

Water Wrights



San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority March 5, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority** held its board of directors meeting on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at its Los Banos headquarters, next door to the historic Miller & Lux building.

The room is usually packed to the rafters but there were still a couple seats left just before the meeting began. And like most gatherings that repeat themselves folks tend to sit in the same place. There was a shift in seating arrangements around the board table this morning.

Chairman **Cannon Michael** called the meeting at 9:30am on the dot. He's not as annal about it as some so it was a happy coincidence if you care to call it that. Anyway, he's a good chairman and runs a good meeting. We all saluted the flag together and introduced ourselves. Michael noticed that all the directors and alternates were present today. Consent Calendar, a great invention, was next and approved with a close to a minimum of fuss.

Action Items

The first agenda item was a resolution to honor **Francis Mizuno**. She's played a foundational role in **SLDMWA**'s success. Mizuno has been interim Executive Director and assistant manager and in charge of the Jones Pumping Plant. The resolution must have had a typo because it stated she's worked at the Authority for 28 years. I'm sure she didn't start there when she was 12-years old. I don't know anyone and I've never heard anyone say anything bad about her. I can't say that about too many people. Westlands Water District General Manager **Tom Birmingham** had high praise for her integrity and diligence in helping growers get water. **Anthea Hansen**, GM Del Puerto WD says she's learned to ask herself before making a big decision, "What would Francis do?" **Chris White**, Executive Officer said the effort to get the water from where it was to where it needs to be is a tremendous task. He said Mizuno made it look easy. There were many other words of praise and appreciation. The board passed the resolution unanimously and gave Mizuno a standing ovation. She also was presented the Golden Bucket Award. Good for her. I hope she's very happy on the next portion of her journey on this blue ball with more green places on it thanks to her.

The next item requiring a board vote was to adopt staff's support position on H.R.5752 by Congressman **Jim Costa** and a co-bill in the Senate by Senator **Diane Feinstein**. These bills will bring \$200 million to fixing subsidence along the Delta Mendota Canal. The board agreed. The board also agreed supporting the science based studies on Delta smelt to the tune of \$25,000. The work being done is under the State Water Contractors. The board also authorized staff to single source a bid from Provost & Pritchard Engineering for SGMA and other related matters.

Next the board elected Michael to continue as Chair, Westland's **William Boudreau** as Vice-Chair and San Luis Executive Director **Federico Barajas** as secretary. Good deal.



Reports

Barajas gave an update on the 13 priority items in the strategic plan. The highest priority is to secure water supplies. He said closer communications with the US Bureau of Reclamation has yielded more information regarding operations and this opens an early window into allocations. Another priority is seeking funding to benefit water infrastructure investments good for all members. He pointed out above federal legislation as one example of get more ducats in the change jar. He said the internal deadlines for the first year of implementing the plan have been met. That's good news. Michael thanked staff for the hard work of getting this plan up and running. He praised staff and San Luis Irrigation District Director **Bill Diedrich** also praised staff for the efforts.

Barajas then spoke regarding the Authority's JPA's lack of bylaws. An ad hoc committee was formed to make some suggestions as how this situation can be improved. A draft review is up for review.

J. Scott Petersen was in Washington DC recently and he said the Corona virus has been the focus lately. There was a \$12 million federal fund to eradicate nutria, the furry not so little swamp rodent. I don't like to call it a rat. It's not. Nutria have fine fur coats and are clean mannered herbivores high in protein and lean meat. They are served in some of the finest restaurants in New Orleans. I haven't had any not because I'm scared but I can't afford those high end restaurants. Maybe next time I'm back there someone will have a two for one coupon.

Petersen said the bill filing deadline for the state has passed and he and his crew will be combing through that pile for mischief. He was asked what he told the boys in Washington. Petersen said they DC bunch was told there is a good deal of uncertainty considering Newsom suing over the biops.

Barajas gave his report by starting with the Bureau's allocation. He said believes the Bureau is doing the best it can under the circumstances. Good news/bad news – the WIIN Act and new biological opinions have allowed them to make available every drop of water it could. Bad news is it's a dry year so the Bureau doesn't have much water to give.

Progress is being made on the raising of San Luis Dam according to Barajas. He said the consultants are in place and he was pleased with their initial ideas. Birmingham suggested there be a presentation to the entire board because of possible policy implications. Barajas agreed and something will be set up. There wasn't a report from the Pacheco Reservoir interests and the Del Puerto Canyon gang is working on responding to comments.

Pablo Arroyave, COO gave his report saying water transfers are being pursued and a close eye has been kept on Shasta inflows. He also expressed thanks for the time he's been able to work with Mizuno and hopes she never gets too busy to return his calls.

Tom Boardman, now with Westlands gave the water report. He said the month of February had some high outflow standards required and higher demands. It hit San Luis Reservoir storage pretty hard and the hoped for make up for water sent to last fall's X2 line requirements didn't happen. There are some storms coming. A lighter one next week followed by a heavier storm to hit Northern California which will be good for Shasta. He agreed with Barajas that the Bureau is doing all it can. That statement is pleasant to hear and all too rare in the recent past. I believe there were many factors hampering the Bureau from fulfilling its mission that no longer exist. He hopes to see the 15 percent allocation increase.

Committee and outside agency/organizations reports were next. There was no O&M or finance reports. Westlands Director **Dan Errotabere** gave a Family Farm Alliance meeting report. He said it was a well-attended meeting and refreshing to hear the administration is thinking about water in the west.

The California Farm Water Coalition reported the biops have yielded another benefit by bringing many water players from all over the state to start talking twice a month or so.

Diedrich gave the ACWA report saying the spring meeting is coming up and there will be a panel discussion on the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint. He encourages financial support for the Family Farm Alliance, the California Water Alliance and the California Farm Water Coalition. Cannon said the Water Blueprint press release about Dr. David Sunding's economic report was released earlier this week. Hansen reported Del Puerto's got a new director, **Kyle Perez**. The name is familiar because his grandfather Earl Perez was on the board and has now retired.

Mizuno took a moment to thank her staff for all the help she's received and singled out attorney **Diane Rathman** for her help. She told a good story about feminine footwear.

The meeting then adjourned into closed session.

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SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY was established in January of 1992 and consists of approximately 2,100,000 acres of 29 federal and exchange water service contractors within the western San Joaquin Valley, San Benito and Santa Clara counties. The governing body of the Authority consists of a 19-member Board of Directors classified into five divisions with directors selected from within each division. The main conveyance is the Delta-Mendota Canal that delivers approximately 3,000,000-acre feet of water within the Authority service area. Of this amount, 2,500,000-acre feet are delivered to highly productive agricultural lands, 150,000 to 200,000-acre feet for municipal and industrial uses, and between 250,000 to 300,000 acre-feet are delivered to wildlife refuges for habitat enhancement and restoration.

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