

Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority

MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 13, 2024:

A meeting of the Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority was convened at 7:01 a.m. both remotely through technological means and in the Pinal County Offices in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Directors Present:

- Bill Collings, Papago Butte DWID
- Stephen Q. Miller, Pinal County
- Bryan Hartman, Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage District
- Craig McFarland, City of Casa Grande
- Jake Lenderking, Water utilities without a CAP water subcontract
- Derek McEachern, Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District
- Fred Schneider, Water utilities with a CAP water subcontract
- Matt Rencher, City of Eloy

Also Present:

- Joe Singleton, PCWAA Executive Director
- Cheyenne Walsh, Compass Strategies
- Lonnie Frost, Pinal County
- Ricardo Aguirre, Dir. Of Land Mgmt. and Water Security, West Consultants
- Nathan Miller, MATRIX New World Engineering

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CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Bill Collings called the meeting to order at 7:01.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Craig McFarland moved to approve the minutes as drafted from the meeting of January, 9 2024. Matt Rencher seconded the motion, which carried 8-0. **COLLINGS, HARTMAN, LENDERKING, McEACHERN, McFARLAND, MILLER, RENCHER, SCHNEIDER.**

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Stephen Miller noted the monthly bills presented were for regularly occurring expenses, which included Compass Strategies and MATRIX New World. Miller said that there was \$157.50 remaining on the contract with MATRIX. He noted the bank balance, from the statement ending on 1/31/24 was a little more than \$1 million. Bryan Hartman moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and pay the bills as presented. Craig McFarland seconded the motion, which carried 8-0. **COLLINGS, HARTMAN, LENDERKING, McEACHERN, McFARLAND, MILLER, RENCHER, SCHNEIDER.**

STORM WATER HARVESTING:

Ricardo Aguirre, the Director of Land Management and Water Security for West Consultants, introduced himself to the Board and to what he termed Holistic Water Management. Aguirre said that he grew up in the Red Rock area and became a flood control engineer. He said that much of his training was centered around treating water as a challenge to overcome rather than as a resource. He said that his view changed through time and he adopted practices to incorporate land planning, planned grazing, financial planning, and ecological monitoring. He cited examples in his slideshow of how compaction negatively effects water infiltration rates, which soil organic matter can improve those rates. He said that a 1% increase in soil organic matter leads to an increase of 20,000 – 60,000 gallons / acre in water retention.

Aguirre said that convention grazing practices, utilizing few animals on large areas of land over long periods of time could be replaced by holistic planned grazing practices that use many animals over smaller areas in short time periods. He said that they have a current project that proposes to use these practices in Cochise County. He noted that this kind of flood mitigation had the benefit of extra aquifer recharge as well. He added that West Consultants, through their own demonstration site in Red Rock, was exploring means to facilitate the process such as biological soil amendments. He said that progress was measured through ecological monitoring, microscopy, to count soil organisms and penetrometer testing of soil compaction.

Aguirre told the group that they were approached by a South African group that utilized technology to simulate rainfall, which had shown a correlation between rain chemistry and soil organic matter. He said that it was being tested at the Red Rock demonstration site. He added that another technology that enhances recharge was found to increase crop efficiencies. He said that the EGRP devices were installed about three feet below land surface and increase vertical and horizontal water distribution as well as increase infiltration rates.

Stephen Miller asked Mr. Aguirre about published results of the holistic grazing practices. Aguirre said that he had published, with white papers available through Linked In. He said that the Cochise County project should produce results in a few years. Jake Lenderking asked how deep that the EGRP devices were placed in to the ground, and if they could be used in conjunction with recharge basins. Aguirre said that they were exploring some of those issues now. He told the group that they had applied for a WIFA grant with CAIDD to pursue a project to explore infiltration into basins. He said that although the grant is still pending, initial work suggests that evaporation is a bigger issue than was previously assumed. He said that modelling showed water percolating only several feet into the ground and then evaporating within 100 days. He said that placing the EGRP devices at varying depths from 5-40 feet below ground in a way to work in concert with each other seemed to provide for the best approach. He said that preliminary modelling showed that use of the EGRP devices showed water infiltration getting past the evaporation zone in a day or two and to 100 feet within 30 days. Craig McFarland said that Casa Grande loses a lot of their recycled water to evaporation when it is discharged down the Santa Cruz. Aguirre said that he had spoken with Chris Wannamaker with Pinal County about doing a project in Arizona City. Matt Rencher said that Eloy was interested in pursuing a pilot project.

ADVANCED WEATHER MODIFICATION SOLUTIONS CONTRACT ADDENDUM:

Bill Collings told the group that the original contract with Advanced Weather Modification Solutions (AWMS) called for the evaluation of the feasibility of a regional Cloud Seeding program. Collings said that the addendum would allow for AWMS to conduct the Summer Cloud Seeding program at the rates quoted in the initial study. Collings said that further steps towards implementation had been delayed while waiting for ADWR to develop a licensing procedure and application for the necessary permits. Collings added that PCWAA legal counsel Steve Cooper had reviewed the new contract language. Joe Singleton added that while the Authority had approved moving forward to program implementation when it voted to accept the final draft of the Cloud Seeding report, interaction with ADWR indicated that a more specific contract for the program would be needed as part of the application process. Stephen Miller moved to approve the addendum to the AWMS contract. Craig McFarland seconded he motion, which carried 8-0.

RESPONSES TO ADWR COMMENTS:

Joe Singleton, on behalf of Nathan Miller of MATRIX New World Engineering, said that MATRIX was working with the effected well owners, whose pumping was moved for modelling purposes, to facilitate the providers signing the letters for ADWR that acknowledge the relocation of the pumping. He said that the letter to Arizona Water Company had been signed and returned. Singleton said that MATRIX was working with the Town of Florence, who had asked that their modelled pumping be redistributed.

BARTLETT DAM MODIFICATION:

Bill Collings told members that the Bartlett Dam Modification Steering Committee would meet later today. Collings said that the group would consider a minor revision to the surface water allocations that were approved in December, 2023. Collings said that the proposed revision was the result of a math error in the usage data from one of the partners that was incorporated in the original calculations. He said that the resulting change allowed for slightly more water to PCWAA. Collings added that the Steering Committee may be considering a change to allow for the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGRD) to pick up additional capacity for CAGRD members that turn back some or all their Bartlett allocations. Joe Singleton added that the Steering Committee was also being asked to finalize the language of the narrative that would be submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation with the allocation recommendations. Craig McFarland asked when the funds would be due for the allocations. Bill Collings said they would be due in 2025.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Joe Singleton said that he had spoken with AWMS and that Jonathan Jennings, who had done a lot of the work on the regional Cloud Seeding evaluation for PCWAA, has taken a job with the State of Utah to oversee their cloud seeding efforts. Singleton said that Jonathan Jennings would still participate informally while George Bomar, who had also participated in much of the initial work, would be the lead in pursuing the licensing from ADWR. Singleton said that the licensing had a 75-day licensing timeframe from ADWR, making it theoretically possible to still have a Cloud Seeding program up and running this coming summer. Singleton said that Cheyenne Walsh had help put the Authority in contact with some of the tribes, and that PCWAA and AWMS would be presenting the Cloud Seeding plans to the Tohono O'odham Nation on February 23, 2024 and the Ak-Chin on February 27th.

Singleton said that the Bartlett Modification Group's Needs subcommittee had met since the last PCWAA Board meeting and were still discussing how to reallocate water that might be turned back by the original allocation holder. Singleton said that one suggestion for the turned back water was to put it back through the algorithm that was initially used to make the allocation recommendations. He added that the group was also discussing provisions that would allocate more water back to the CAGRD as EPCOR had changed their initial request for

water in a manner that would lead to additional CAGRD replenishment demands. The CAGRD request was not adjusted to reflect this before allocations were voted on in December, and the CAGRD has asked that its allocation be reconsidered. Singleton said that PCWAA had supported their request, but that the majority of the Bartlett Needs subcommittee members had not. Singleton told the group that Ron Klawitter, who had been leading much of the Bartlett Modification work, has taken a different job within Salt River Project (SRP), and would be handing off his work on Bartlett to other staff.

Singleton told members that among other recommendations, that the Governor's Water policy Council had recommended an Alternative Path to Designation (ADAWS) last fall. He said that ADWR had drafted rule language based on what had come from the Council. Singleton said that those providers had formed an informal stakeholder group to go through the proposal in absence of a formal stakeholder group. Singleton said that the group had discussed common challenges and other policies that would need to change for the providers to make use of ADAWS. Singleton said that the group would meet again next week.

Singleton said that he had spoken with SRP regarding the Salt River Project / CAP Interconnect Facility (SCIF). He said that he had asked about PCWAA joining the technical review study as a partner in the second stage of the interconnect, which would allow SRP water to be moved into the CAP system. Singleton said that it seemed that joining the initial phase of the study would cost \$65,000-\$70,000, which includes the extra fee for joining late. He said that very preliminary figures for a second phase of the work were currently estimated in the same range as the initial ones. He said that the group hoped to initiate the NEPA process this summer. Singleton said that the SCIF group was meeting less often than the Bartlett group, but that he had talked to SRP staff before the informal meeting that they held earlier in the week. He said that they would communicate the PCWAA interest in joining the group to the other members at their informal gathering.

LOBBYIST REPORT:

Cheyenne Walsh of Compass Strategies told the group that the legislature was engaged in their last week to hear bills in their chamber of origin. She said that about 360 bills were on committee agendas for this week. Walsh said that Sarah Liguori replaced Jennifer Longdon representing Legislative District 5, following Longdon's resignation.

Walsh told member that there were more water bills this year than she could remember seeing in any other year. She noted that PCWAA was supporting some of the funding bills, like WIFA and the agricultural efficiency legislation, and H.B. 2200 and 2201, concerning private water companies' ability to transport water from the Harquahala INA. Walsh said that there was a 5-year limitation on using the water that was to be amended out of the legislation while it in committee. She said that both bills would move forward, one of which allows water users in La Paz County to use the water, while the other bill does not. Walsh said that H.B. 2017 would change how ADWR treats commingling of waters, S.B. 1181 would change how CAGRD member lands are transitioned into member service areas, and S.B. 1172 and H.B. 2647 would

allow for agricultural rights to be converted to physical availability credits. Walsh told members that S.B. 1041 would create a groundwater savings certificate as a sort of alternative to a certificate of assured water supply, and S.B. 1236 would create a groundwater marketplace. Walsh said that the House Natural Resources, Environment and Water committee would be hearing two of the so-called “build-to-rent” bills (H.B. 2025 and 2026) later today. Walsh said that she was told that both bills needed amendments. She said that H.B. 2025 was like the floor amendment that was offered last legislative session, which sought to decouple the replenishment obligation from the assured water supply requirements.

Craig McFarland said that he understood that among the “build-to-rent” proposals that one had required a certificate of assured water supply, and that the two currently being considered only required joining the CAGRD. Walsh said that H.B. 2025 required the CAGRD but not a certificate, while H.B. 2026 did not go that far.

PINAL STAKEHOLDER PROCESS REPORT:

Stephen Miller said that he hoped Nathan Miller could work through the issues with the providers soon and finalize their work. He said that discussion with Nathan Miller indicated that the ADWR may be willing to consider the results of the Pinal work as the new assured water supply baseline for the AMA.

CHAIR’S REPORT:

Chairman Collings said that PCWAA would begin work on its FY25 budget next month.

CALL TO THE AUTHORITY:

There was a call to the Authority. Stephen Miller said that they had scheduled a meeting for Pinal County to discuss Bartlett financing and Pinal Cloud Seeding. Miller said that he hoped for a future PCWAA presentation to the Pinal County Board of Supervisors to inform them as to both projects. Miller told the group that the April CAP Board meeting would be in Casa Grande.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

There was a call to the public. There was no response.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next meeting will be held on March 12, 2024 at 7:00 a.m.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 a.m.

ATTEST:


William Collings, Chairman


Stephen Q. Miller, Secretary-Treasurer