
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board

Meeting Minutes

In-person/Hybrid Meeting

Junipero Serra Building

Carmel Room

Los Angeles, CA 90013

March 23, 2023

Chair Camacho called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

She explained the process for participation in the virtual meeting, noting that for those who only want to listen or watch the meeting, the Board's customary webcast was available, and that the Board has Spanish translation services available through the Zoom platform for those who want to listen or participate in the meeting in Spanish. She provided instructions on how to join the Zoom meeting for those wishing to provide comments on an agenda item, and she announced that the meeting was being recorded.

Sergio Morales, one of the Spanish translators, provided instructions on how to participate in the meeting in Spanish.

Item 1 – Roll Call

Board Members Present: Sabrina Ashjian, Norma Camacho, Marissa Christiansen, Michael Méndez, Irma Muñoz, and James Stahl

Board Member Absent: David Nahai (present for closed session only)

Note: Marissa Christiansen and Irma Muñoz departed early after closed session.

Staff Present: Jenny Newman, Hugh Marley, Helen Rowe, Adriana Nuñez, Sophie Froelich (Remote), Tamarin Austin, Jennifer Fordyce, Khalid Abdullah, Alfredo Duran, Gerardo Rabelo, LB Nye, Russ Colby, Arthur Heath, Yue Rong, Jeong-Hee Lim, Stefani Daryanto, Susana Lagudis and Brian Anderson

Item 2 – Order of Agenda

There were no changes to the order of the agenda.

Item 3 – Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes for the February 23, 2023, meeting.

MOTION: Board Member Stahl made a motion to approve the February 23, 2023, draft meeting minutes.

Seconded by: Board Member Muñoz.

Motion carried: Approved by roll call vote.

Sabrina Ashjian - Yea
Norma Camacho – Yea
Marissa Christiansen – Abstained
Michael Méndez – Yea
Irma Muñoz – Yea
David Nahai – Absent
James Stahl – Yea

Item 4 – Board Member Communications

- a. Ex Parte Disclosures (Board members identified any discussions they had requiring disclosure pursuant to Government Code section 11430.40.)

Chair Camacho reported on one ex parte communication.

On March 13, 2023, she received an email with a letter attached from Mr. Ray Tahir. She understood that the letter was a prohibited ex parte communication because it related to the pending NPDES permit for the Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company and mentioned the odors associated with the Dominguez Channel. She did not read the letter. She forwarded the email to the acting executive officers and legal counsel.

Board Member Méndez reported on two communications.

He received the same ex parte email with the attached letter from Mr. Tahir. He did not read the letter. He deleted the email.

He has communicated with LA Waterkeeper and Alliance for a Better Community on school greening projects. He discussed green spaces and other types of groundwater capture opportunities, particularly in low-income communities of color in the Los Angeles Unified School District and throughout LA County.

Board Member Muñoz reported on one ex parte communication.

She received the same letter from Mr. Tahir. She did not open the letter.

Board Member Stahl reported on one ex parte communication.

He received the same letter from Mr. Tahir and a letter regarding zinc. He forwarded both letters to Regional Water Board staff.

Board Member Christiansen reported on one ex parte communication.

She received the same letter from Mr. Tahir. She did not read the letter.

Board Member Ashjian reported on three communications.

She received the same ex parte email with an attached letter from Mr. Tahir. She did not read the letter.

She had a discussion with LA Waterkeeper and Heal the Bay. She did not discuss any pending matters.

She received an email from the Farm Bureau in Ventura County inviting the Board to participate in a tour of the farms.

b. Board Member Reports:

Board Member Méndez reported that he is involved with two different water related issues statewide. The issues review the disproportionate amount of infrastructure and resources, particularly flooding issues and other types of climate resilience projects, in low-income agricultural farm worker communities.

Board Member Muñoz reported that she received a call from James Simonelli, Executive Officer with the California Metals Coalition. Mr. Simonelli invited her to their 50th anniversary.

Board Member Christiansen reported that she hosted a conference on weather whiplash with funders in both California and outside of California that are either directly connected or tangentially connected to our water supply issues. Speakers for this event were: Pablo Garza, California State Assembly, Ellen Hick, Public Policy Institute of California, and Liz Crossen, Metropolitan Water District.

Board Member Ashjian reported that March 22, 2023, was World Water Day and the theme was accelerating change to solve the water and sanitation crisis.

Item 5 – Executive Officer’s Report

Hugh Marley, Acting Executive Officer, provided updates on the following items: preparation for a proposed Ballona Wetlands tour and May 2023 Information Item; development of Waste Discharge Requirements for irrigated agricultural operations; participation in the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Policy and Intended Use Plan update meeting; progress on cleanup of the former Kast Property Tank Farm, updates on the Ojai Valley Sanitary District sewage spill that occurred on January 23, 2023, and the March 16, 2023, sewage spill in Fillmore; preparation for implementation of the Reissued Stormwater Construction General Permit with new requirements becoming effective on September 1, 2023; and updates on enforcement items, including issuance of a \$1.22 million administrative civil liability complaint against Robert French and Wahib Mikhail, the owners and operators of Buy Rite Gasoline on December 27, 2022, a \$470,678 dollars administrative civil liability against Steven Jones Development Company on March 7, 2023, a settlement with Linde, Inc. on January 18, 2023, for \$30,000 towards a SEP for the California Green Works Corporation South Los Angeles Urban Greening and the Community Forestry Program, administrated by the Rose Foundation, and settlement of 35 complaints for stormwater effluent violations using our expedited settlement process for a total of \$282,000 dollars.

Chair Camacho opened the floor for questions from the Board members.

Board Members Méndez, Muñoz and Stahl made comments and asked questions. Jenny Newman and Hugh Marley responded to Board members comments and questions.

Item 6 – Update from State Water Board [Board Member Laurel Firestone]

Board Member Laurel Firestone provided updates of the following items: 1) Governor Newsom signed two executive orders to capture floodwater to recharge groundwater. The executive orders provided recommendations on the State’s drought response action by the end of April 2023. On March 22, 2023, the State Water Board held a Water Use Sufficiency workshop on the proposed regulatory framework. 2) A notice of proposed rulemaking on hexavalent chromium will be distributed in the next few weeks. The State Water Board will consider adopting the proposal by the end of 2023. 3) The notice on the proposed rulemaking on direct portable use will be distributed in spring 2023. A public hearing on the notice will be held in the summer of 2023 and a consideration by the State Water Board will be held later this year. 4) Public comments for the hearing on the California Integrated Report will be accepted until April 3, 2023. A revised report with public comments will be released in the winter of 2023. Consideration of adoption of the revised report is expected in the winter of 2023 or in 2024.

Chair Camacho opened the floor for questions from the Board members.

Board Member Stahl made comments. Board Member Laurel Firestone responded to Board Member Stahl’s comments.

Item 7 – Public Forum**Speakers:**

- Margot Griswold, Los Angeles Audubon Society
- Ray Tahir, TECS Environmental
- Patricia McPherson, Grassroots Coalition
- Jeanette Vosburg, Grassroots Coalition
- Maureen McGuire, Farm Bureau of Ventura County/Ventura County Irrigated Lands Group
- Kathy Knight, Ballona Ecosystem Education Project

Legal counsel, Tamarin Austin, responded to comments made by Ray Tahir.

Break: 10:53 a.m. to 11:03 a.m.

Chair Camacho: Announced agenda Item 8 and administered the oath.

Item 8 – Consideration of Tentative Waste Discharge Requirements and NPDES Permit Renewal for the Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company LLC., Los Angeles Refinery-Sulfur Recovery Plant, Carson, CA

There was no staff presentation. Regional Water Board staff were available to address public comments.

Speakers:

- Ray Tahir, TECS Environmental

Chair Camacho asked staff to respond to questions regarding odors from Mr. Tahir.

Regional Water Board staff Jeong-Hee Lim, Section Manager, Watershed Regulatory Section responded to Ray Tahir's questions on odors.

Chair Camacho opened the floor for questions from the Board members.

There were no questions from the Board members.

Motion: Board Member Méndez made a motion to approve Item 8.

Seconded by: Board Member Christiansen.

Motion carried: Approved by roll call vote.

Sabrina Ashjian - Yea
Norma Camacho – Yea
Marissa Christiansen - Yea
Michael Méndez – Yea
Irma Muñoz – Yea
David Nahai – Absent
James Stahl – Yea

Chair Camacho announced Information Item 9.

Item 9 – Review of the Los Angeles Region Basin Plan for the Coastal Watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties (Basin Plan) and the Triennial Review Process.

Staff Presentation: Dr. LB Nye, Section Manager, Regional Programs Section

Speakers:

- Benjamin Harris, Los Angeles Waterkeeper
- Ray Tahir, TECS Environmental
- Patricia McPherson, Grassroots Coalition
- Leslie Purcell
- Annalisa Moe, Heal the Bay

Board Member Méndez requested a briefing from Regional Water Board staff on the California Stream Condition Index.

Chair Camacho asked staff to respond to questions from Mr. Tahir.

LB Nye and Legal Counsel, Adriana Nuñez responded to the comments and questions from Mr. Tahir.

Chair Camacho opened the floor for questions from the Board members.

Board Members Stahl, Méndez and Chair Camacho made comments and asked questions. Jenny Newman and Adriana Nuñez responded to the comments and questions made by the Board members.

Lunch Break/Closed Session

Item 12 – Closed Session

Legal counsel, Adriana Nuñez, announced the Board was going into closed session to discuss Items 12.t (iii) appointment of an executive officer.

(The Board met in closed session from 12:10 p.m. to 1:28 p.m.)

Chair Camacho: Announced Information item 10.

Item – 10 Update on implementation of Assembly Bill 2108, which requires the Board to conduct early outreach to identify and make findings on potential environmental justice, tribal impact, and racial equity considerations prior to taking certain actions.

Staff Presentation: Adriana Nuñez, attorney, Office of Chief Counsel, and Jenny Newman, Assistant Executive Officer.

Chair Camacho opened the floor for Board member questions.

Board Members Stahl, Méndez, Ashjian and Chair Camacho made comments and asked questions. Jenny Newman and Hugh Marley responded to comments and questions from the Board members.

Speakers:

- Patricia McPherson, Grassroots Coalition
- Jeanette Vosburg, Grassroots Coalition
- Kathy Knight, Ballona Ecosystem Education Project

LB Nye responded to comments and questions from Patricia McPherson.

Chair Camacho: Announced Information item 11.

Item – 11 Update on Regional Board Subcommittees established at the January 2023 Board Retreat. The subcommittees are: Public Outreach, Water Resilience, Supplemental Environmental Projects, and Racial Equity and Environmental Justice. (The Regional Board Subcommittees will provide updates.)

Chair Camacho introduced the topics and led the subcommittees members in a discussion on Regional Water Board Subcommittees established at the January 2023 Board Retreat. The discussion points were updates, reports on the status of subcommittees, recommendations moving forward and what information Board members would provide to the Board in the fiscal year 23/24 as follows:

- Board Member Stahl provided an update on the Water Resilience Committee;
- Board Member Mendez provided an update on the SEP and Racial Equity and Environmental Justice subcommittees; and
- Board Chair Camacho provided an update on the Public Outreach Subcommittee.

Speakers:

- Patricia McPherson, Grassroots Coalition
- Leslie Purcell
- Kathy Knight, Ballona Ecosystem Education Project

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m. (For more detailed information on any matter at our meetings, you may contact Helen Rowe at (213) 576-6612 or email at: Helen.Rowe@waterboards.ca.gov and she will provide an electronic copy of the transcript or audio, when available.)

Written and submitted by Helen Rowe, Board Clerk on: May 1, 2023

Signature on File: Helen Rowe