

Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority

MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF MAY 13, 2025:

A meeting of the Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority was convened at 7:08 a.m. both remotely through technological means and in the Pinal County Offices in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Directors Present:

- Bill Collings, Papago Butte DWID
- Melissa Campbell, City of Coolidge
- Bryan Hartman, Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage District
- Derek McEachern, Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District
- Bob Marsh, City of Maricopa
- Craig McFarland, City of Casa Grande
- Keith Eaton, Town of Florence
- David Malewitz, City of Eloy
- Stephen Q. Miller, Pinal County

Also Present:

- Joe Singleton, PCWAA Executive Director
- Cheyenne Walsh, Compass Strategies
- Mitch Basefsky, Central Arizona Project
- Lonnie Frost
- Gary Walker, SOAR

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Bill Collings called the meeting to order at 7:08.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Craig McFarland moved to approve the minutes as drafted from the meeting of April 8, 2025. Derek McEachern seconded the motion, which carried 9-0. **CAMPBELL, COLLINGS, EATON, HARTMAN, MARSH, McEACHERN, McFARLAND, MALEWITZ, MILLER.**

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Stephen Miller said that the expenses for the month were standard, except for the invoice from Salt River Project for \$100,000. Miller noted the bank balance from the last bank statement. David Malewitz moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and pay the bills as presented. Craig McFarland seconded the motion, which carried 9-0.

CLOUD SEEDING:

Chairman Bill Collings said that two entities submitted proposals regarding the PCWAA cloud seeding project, and that he had spoken to a third group. Collings said that RH Consulting had proposed a project for \$258,000 plus indirect costs and that SOAR had proposed a cloud seeding project for \$72,400 per month over a three-month period. Collings noted that the SOAR proposal indicated that they did not require hangar space. Collings said that he recommended that the PCWAA accept the SOAR proposal for cloud seeding in the Pinal AMA, and asked for comment from the Board. Bryan Hartman said that the Water Policy Group of the Arizona Farm Bureau had discussed cloud seeding at their last meeting, and that the group's chair had said that cloud seeding was tapering off in West Texas. Hartman added that the group had discussion regarding that cloud seeding may cause downwind areas to be deprived of rainfall that would have otherwise fallen there without the cloud seeding. Collings said that his understanding was that cloud seeding enhanced the total rainfall rather than favoring one area at the expense of a downwind area. He invited Gary Walker of SOAR, who is based in Texas, to address the issue.

Gary Walker, who previously served in the Texas legislature, told the group that the number of weather modification projects in West Texas vary with available financing for the projects. He said that localized projects were harder to put together without the support of state appropriations, noting that a program in Lubbock had stopped operating. He said that programs in Amarillo, San Angelo, Abelline, and south Texas were ongoing. Walker said that there was a lot of data supporting that cloud seeding facilitates additional rainfall, and does not disadvantage one area in favor of another. He added that in cloud seeded areas in Texas that seeding activities created additional water for an estimated cost of \$10-\$15 / acre-foot.

David Malewitz asked about outreach to membership populations concerning cloud seeding before approving a cloud seeding project, noting it was a regional project, and that the Indians had expressed concerns with the seeding agent in the project that was initially proposed. Bill Collings said that he hoped to have meetings or a work session with the various communities involved as the project goes through the permitting process. Collings said that he did not believe that the seeding agent should be an issue given the way that this version of the project was scoped. Malewitz noted that public opinion of the project could fall across a spectrum of concerns, even though the seeding agent might seem less controversial. Stephen Miller noted that the municipalities and the county had representatives on the PCWAA Board, and that aside from the tribes, the PCWAA Board represented the communities that would be impacted by an AMA-wide cloud seeding project. Melissa Campbell asked about the number of states that had cloud seeding projects. Collings said that he thought that virtually every western state except Arizona hosted cloud seeding activities. Malewitz wondered how the other jurisdiction conducted their outreach with their communities. Collings said that he thought Malewitz raised good issues, but noted that the Authority had been pursuing a cloud seeding project for nearly three years. Collings asked Joe Singleton if he had discussed cloud seeding with the municipalities that he had been in contact with. Singleton said that he had, but noted that Eloy was not one of the cities that he had spoken with. He said that they had specifically reached out to the tribes to discuss cloud seeding, as they did not have representatives on the PCWAA Board, and therefore may not have heard the same level of discussion regarding a Pinal AMA cloud seeding program as those who did. Craig McFarland and Stephen Miller indicated that they had raised the issue with their entities (Casa Grande and Pinal County) as the Authority's discussions of cloud seeding had progressed over time. Collings said that they could do follow up outreach activities, but that if the Board did not act soon that they would have to skip another year, as the weather patterns of the area called for a summertime cloud seeding program, and the permit process could take weeks. Collings noted that the only cloud seeding program to-date in Arizona occurred between Salt River project and the Apache on tribal land, which therefore did not require a state permit to conduct. Malewitz asked if the state had ever issued a cloud seeding permit. Collings said that although the statute permitting it had existed for a long time that they had not, noting that Joe Singleton had working with ADWR staff to create an application form to use. Stephen Miller asked if the permit process had a public noticing provision. Joe Singleton said that he would find out.

Keith Eaton expressed concerns like those stated by David Malewitz regarding public outreach. He said that as a newer Board member he did not want to derail a continuing conversation, but hoped for PCWAA presentation of the project for public comment, and asked if previous Florence leadership was more briefed on cloud seeding. Joe Singleton said that the information to and from the Florence representatives was probably not as extensive as it could have been. Eaton said that his town had experienced high staff turnover, and may benefit for a general briefing on PCWAA activities.

Stephen Miller said that the project could not move forward without the permit, and noted that a motion to approve could include language calling for more dissemination of information to the public. Collings said that ADWR had indicated that they wanted a contract in place for a cloud seeding operator as a condition of issuing the permit. Craig McFarland

motioned to enter into a contract with SOAR for cloud seeding, and for putting together more information for the public to be distributed to the municipalities. Stephen Miller seconded the motion. The motion was approved 8-1 **AYE - CAMPBELL, COLLINGS, EATON, HARTMAN, MARSH, McEACHERN, McFARLAND, MILLER. NAY – MALEWITZ.**

PCWAA BUDGET, FY26:

Bill Collings asked Joe Singleton to brief members on the changes in the FY 26 budget. Singleton said that several areas were color highlighted on the proposed budget, drawing the group's attention to an increase in the revenue section, which he said represented the second part of an increase to member contributions that was voted in the previous year. He noted the large increase in the bonding section, which he said was to cover increases to the estimate of PCWAA's share of the construction costs for the Bartlett Dam Modification. Singleton noted others changes, including an inflation adjustment to the Executive Director expense and an increase to the cost for membership on the Bartlett Lake Modification Group Steering Committee. The adjustment to cost of the Bartlett partners was to cover a cost increase of \$288,000 being assessed to the Steering Committee members (like PCWAA) over a two-year period. Singleton said that unlighted budget line items represented revenues or expenses continuing at the same levels as in the current PCWAA budget. Craig McFarland asked for a copy of what next year's membership dues would be, as many municipalities were putting their budgets together right now. Stephen Miller moved to approve the draft FY 2026 budget as presented. Craig McFarland seconded the motion, which carried 9-0.

BARTLETT DAM MODIFICATION / SCIF:

Bill Collings said that there had not been a meeting with the Bartlett Dam partners since the last Authority meeting, but that some of the partners had met with the Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District (BWCD) concerning BWCD claims against the Bartlett Dam modification project. Collings said that BWCD was asking for 9% of the partnership's yield from the project to satisfy their claims and other downstream claims against the project. Collings noted that BWCD would contact and quell any of the other downstream claims against the project as part of a proposed settlement.

Joe Singleton added that when they had met previously, BWCD had suggested 10% of yield for a settlement and made no mention of other possible downstream claims. Craig McFarland asked if BWCD intended to pay for their portion of the yield. Singleton and Collings said they were not proposing that, and that they wanted the partners to pay the entire cost. Collings said that BWCD was trying to schedule an additional meeting with Bartlett partners that were unable to attend the April meeting. He said that the Bartlett Dam Steering Committee would meet again on June 11, 2025.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Joe Singleton said that he had received most of the partnership funding for the current fiscal year. He said that funds from Florence, Coolidge and the 4th quarter of the Casa Grande contributions were still outstanding. Singleton said that he would send members a copy of what the funding request for the coming fiscal year would be.

Singleton told members that he and Chairman Collings had met with ADWR staff to discuss entering into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Department in order to facilitate ADWR approval of the PCWAA fund request. He said that a draft IGA asked about PCWAA activities that are tied back to PCWAA statutes, and therefore not asking for extraordinary things from the Authority. Singleton said that during the meeting, they had discussed the timing of the submittal of some information and what the Department would be using for review criteria. Singleton said that following the meeting ADWR would amend the draft agreement based on the meeting discussion. He added that he had invoiced the Department for \$200,000 for the current fiscal year after the meeting, telling members that he had been holding the invoice until after the meeting.

Singleton said that the Ag-to-Urban stakeholder group being run by the legislative Natural Resource chairs had met again in the Senate. He added that the ADWR group had not met on the Department's proposal in a while. He said that the Pinal GRD bill was still pending, and not one of the bills that the Governor had recently vetoed.

LOBBYIST REPORT:

Cheyenne Walsh of Compass Strategies told the Board that the pace of the legislature had slowed. She said that the House would be adjourned this week, and that the Senate was adjourned until May 28, 2025. She said that the PCWAA bill SB 1134 was ready for final read in the Senate. Walsh said that the bill could move through the remainder of the process quickly, so she was not alarmed that it had not passed yet. She said that she and Joe Singleton had spoken briefly to Patrick Adams, the Governor's Water Policy Advisor, and that he had indicated that the Governor was not troubled by the bill. Walsh said that although the larger group had not met recently, smaller groups of the "Ag-to-Urban" stakeholders were continuing to meet. She told members that Rep. Martinez's HB 2753 had been taken up in the Committee of the Whole, where the group removed the language that was added at the insistence of the Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, and passed the bill. Walsh said that the bill would now have to return to the House for concurrence of the changes.

Craig McFarland said that he had met with Rep. Martinez last week, and that she had said she would concur with the changes to HB 2753.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

There was no report from the Chair.

CALL TO THE AUTHORITY:

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

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

There was a call to the public. Mitch Basefsky of CAP said that the Colorado River conditions appeared to be deteriorating. He said that he expected the system to remain in Tier 1 shortage conditions for next year, but may be in a Tier 2 shortage in 2027. He said that the Upper Basin and Lower Basin states were continuing talks. Basefsky said that there would be a meeting of the Arizona Reconsultation Committee, likely June 17, 2025 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Keith Eaton asked if the new Presidential administration had taken a different posture on Colorado River issues. Basefsky said that the Trump administration had nominated someone to be the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for water and science who was a friend of CAP General Manager Brenda Burman. He said that he hoped that this might provide for a great voice on Lower Basin issues in the new administration. He added that there was still no nomination for a Commissioner for the Bureau of Reclamation.

NEXT MEETING DATE:


The next meeting will be held on June 10, 2025 at 7:00 a.m.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 a.m.

ATTEST:


William Collings, Chairman


Stephen Q. Miller, Secretary-Treasurer