



Meeting of the Board of Directors

Friday, March 21, 2014, 10am – 3pm

Merced County Fairgrounds, San Joaquin Hall
900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Merced, CA 95341

MEETING MINUTES

I. Convene Meeting and Introductory Remarks

The meeting of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley (Partnership) was called to order at 10:07 am by Chair Ashley Swearingin who welcomed Partnership Board members and guests.

Board Members present: James Aleru, Lynne Ashbeck, Sharri Ehlert, Steve Bestalorides, Judy Case McNairy, Vito Chiesa, DeeDee D'Adamo, Diana Dooley, Mike Dozier, Lee Ann Eager, Bryn Forhan, Andrew Genasci, Pat Gordon, Glenda Humiston, Genoveva Islas, Blake Konczal, Dorothy Leland, David Long, Brian McMahan, Luisa Medina, Michael Navarro, Joe Oliveira, Billy Powell, Larry Powell, Max Rodriguez, Karen Ross, Gary Serrato, Ted Smalley, Mark Starr, Ashley Swearingin, James Tague, Robert Tse.

II. Recognition of Sponsors

California Assemblymember Adam Gray representing Merced welcomed the board and members of the public and members of the Governor's Drought Task Force.

Merced's Mayor Stan Thursten welcomed all and applauds the group's efforts to produce ideas to solve the issues of the drought now and for the future.

The board recognized and thanked our sponsor UC Merced, and Dr. Conklin with her presentation on the drought. The board also recognized Merced County Supervisor Hub Walsh.

Introductions were then made from the board and the audience around the room.

III. New Board Member Oath of Office

New member of the Partnership Board of Directors Gary Serrato was installed by Secretary Ross who administered the oath of office.

IV. Public and Board Comment

Chair Swearingin thanked the Brown Administration and Secretary Dooley for supporting the Partnership.

Secretary Ross assumed her role of Deputy Co-Chair with an ongoing commitment from the administration to supporting the work of the Partnership.

V. Consent Calendar

Larry Powell moved to accept the consent calendar as published. Lynne Ashbeck seconded and the motion was approved.

OCED staff will serve as concierge to board. Melanie Allen was bid a fond farewell after more than 20 board meetings. She promised to continue to support the organizations.

VI. Central Valley AgPLUS

A fact sheet was shared which explains the aim to win federal designation to access up to \$1.3 billion in assistance to accelerate manufacturing job creation and boost investment in the Agriculture and Food sector.

Mike Dozier thanked Congressman Costa for taking the lead and getting federal representatives to endorse, and also GoBiz and Connie Conway.

ACTION: Letters of support from board members are needed for submission on April 7.

Glenda Humiston urged everyone to help, as there is no place else that has the mix of agriculture and manufacturing that the San Joaquin Valley has.

VII. UC Merced's Sierra Nevada Research Institute

Dr. Conklin's presentation helped explain how most of the water that we use falls on the Sierra Nevada and accumulates in the trees and slopes. 50% of our water falls as snow; it is important to measure and manage the water from the snow pack.

ACTION: Dr. Conklin's presentation to be posted on Partnership website. (Posted March 21, 2014).

ACTION: Larry Powell wants this presentation out to students in the 7th grade and up, stating that our school students should learn early on to promote water conservation. Dr. Conklin responded that they have been working with the school districts but are willing to do more.

Max Rodriguez stated that the brush build-up is tremendous and it soaks up a lot of water. He asked what actions can be taken to remedy the issue, such as controlled fires and cloud seeding. Dr. Conklin agreed that brush management is very important; but fire is a big concern. She is aware of cloud seeding activities but is unsure of the results.

VIII. Governor's Drought Task Force

Secretary Ross of the Governor's Drought Task Force began the panel discussion providing a brief history of how the task force was initiated when Governor Brown had an emergency declared and directed the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the Office of Emergency Services

to work together on real-time monitoring and managing based on temporary urgency measures. This has enabled the government to move more swiftly on issues.

Secretary Diana Dooley praised Karen Ross's leadership on the Drought Task Force and discusses the focus on a drinking water program from the Department of Health and Human Services, working with partners in the food bank community and helping partners to recognize needs due to the drought. The issue of carryover is stressed, as there needs to be enough water released to protect the Delta from salting up, however, if too much water is let go we won't be prepared for another dry year.

DeeDee D'Adamo discussed the drought impact from the State Water Resources Control Board and Dr. Mark Starr from the California Department of Public Health talked about his program which operates the public water system for drinking water, working with the environmental health system.

There is staff specifically assigned to at-risk systems: those which could run out of water within 60 days, and also focused on longer term systems to help them avoid getting on the short list. All systems on the list are small water systems. They're much more vulnerable to drought impacts.

IX. Lunch

Break for quick lunch at 11:55am
Reconvene at 12:15pm

Dr. Glenda Humiston spoke about the Federal Government's Drought Response. The USDA emergency board has been meeting regularly and coordinating with the California Department of Emergency services. There are emergency ag loans. The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is collaborating with forest service.

Chair Swearingin then encouraged questions and comments from the room to turn the conversation towards community interaction with the board.

Genoveva Islas spoke of her concern for people purchasing unhealthy drinks instead of drinking water when it's not as available and of how limited resources may limit the ability to make health conscious decisions. Drought management could provide the opportunity to focus on improving situation in the farm communities.

DeeDee D'Adamo stated that drinking water in communities is a top priority across the administration which continues to address water recycling and management in the disadvantaged communities.

Genoveva Islas asked how to better prepare the farm worker communities to respond to the drought, not just subsistence assistance, but job retraining and education opportunities need to be a priority.

Blake Konczal addressed this topic with regards to Fresno's pilot program for Irrigation Specialists. The US Department of Labor passes out money per a formula, however, and farm workers are no longer counted in this figure; therefore, there are restrictions in the funds received. A reclassification has resulted in farm worker layoffs not being considered in layoff/job loss statistics. There will be an emergency grant application.

Supervisor Hub Walsh addressed the board and asked that the discussion go beyond surface water to ground water, believing that there may be more regulations and legislation about it. He would like those issues to stay local and not go to the state. DeeDee answered that the board is focused on the ground water issue, plus surface water and water conveyance. There is a need to protect water quality in state and there is clear authority to step in and help communities work through the issues

Our board is focusing the issue of what needs to be done to properly manage the ground water. What is the appropriate role for the state to step in temporarily for management? Karen Ross answered that it is difficult to make sound, long term policy in the middle of a crisis and there is a need to think about replenishing water in the good times, too.

Luisa Medina cautioned not to ignore the fact that many of the farm workers have been out of work for a long time, therefore housing, utilities – all are big issues. Blake Konczal says they need to be eligible for opportunities.

X. San Joaquin Valley Water Supply Overview

Sarge Green from the California Water Institute presented a program outlining the San Joaquin Valley Water Supply. He believes that this drought will cause groups of people to ask for help who have never had to before. There are emergency declaration options in place that offer a set of reasonable alternatives and flexibility for working with the Endangered Species Act. The pumping efficiency program is another tool for the water community.

David Long of the Merced Irrigation District said that there will be massive increases in groundwater pumping and power generation will be dramatically impacted by the loss of hydrostatic generation. Karen Ross replied that this will be monitored.

DeeDee D'Adamo discussed options. There are two bills currently being introduced: one through Senator Dianne Feinstein to select alternatives, and another bill from Congressman Devin Nunez which would make some more significant adjustments. Due to the timing of the bills, nothing is expected to come out of the federal legislator in time to do anything this year. The only thing that can help now is working through changes in the endangered species act, as this is an emergency.

XI. Roundtable Discussion and Public Health Impacts

Amanda Carvajal, Executive Director from the Merced County Farm Bureau, spoke about the implications for agriculture, stating that although applied water has gone down 14%, the volume of farm production has gone up. Farmers are able to manage their operations better, but are still in need of long-term solutions.

American Ag Credit's Stephen Moitozo from Merced warned that food prices will increase across all states from this drought, and the ripples will be a tsunami in communities like Mendota which is full of farm workers. Farmers, ranchers and dairymen in the Valley have to make many decisions about purchasing and investing. Instability and volatility means business people have to hold back in everything. Lending institutions like stability.

Victor Lopez of Orange Cove spoke out about his city's devastation, stating that farm workers are the community and something needs to be done for them.

Larry Powell stated that stability is necessary for a student's success. Family layoffs lead to instability. Schools lose funding and programs and students. The better qualified teachers will leave to go to more stable areas and there is a loss of aid and resources in the community when the numbers decrease.

Ms. Swearingin invited Tom Smith from E&J Gallo to comment on the situation as a food and beverage processor in the Valley.

XII. Public and Board Comments

Chair. Swearingin challenged all to bring direction on how we can be most helpful.

Cruz Ramos from the City of San Joaquin expressed the need for skills and expertise for help. Need help of companies that are being innovative as well.

ACTION: Lee Ann Eager from the EDC added that ETP has funds for drought relief and will work to schedule training after April.

ACTION: California Roundtable for Food and Water Supply – send out to Board/post on website.

ACTION: Lynne Ashbeck suggested a “Sister City” incubator to link local resources and expertise.

Mary Renner said conservation education is needed for employers and employees.

Mike Dozier said that the Rural Development Center is already in place in Orange Cove and also in San Joaquin with the RBEG grant. Perhaps it can be done bigger and better.

Brian McMahon reiterated the importance of the investment in job training and workforce solutions.

Andrew Genasci said we need to find a workaround for the Delta project. Need better management on watershed issue to work against tomorrow's drought today.

Bryn says that everyone is impacted and we have to look at key things to push and move to make happen.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:09pm.