

***Mendocino County***

***Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District***

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**APPROVED MINUTES**

**Special Meeting**

**March 8, 2021**

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE DIRECTIVES OF THE COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER, STATE AND CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC), THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM.

**1. Roll Call**

President Watt called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

Trustees Present: Christopher Watt, President  
Alfred White, Vice President  
Tyler Rodrigue, Trustee (left at 2:15)  
John Reardan, Trustee  
Matthew Froneberger, Treasurer

Staff: Elizabeth Salomone, General Manager

**2. Public Expression**

No one from the public indicated an interest in speaking.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

Treasurer Froneberger moved to approve the agenda, postponing item 8: Closed Session. Vice President White seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the following unanimous vote:

Ayes: 5 (Reardan, Rodrigue, Froneberger White, Watt)

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION**

**4. Water Supply Conditions Update**

GM Salomone introduced Pam Jeane, Assistant General Manager of Sonoma Water Agency and Don Seymour, Principle Water Agency Engineer at Sonoma Water Agency to provide an update on the water supply conditions and reservoir operations. Current conditions were presented and discussed, as well as an update on Sonoma Water Agency's response to the conditions.

Pam Jeane and Don Seymour shared their appreciation for the invitation and collaboration through the current and continuing water supply challenges. Don Seymour provided the following information:

Lake Mendocino is at 33,800 acre feet storage level which is really low for this time of year. It is at 56% of the 5 year average and cumulative inflow projections for Lake Mendocino show little storage increase due to forecast precipitation. The rainy season is nearing a close leaving Lake Mendocino at historically low storage levels for the summer demand.

Lake Pillsbury is also very low at just under 37,000. It is expected PG&E will be reconvening the Drought Working Group with stakeholders to discuss potential scenarios for a variance request temporarily changing the minimum instream flow requirements to preserve storage.

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Lake Sonoma is also experiencing d lows at 155,000 acre feet storage level. This is 25,000 af lower than in 2014. However, it is expected to meet water demand for up to another year and a half.

Don Seymour answered the follow questions:

Q: How much water is lost in Lake Mendocino due to evaporation?

A: During warmer months, up to an average of 30 acre feet per day and historical data can be provided. Calculations vary based on lake surface area, weather, etc.

Q: Is there an operational low limit for Lake Mendocino, like there is at Lake Pillsbury?

A: The Army Corp of Engineers has not indicated any such level exists. However, if we see Lake Mendocino drop below 20,000 (and approaching the 1977 low levels of 17,000 af) there is uncertainty regarding how the dam and lake will perform.

Q: Is there benefit for diverters to make use of current flow to meet demands and store rather than divert later in the year when flows are supplemented from reservoir releases?

A: [While taking into consideration all regulations to do so] yes; any relief from the use of stored water leaves more for later use.

Q: Can you provide information on soil profile as a conservation tool. [Saturating ground with currently available water to potentially lead to less water required by plants later in the year.]

A: There is uncertainty if current conditions support any type of recharge [or saturation] projects but these are definitely topics for future development. Studies have been done on this topic and can be made available.

Q: Will there be formal notice regarding boating restrictions on Lake Mendocino?

A: The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for the recreational use at Lake Mendocino and would be the authority to issue formal notice. It was acknowledged that providing boat ramp closure to the general public will help in the outreach interest.

Pam Jeanne provided an update on Sonoma Water Agency's responses to the conditions. (a) A Temporary Urgency Change Petition was filed in January 2021 and the Order approved and implemented in February, allowing SWA to set minimum stream flow requirements to Lake Mendocino storage rather than cumulative storage into Lake Pillsbury as it is normally done. Minimum instream requirements are set at Critical Water Year and under Decision 1610, we would only be under Dry Year classification. This allows the dial to be turned down on releases from the reservoir. Sonoma Water Agency does not have control over any diversions from the water system other than their own, which rely heavily on Lake Sonoma. (b) Sonoma Water Agency has launched a public outreach campaign and is coordinating with the District to make sure outreach messages from Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin counties are aligned. The District will also be included in any legislative response, as well, such as declarations of drought. (c) Echoing a recent conversation between Pam Jeane and GM Salomone, everyone in the watershed needs to take responsibility on their water usage and conservation. Further turning down of the release dial from Lake Mendocino is dependent on reducing demand and making sure everyone is using water as efficiently as possible. (d) Sonoma Water Agency is conducting internal discussion in regarding the process and triggers for formal declaration of drought conditions. Declaration of a water supply impairment can result an allocation of what water supply is available, a tool that Sonoma Water has but is not currently preparing to implement. No issues of formal declarations have been settled at this point. The State of California has yet to declare drought. The Agency is meeting frequently with their customers, who represent 600,000 end users of water.

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GM Salomone provided information on the District's own public outreach efforts which include collaboration with the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (RCD). Through a contract for services with the District, the RCD will be the lead on developing a regional partnership like that of the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership and coordinating an aligned message of demand reduction. GM Salomone encouraged all water suppliers to take steps to support the conservation message, despite their individual water supply security.

Pam Jeanne and Don Seymour were thanked for their time and information provided.

GM Salomone presented DRAFT Resolution #21-02 Water Supply Alert, noting the formal adoption is a strong message to customers, other water leaders in the region, and the general public. It also outlines direction to Staff for further action.

Trustee Reardan moved to adopt Resolution #21-02 Water Supply Alert. Vice President White seconded the motion.

Treasurer Froneberger initiated a discussion on the most appropriate procedure for the document and comments and questions were offered by the Trustees, General Manager, and member of the public, Carre Brown.

GM Salomone amended the recommended action from adoption of Resolution #21-02 Water Supply Alert to adopting Declaration #21-01 Water Supply Alert.

Trustee Reardan moved to amend the previously made motion to adoption of Declaration #21-01 Water Supply Alert. Vice President White seconded the amended motion.

The motion was approved by the following unanimous vote:

Ayes: 5 (Reardan, Rodrigue, Froneberger White, Watt)

## **WORKSHOP**

### **5. Temporary Urgency Change Petition**

GM Salomone and Don Seymour, Principle Water Agency Engineer at Sonoma Water Agency, presented the item, noting terms within the Temporary Urgency Change Order directing Sonoma Water Agency to coordinate with this District for response and reporting this work is underway. Comments and questions were offered by Trustees.

Q: How helpful is instantaneous knowledge of diversion amounts, times, and location in providing the necessary information to reduce buffers? Is forecasted diversion data more useful?

A: Previous Temporary Urgency Change Orders required implementation of a 3 day diversion forecast tool is potentially useful in managing flows in the system. However, low participation rates and navigating the limitations of observable impacts from Lake Mendocino release changes reduce the usefulness to reduce buffers. A more useful tool is meeting the minimum instream flow requirements on a 5 day moving average of minimum instream flow measurements rather than an instantaneous basis as currently required in Decision 1610 and Sonoma Water's right. It was noted through discussion that the cooperation from the State Water Resources Control Board is vital in the watershed wide participation and implementation of forecasting as a more useful tool in the effort to reduce buffers.

President Watt noted that in a time of limited water supply and low flows such as the region is currently experiencing is the appropriate time to consider the State Water Resources Control Board encouragement for development of voluntary, locally based management programs. This consideration is indicated in the Board

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approved Declaration #21-01, which also indicates the need of watershed wide participation in creating a locally based program for demand management so that Sonoma Water Agency has access to data that will support efficient operations including reduced buffer releases. He suggested the Board consider putting District resources behind this effort.

GM Salomone noted there are many diverters in the watershed that are not represented by an organization such as Sonoma Water Agency or RRF. A voluntary demand management system cooperatively developed in stages over time by the watershed right holders in such a way that is supported locally would benefit all users through in enhanced operations.

Specific ideas for managing and reducing demand of surface water were discussed.

## 6. Other Board Member and General Manager Reports

*President Watt* shared his comments at the Upper Russian River Water Agency encouraging the members to pay close attention to the water supply conditions and how it may impact their districts ability to serve their customers.

*GM Salomone* noted the local water district meeting agendas indicate review of previous drought response actions and the City of Ukiah recently received an update on their water supply security.

## 7. Direction on Future Agenda Items

Items identified included:

- o Closed Session on information received from participation in IWPC closed sessions.

## 8. Closed Session

Information received from participation in IWPC joint powers agency closed session that has direct financial or liability implications for RRF (Gov't Code §54956.96)

*Property: PG&E Potter Valley Project. Agency Negotiators: Janet Pauli & Scott Shapiro*  
*Negotiating Parties: IWPC and FERC. Under Negotiation: Price and Terms*

The Board postponed the Closed Session for a future meeting.

## ADJOURNMENT

Vice President White moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:36 pm. Trustee Reardan seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by the following unanimous vote:

Ayes: 4 (Reardan, Froneberger White, Watt)  
Absent: 1 (Rodrigue)

**APPROVED by Board of Trustees on April 5, 2021**



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President of the Board of Trustees



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Secretary of the Board of Trustees

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**Vice President**  
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