



Meeting Minutes

Meeting of the California Water Commission

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

California Natural Resources Building

715 P Street, Auditorium

Sacramento, California 95814

Beginning at 9:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Commission Chair Fern Steiner called the meeting to order at 9:28 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Bland, Curtin, Gallagher, Hurt, Makler, Matsumoto, and Steiner were present, constituting a quorum. Commissioner Solorio arrived during agenda item eight.

3. Acknowledgement of California Native American Tribal Governments

This is an opportunity for elected Tribal leaders and formally designated Tribal representatives to identify themselves and to specify the agenda item(s) on which they will comment, as described in the Commission's California Native American Tribal Leadership Comment Policy. No Tribal leaders or representatives asked to comment.

4. Approval of September 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Bland motioned to approve the September 17, 2025, meeting minutes.

Commissioner Gallagher seconded the motion. All Commissioners present voted to approve the minutes.

5. Executive Officer's Report

Executive Officer, Laura Jensen reported the engagement and participation numbers from the September Commission meeting. The September meeting had the second-highest attendance of the year, despite few comments. Executive Officer Jensen shared that commission staff participated in California Native American Day at the Capitol and the Commission submitted its 2024 report on the State Water Project to the legislature. Executive Officer Jensen shared that the November Commission meeting will be held in Southern California at the Vista Del Lago Visitor Center near Pyramid Lake.

6. Commission Member Report

Commissioner Steiner reported, at the end of October, Executive Officer Jensen will be the Keynote Speaker at the 14th Annual San Diego Committee Water for People Luncheon.

7. Public Testimony

There was no public comment.

8. Water Storage Investment Program: Projects Update

Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) Manager Amy Young provided an update on the progress of projects in the WSIP.

Commissioner Solorio arrived.

Commissioner Bland asked about the CEQA challenge for the Chino Basin Program. Ms. Young stated it was by the City of Ontario, among the rulings in the lawsuit was that the project did not include the pulse flow evaluation items in their documentation.

Commissioner Makler asked when Chino Basin Program is scheduled to return to present an update to the Commission. Ms. Young stated they are not scheduled to return at this time.

Executive Officer Jensen mentioned Chino Basin Program reported they do not expect any changes to their project schedule.

9. Water Storage Investment Program: Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project Update

Melanie Richardson, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, provided a report on the decision to withdraw their application for state funding of the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project, from the WSIP Program.

Ryan McCarter, Deputy Operating Officer of the Dam Safety and Capital Delivery Division, provided an overview of how Valley Water spent early funding from the WSIP.

Public comment from Peter Van Dyke, from the Loma Prieta Resource Conservation District, believes the project is not feasible, with rising costs and will have negative impact on the Riparian population.

Ron Stork, with Friends of the River, commented on three of the four surface storage dam projects have failed and the Sites Project may not be favorable to profitable operations of the project.

Commissioner Steiner asked about other projects mentioned in the minutes from the Santa Clara Valley Water Board Meeting. Mr. McCarter stated there are some other water supply projects through recycled and purified water they are looking at to supplement their existing system.

Commissioner Bland asked if there was a point prior to August 2025 they saw the signs of not being able to move forward. Mr. McCarter stated despite the faith they had in the project, the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project had to be eliminated from the water district's long-term projection, as it was going to be difficult to fund a project of this size.

Commissioner Matsumoto expressed appreciation for the hard decision made by the project to withdraw and asked about the benefit to the people of California based on the \$24 Million in bond money spent on this project. Mr. McCarter stated they gathered a lot of usable data, including many archeological discoveries, doing excavations and providing information to their Tribal partners.

Commissioner Hurt asked about what could have been done differently in relation to the Tribal Engagement. Mr. McCarter stated they were very engaged and involved early on with the Tribe beginning in 2019 and worked very closely with the Tribe.

Commissioner Makler mentioned the difficulty any water infrastructure project faces and the surmounting costs associated, as well as thinking about alternatives to water infrastructure for the people of California.

Commissioner Curtin believes the project has much potential and will be returning in the future as the current sources of water are depleting.

10. Water Storage Investment Program: Proposed Pathway for Uncommitted Funds

Assistant Executive Officer, Dr. Sarah Lesmeister, provided information on a proposed pathway for allocating approximately \$638 million in uncommitted Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) funds. Dr. Lesmeister stated the concept involves modifying regulations to allow supplemental funding on a case-by-case basis for existing projects. The approach was developed after consulting with administering agencies and project proponents; aims to incentivize project progress and maximize public benefits; and potentially uses an emergency rulemaking process for a faster timeline.

Public comment from Heidi Oriol, with Sacramento Area Sewer District, expressed support for the proposed pathway presented by staff.

Public comment from Jerry Brown, with Sites Reservoir Project, expressed support for the proposed pathway for allocation of Proposition 1 and Proposition 4 funds.

Public comment from Fiona Nye, Project Manager for the Kern Fan Groundwater Project, requests the Commission not rush the process through an emergency rulemaking and take the time to consider options for potential modifications to the regulations.

Commissioner Gallagher asked about the time frame of the regulation and if it was months or years. Dr. Lesmeister stated in the event of the emergency rulemaking it would be three to four months before the regulations would become effective.

Commissioner Hurt believes flexibility is important and expediting the allocation is beneficial.

Commissioner Matsumoto agrees with the recommendation to expedite the rulemaking and sees a decrease in the amount of public benefits caused by project delays.

Commissioner Steiner stated she understands that if more public benefits were determined in a project, that could change the funding and the Commission would like to move forward with the path for the change in the rulemaking.

12. Outreach and Engagement Update

This item was heard out of order.

Public Information Officer Paul Cambra provided an update on the work to increase and track engagement with the Commission's activities, highlighting metrics being used to measure its success, and targets and goals staff hope to achieve in the next five years.

Commissioner Hurt expressed appreciation for finding alternative ways to work with the Tribes.

11. Closed Session

The Commission held a closed session to talk about a lawsuit related to a project called the "Big Notch Project". No action was taken by the Commission.

13. Legislative Update

Department of Water Resources (DWR) Deputy Director for Legislative Affairs, Kasey Schimke, provided a brief update to the Commission on the status of State legislation introduced as part of the 2025 legislative year and relevant budget items.

Commissioner Steiner said the Commission looks forward to working with DWR on the California Water Plan Update as part of Senate Bill 72 (Caballero).

14. Consideration of Items for the next California Water Commission Meeting

The Commission is planning to hold the November meeting in Southern California at the Vista del Lago Visitor Center near Pyramid Lake. In addition to the monthly WSIP update, the Commission will host its fifth State Water Project briefing of the year and have tours of Pyramid Lake and Castaic Lake.

15. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned at 12:32 PM.