

**MINUTES OF THE JUNE 15, 2015  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION OF YOLO COUNTY**

**1. CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair, Bill Marble.

Board members present:	Bill Marble - City of Woodland, Chair Cecilia Curry – City of Winters, WRA Vice-Chair Robb Davis – City of Davis Duane Chamberlain - Yolo County Jim Mayer - Yolo County Flood Control & WCD Sid England – University of California Davis
Alternate members present:	Tim O'Halloran – Yolo County Flood Control & WCD, WRA Treasurer Kurt Balasek – City of Winters William Kristhoff – City of West Sacramento Lewis Bair - Reclamation District 108 Donita Hendrix - Dunnigan Water District Jim Hilliard – City of Woodland
Associate members present:	Heather Nichols – Yolo County Resources Conservation District Nancy Ullrey – Cache Creek Conservancy
Member agencies absent:	Reclamation District 2035 (no Board appointed representative present)
Public & Agency Staff:	Elisa Sabatini - Yolo County, WRA Technical Committee Chair Todd Manley - Northern California Water Association (NCWA) Cindy Tuttle - Yolo County John Young – Yolo County Fred Ichtertz, Yolo County Housing Christine Crawford – Yolo County LAFCO Mike Hall – Reclamation District 2035 Betsy Marchand – Yocha DeHe Wintun Nation Kyle Lang – Reclamation District 537 and 1600 Grant Davids – Davids Engineering, Inc. Tim Busch – City of Woodland Monique Day – West Yost Associates Frank Sieferman – Yolo County Landowners Association Dave Pratt John McKean Lynnel Pollock C.K. Shewmaker Pat Murray

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** The Board motioned, seconded and unanimously approved the agenda as presented.

**3. PUBLIC FORUM:** Cindy Tuttle introduced Kyle Lang representing Reclamation District 1600 and 537. His family has been farming the upper and lower Elkhorn areas for many years. Bill Marble inquired whether Mike Hall was the designated alternate for RD 2035, since Bob Thomas was unable to attend. Mike is not the appointed alternate. Bill asked Mike to inform RD 2035 that an alternate representative should be assigned to the WRA Board. Nancy Ullrey introduced herself as the new Executive Director for the Cache Creek Conservancy. Christine Crawford also introduced herself from Yolo County LAFCO.

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**4. CONSENT ITEMS:** The Board motioned, seconded and unanimously approved the consent items.

- a. Approved minutes: March 9, 2015 Board meeting
- b. Received minutes of Executive Committee (EC): 2/18, 4/6, 5/4/15
- c. Received minutes of Technical Committee (TC): 3/5, 4/2, 5/7/15
- d. Received financial reports: March, April, May 2015
- e. Approved Associate Membership request from the Yolo County Farm Bureau
- f. Approved annual Board meeting schedule for 2016: 1/11, 3/14, 6/20, 9/19, and 11/14/16
- g. Approved FY2014-2015 Budget Amendment #2
- h. Received FY2014-15 WRA Accomplishments summary
- i. Adopted FY2015-16 WRA Operating Budget

**5. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- a. Report from the WRA Chair: Chair Marble brought everyone's attention to the correspondence sent in support of legislation in Item 5b.
- b. Correspondence Sent: Support letters for AB 568, HR 1060 and Proposition 1 watershed restoration project grant funding.

**6. UPDATE ON WATER LEGISLATION & REGULATORY ISSUES**

- a. Delta Update: Cindy Tuttle gave a short Delta update. Earlier this year the Governor unveiled a new dual approach to improving water conveyance and ecosystem health in the Delta with two projects named California WaterFix and California EcoRestore. The dual projects are an alteration of what was formally known as the BDCP. This new approach no longer seeks a 50-year permit, but would upgrade Delta conveyance and restore habitat through separate permitting processes. She noted that EcoRestore does not include mitigation for conveyance. The Governor appointed David Okita (retired Solano County Water Agency general manager) to oversee the EcoRestore habitat restoration and streamline the project permitting process. Cindy answered questions.
- b. Legislation and Regulatory Update: Todd Manley, Northern California Water Association, reported that drought is dominating discussions in the State legislature, but June is also budget time. In the State budget this year there is \$21.3 million from Proposition 1 for Local Groundwater Assistance grants. NCWA has been pushing to switch this to general funds, otherwise it will likely be a year before funding is released due to the nature of Proposition 1 criteria. Todd reported on a series of budget trailer bill introduced with the intent of addressing drought issues. One is proposing increased monitoring and reporting requirements for anyone diverting 10 acre-feet or more. They would be required to install a metering device and report that information to the SWRCB. Most of the larger diverters are already metering, so this would be impacting the smaller diverters. Another bill proposes expanding the SWRCB Division of Water Rights fees that water right holders pay every year to include funding new activities, such as enhancing in-stream flows and SWRCB positions to address the Delta water quality control plan. Water rights holders would have to pay an additional several million dollars to cover these new costs. NCWA gave the SWRCB considerable push back on these new fees that should hopefully be removed. A positive trailer bill would prioritize funding for high priority fish screen projects, such as RD 2035's project. Todd thanked everyone for their letters of support for AB 568 (expanding RD108's hydropower authorities) which is now in the Senate committee. In the Federal budget, Todd summarized pending legislation and funding related to groundwater, fish screens and the drought.

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Todd discussed how Sacramento Valley water suppliers are being impacted by curtailments and distributed a handout that illustrated the percentages throughout the North State area.

<http://www.norcalwater.org/2015/06/19/planning-for-a-dry-year-in-the-north-state/>

Chair Marble asked about the impacts of the SWRCB curtailment notices. Todd, Tim O'Halloran and Lewis Bair summarized impacts locally.

**7. WRA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE, Elisa Sabatini, Committee Chair**

- a. *Technical Committee (TC) Activities and Westside IRWMP Update* – Elisa reported that the TC extended the deadline for submitting project proposals for the FY2015-16 project fund budget. The TC will be reviewing all proposals at their July meeting and will be presenting recommendations for allocation to the Board in September.

As far as the Westside IRWM activities, Solano and Napa counties are preparing an application for 2015 IRWM Implementation grant funding. Yolo and Lake will not be seeking funding in this final round of Proposition 84 funding.

Lewis Bair, Reclamation District 108 gave a short update on the status of the Sites Reservoir Project. He gave a historical summary of this off-stream storage project located west of Maxwell. The project options include a small (1.3 million acre-ft) and large (1.8 million acre-ft) reservoir. Project cost is about \$3-4 billion depending on the size of the reservoir and other features selected to build. The Water Bond that was passed provided \$2.7 billion to pay for public benefits from storage projects. The Sites Project work plan is targeting to utilize these public benefit funds for construction. The goal is to submit an application package to the California Water Commission by the end of next year. Lewis explained how this could insulate Northern California water rights while benefiting the environment/fish and hopefully taking pressure off the existing water rights. DWR is currently leading the Project's CEQA process and the Bureau of Reclamation is the Federal NEPA lead. The Sites Project JPA has formally asked DWR if they could become the CEQA lead and are awaiting a response. A signed MOU between Sites JPA and the Bureau has been executed for the JPA to become a cooperative agency. The Bureau will cooperate with the JPA to advance joint environmental documents and a feasibility study for the Project. The two counties where the Project resides are on the JPA Board, Glenn and Colusa. They are assisting with public outreach and education to local landowners about the Project. The JPA began meeting with "priority one" investors, but has paused that activity while recruiting for a general manager. Discussions are focusing on how to reformulate the Board's purpose as they shift from project advocate to the \$3-4 million task of preparing a work plan for the California Water Commission. Lewis answered questions. Project related websites: <http://www.sitesjpa.net/index.php> and [http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nodos/docs/07-11-NODOS-project\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nodos/docs/07-11-NODOS-project_factsheet.pdf)

**8. The "YEAR of GROUNDWATER", Tim O'Halloran, Yolo County Flood Control & WCD**

- a. *Groundwater Legislation:* Tim gave an update on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) as we move forward with the formation of a local Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). Discussions with neighboring counties regarding collaboration and management of the four sub-basins within Yolo County are on-going. Tim and Elisa's recent focus has been collaborating with Colusa agencies. Kearns & West will be facilitating a GSA workshop in Colusa in a few weeks that Tim will be attending. Dunnigan Water District has filed for GSA status with DWR, but they are agreeable to engage in the WRA's GSA formation process and SGMA planning.

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Tim has also been participating in DWR's Practitioner's Advisory Panel (PAP) by invitation. The PAP is a statewide group of water managers/stakeholders that will implement SGMA in their respective basins. A series of meetings are scheduled to provide input to DWR.

- c. Approve application to DWR for facilitation support services: Tim referred the Board to the Committee Report in the agenda packet regarding WRA's DWR application for facilitation support services. The SOQ process initiated by the WRA was put on hold as we investigated other State funding sources. The WRA became aware of other State funding options after receiving the seven SOQ solicitations. Tim was unsure of the exact timing of DWR's funding process. Elisa summarized WRA's application, which is for in-kind facilitation support services from DWR. We are requesting 30 months of facilitation that will be divided into two parts. Part one will be for GSA formation and part two is for 18 months of assistance to draft the GSP. The WRA specifically requested that DWR engage in a discussion with us to contract with one of the facilitators that responded to our request for SOQ. The YCFB is completely in support of the WRA's application and process. The Board motioned, seconded and unanimously approved the WRA's application to the CA Department of Water Resources to request facilitation support services for SGMA implementation.

- 9. LAND USE TRENDS and IMPACT ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT in YOLO COUNTY,** Grant Davids, Davids Engineering's purpose for today's presentation is to build awareness of the changing land and water use in the Sacramento Valley and Yolo County. He is also building awareness of remote sensing technology and its increased usage in the private sector and by federal agencies. For the record, Grant noted that the information he is sharing today is an "in-house" investigation and has not been formally peer reviewed, but the results have been widely shared and validated by other data. Sacramento Valley has experienced expanded irrigated areas; some development of previously dry land and less summer idling in irrigated areas. There has been an increase in proportion of permanent crops and the preference is to use a groundwater source, even when surface water is available. He illustrated some statistics on almond acreage growth from 1996 to 2014 as an indication of changes.

Some of the basic questions asked for this data gathering investigation were:

- How much, where and when is the irrigated area expanding?
- Is vegetation intensity increasing?
- What are the implications to water consumption?

DWR conducts the most detailed land use surveys; however this useful information is very dated as he demonstrated in a chart of DWR's surveys by county and year. Current information availability is one of challenges to conducting a regional investigation. One program that has provided an additional set of information since the mid-1980s is NASA's Landsat. It conducts remote sensing of the earth's radiation in a high-resolution image. One "image" covers almost the entire Sacramento Valley. Remote sensing measures the consumptive water use as a Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI). Basically the higher the NDVI number, the greener the plant, the lower the number indicates lower plant growth activity. David Engineering's report analysis used the NDVI as an analytic rationale. If the land surface is green in mid-summer that means it's being irrigated and the more water being used. This information was verified by on-site ground visits to select locations. Grant illustrated the extent of the Sacramento Valley area that was analyzed with a map that covered portions of 11 counties. He then illustrated the results of the valley-wide data gathered in a graph

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indexed by year (1985-2014), irrigated acreage (millions) and the hydrologic year type (wet, dry, above/below normal, critical). The data represented the trends in three periods.

- 1985-1994: depressed commodity prices, gov't PIK(Payment-in-Kind) program established, drought conditions
- 1995-2008: relatively stable economic and water supply conditions
- 2009-2014: strong markets, expanded cropping, 2014 drought conditions

Grant further discussed several different ways that the water using area trend data can be interpreted. He summarized with the following valley-wide observations: Sacramento Valley farmers are doing a great job, about 200,000 irrigated acres were added between 2007 and 2003 (11% increase), the greenness of irrigated areas is 16% higher since the 1980s, and both factors indicate increased water consumption annually.

Next Grant discussed water use data specific to Yolo County land use. The trends in Yolo County are similar to those being experienced valley-wide. He illustrated the increase in almond acreage over a 17 year period demonstrating the good economic use of what had been considered dry land pasture that is mostly being irrigated by groundwater. Grant explained a couple of graphs detailing the Yolo County water using area by water supplier and relative to the 1985 data. Relative to the valley-wide average, Yolo County has proportionally been impacted harder by the drought in 2014, as Grant illustrated in a comparative table to 2013 data. A time-lapsed animation showed changes in mid-summer green vegetation from 1985 to 2015. He explained how these trends relate to permanent crop growth, crop type and water use intensity. Grant summarized the Yolo county data observations:

- 14 % increase in irrigated acres between 2009 and 2013
- 11% higher greenness of irrigated area since 1980s
- Potential increased water consumption annually when crops mature (100,000 AF)
- Large remaining potential for intensified, irrigated land use in the county
- Yolo county more drought-affected relative to other parts of the Valley

In conclusion, Grant made the following comments and answered questions.

- As currently conducted, ground surveys are not adequate for tracking land and water use changes in a timely manner
- Remote sensing offers a timely, cost-effective alternative to ground surveys
- There are many forms and applications of remote sensing
- California State agencies are slow to adopt this technology

Grant's presentation is available on the WRA's website:

[http://www.yolowra.org/meeting\\_directors.html](http://www.yolowra.org/meeting_directors.html)

John Young, Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner, opened with the comment that water worldwide is plentiful; it is just not in the right form or the right location! John illustrated the increase in production acres of almonds compared to walnuts, olives and wine grapes in Yolo County from 2010 to 2014. Farmers are planting more almonds due to availability of water and profitability. He reviewed the crop value per acre. Wine grapes are showing a slight decline in profit, while almonds and walnuts are increasing. John gave a detailed summary of agricultural land values for walnuts, wine grapes, row crops and rangeland from 2010 to 2014 (reference his PPT posted on the WRA's website: [http://www.yolowra.org/meeting\\_directors.html](http://www.yolowra.org/meeting_directors.html).) The factor that increases land value is technology. If rangeland is enhanced with a 1000 ft. well and drip lines that can increase the potential value of that land from \$2,000 to \$25,000/acre. Often it is not local farmers converting this rangeland to orchards, such as almonds. It is outside investors purchasing land for the profitability

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factor. John gave some basic agricultural figures for a total perspective. There are 540,591 total agricultural acres in Yolo County. The total almond, grape, olive and walnut acres are 62,457 or 11.6% of the total agricultural acres (15% of all irrigated acres). The bigger question is whether the groundwater is sustainable in the areas where land is being converted. From an economic standpoint, high value crops are more desirable because they equal more jobs and higher property taxes for the County and cities. John answered questions. He noted that all Agricultural Commissioners have the GIS data for all crops in every county in the State of California for analysis purposes. John's presentation is posted on the WRA's website: [http://www.yolowra.org/meeting\\_directors.html](http://www.yolowra.org/meeting_directors.html)

**10. MEMBERS' REPORTS & FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS,** All of the WRA member agencies present gave short updates on their water and drought-related activities.

**11. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:** Monday, September 14, 2015 from 3-5 pm, Woodland Community & Senior Center.

**12. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Donna L. Gentile

Board Secretary & Administrative Coordinator

**ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS**

BDCP – Bay Delta Conservation Plan  
CEQA – California Environmental Quality Act  
DWR – California Department of Water Resources  
GSA – Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
GSP - Groundwater Sustainability Plan  
IRWMP – Integrated Regional Water Management Plan  
JPA – Joint Powers Authority  
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding  
NCWA – Northern California Water Association  
NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act  
SGMA – Sustainable Groundwater Management Act  
SOQ – Statement of Qualifications  
SWRCB – State Water Resources Control Board  
YCFB – Yolo County Farm Bureau