region and basin levels.

Denise England commented that as part of the World Ag Expo, Commissioner Larsen will be hosting a Land Owner Meeting from 9-11am at the Heritage Complex on Wednesday. It is for those who are part of the Kaweah Sub Basin. There will also be a stakeholder meeting on February 23rd at the County Administrative Office bringing together the Cites and various special district and irrigations districts to start having conversations in regards to GSA's and what that would look like.

Denise England also shared some Drought impacts. As of last Monday, there were 911 dry wells throughout the County. Most of them are in East Porterville. We are seeing more and more dry wells throughout County. The Office of Emergency services update their website on a weekly basis with new maps of impacts. She is still working with OES to implement the household tank program to set individual tanks at properties with dry wells. One obstacle is that we can't place tanks at rental properties

There is a hearing next Wednesday, February 18th from 2-5pm. It can be seen online. Part of the hearing will be focused on the drought response in East Porterville. Chairman Ishida shared that Denise England will be presenting the technical side of the hearing. Discussion followed.

8. Commissioners Comments

Commissioner Boyer stated that there are close to a hundred homes in Cameron Creek where the City of Farmersville will be extending water service. A strong majority wanted water service but not to be part of city, it worked out well.

Chairman Ishida stated Cameron Creek is a real success story and he is surprised it happened in such a

short period of time. He shared that the Farmerville City Council did a great job.

Commissioner Schafer discussed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. He shared that the Tule Basin is identified under Bulletin 118 as the northern boundary of the Lower Tule River Irrigation District and the Porterville Irrigation District and the Southern boundary of the Lindmore Irrigation District. The eastern boundary is the Foothills. Southern boundary is Kern County and the Western boundary is Kings County. There will be a series of meeting taking place in regards to the Act in the Tule Basin. The purpose is to receive input on how the landowners' feel we should proceed with formation of the GSA's.

9. Next meeting – Monday, March 9, 2015, 3:00 p.m. – Board of Supervisors Chambers

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:50pm.

Carole Clum's Public Comments at the Tulare County Water Commission on February 9, 2015

On February 3, 2015 Brian Jurgens, a hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Service reported on the results of the national Water Quality Assessment Program. Beginning twenty years ago the water quality of 122 San Joaquin Valley domestic wells has been analyzed. Uranium is quite high (above the maximum contaminant level allowed by the EPA) in eastern San Joaquin Valley groundwater. This is a new problem. Uranium occurs naturally in sediment from the Sierra Nevada mountains. Uranium did not become a problem until irrigation was introduced in the valley about 100 years ago. Crops planted in the summer are irrigated. The roots of these plants emit CO_2 which causes water in the soil to become acidic. Minerals dissolve in acidic water, resulting in the release of uranium into groundwater.

Deeper wells and more groundwater pumping cause a higher contamination of uranium. One fourth of the domestic wells tested in the eastern San Joaquin Valley have above the MCL of uranium (30 micrograms). Uranium in groundwater extends toward the center of the valley. Uranium is a heavy metal which accumulates in the kidneys. It's a toxin.

In the future more wells will be sampled by USGS because they expect the uranium to spread to a larger and larger portion of the aquifer. Deeper wells and public supply wells will become contaminated and have to be taken off line.

I brought a copy of a four page article from the February 2015 issue of Scientific American magazine. The article concerns the consequences of increasing the food supply or energy supply or water supply without considering the impact on the other two. They are interconnected. For instance, reducing wasted food which is now estimated to be 25% of all food produced in the U.S. would reduce the use of water and energy. Desalinating brackish water uses much less energy than desalinating sea water.

A good example of the interconnectedness of food, water, and energy is a major drought in 2012 in India. "In July 2012 three of India's regional electric grids failed, triggering the largest blackout on earth. More than 620 million people - 9 percent of the world's population - were left powerless. The cause: the strain of food production from a lack of water. Because of major drought, farmers plugged in more and more electric pumps to draw water from deeper and deeper below ground for irrigation. Those pumps, working furiously under the hot sun, increased the demand on power plants. At the same time low water levels meant hydroelectric dams were generating less electricity than normal. Making matters worse, runoff from those irrigated farms during floods earlier in the year left piles of silt right behind the dams, reducing the water capacity in the dam reservoirs. Suddenly, a population larger than all of Europe and twice as large as that of the U.S. was plunged into darkness."