

MINUTES

Owens Valley Groundwater Authority

Board Members:

INDIAN CREEK-WESTRIDGE CSD	Sarah Peterson	BIG PINE CSD	BryAnna Vaughan
CITY OF BISHOP	Karen Kong	LONE PINE PAIUTE SHOSHONE TRIBE	Mel Joseph
COUNTY OF INYO	Scott Marcellin	OWENS VALLEY COMMITTEE	Mary Roper

February 27, 2025

The Owens Valley Groundwater Authority meeting was called to order at approximately 2:11 pm at the Inyo County Water Department, Independence, CA.

1. Pledge of allegiance

Mel Joseph led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Introductions

The Board introduced themselves with two members absent, BryAnna Vaughan and Mary Roper. They welcomed a new member, Sarah Peterson, with Indian Creek Westridge CSD.

3. Public Comment

The Chairperson opened the public comment period.

Mr. George Croll, General Manager of Indian Wells Valley Water District, introduced himself and provided a summary of his background.

Sally Manning stated the Big Pine Tribe has an issue with Fish Springs. She stated Fish Springs hatchery, run by CA Fish & Wildlife, gets its water from LADWP pumps, the pumps extract more water than the spring used to flow and as a result they maintain the water levels under the whole Big Pine wellfield much lower than normal which affects the water under the town and the reservation and Baker Creek area. She stated one of the places of cultural interest to the Tribe is a five acre pond located west of the hatchery, the pond fills when the water table is up and it has been dry for most of the past 50+ years that LADWP has been pumping for the hatchery, but in the past few years when LADWP spread water in the area, the pond filled. She stated they would like to get people interested in changing that mitigation project so they can have the pond which makes it more environmentally friendly for the Tribe.

4. Approval of minutes from the July 18, 2024 OVGA Board meeting

Motion to approve the July 18, 2024, minutes by Mel Joseph, seconded by Scott Marcellin. Motion passed with one abstention.

5. Election of OVGA Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for 2025-26

The Chairperson opened the elections for Chair and Vice Chairperson. The Board unanimously voted for Karen Kong as Chairperson and Sarah Peterson as Vice Chairperson. Motion passed.

6. Board Member Reports

Mel Joseph reported on the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe's 12th Annual Earth Day event on April 26, 2025, at the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone reservation in Lone Pine.

Sarah Peterson discussed Prop 218, rate increases to purchase meters to comply with Senate bill 552. She stated greater than 50% of property owners rejected the increase so it did not move forward. She stated the Indian Creek Westridge CSD has three new Board Members and elections were held for Board positions.

Karen Kong stated Bill 552 is for water meters and water pressure for hydrants. She stated the City of Bishop tests their fire hydrants on a regular basis. Karen Kong stated LAFCO is in charge of all community service districts to ensure they are operating correctly and are tasked with performing reviews of all the community service districts which is required to be done every five years. She stated some of the community services districts are asking the City of Bishop to take them over, which they will discuss at the Inyo LAFCO May meeting.

7. OVGA Staff Reports

a. Financial Report

Laura Piper provided the financial report and stated the OVGA cash balance is \$261,560.72 with revenue of \$5,974.31, total expenses of \$53,597.16 which included staff services and consultant costs.

b. Form 700 reminder

Dr. Alpert reminded the Board their 700 forms are due by April 1st.

8. Updating the Conflict of Interest Code

John Vallejo gave a brief background on the Conflict-of-Interest Code, the need for updates if necessary, and reporting to the state for the two year approval. Mel Joseph wished to discuss a conflict of interest with the Inyo County Water Department Water Director also being the OVGA Executive Director, and stated it was a concern with the Tribe. John Vallejo stated for Brown Act issues, this would not fall under this agenda item and could not be a discussion but could be on a future agenda. Sally Manning stated Mel Joseph's conflict of interest concern is a concern of hers also. Motion made by Scott Marcellin to approve the Conflict-of-Interest Code with a second by Sarah Peterson. One abstention. Motion passed.

9. Approval of Amendment #1 to the Executive Manager Staff Services Contract to update staff hourly rates

Dr. Alpert provided a brief update on Amendment #1 to the Executive Manager staff services contract considering the recent increases in the County in staff's hourly rates. Mel Joseph provided an in-depth background on the pumping on Owens Lake; the land ownership; LTWA; the County's influence; the County's influence on the OVGA Board; and shared conflicts of interest in the opinion of the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe and protection of the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe's groundwater. The Board and staff discussed this in detail. John Vallejo read to the Board a section of the JPA that stated it does not mandate that the Inyo County Water Director be the OVGA Executive Director. He also stated those were policies created and approved by the OVGA Board when creating the JPA. Sally Manning provided her view that the public was hopeful SGMA gave the locals a position to take control of the water for this region but then LADWP lands were adjudicated and she believes there is a conflict. The Chairperson stated she would like a workshop on what the OVGA can and can't do. BryAnna Vaughan wished to thank Mel Joseph for bringing the conflict of interest issue forward. She stated she was present during the discussion to choose the

Executive Director, someone in the area with water knowledge and that's why it ended up where it did. If the Board wishes to change, there will need to be discussion of who and where is the funding coming from. Kristen Stipanov stated she had some personal opinions on this, she would like John Vallejo's analysis with respect to Owens Lake, she believes there is a conflict also. Lynn Boulton stated she agreed there is a conflict and a bias and most of the thinking is from the Water Dept's perspective dealing with LADWP, an unconscious bias. Sarah Peterson thanked Mel Joseph for his discussion. The Chairperson made a motion to approve Amendment #1 to the Executive Manager/ Staff Services contract with a second by Sarah Peterson. Motion passed.

10. Presentation of draft 2025-26 OVGA budget and consideration of a final budget

Dr. Alpert provided a brief presentation on the 2025-26 OVGA budget and review with the Board. BryAnna stated in the past the CSD's have a very hard time coming up with the funding for the OVGA and she believes SGMA has opportunity to tax property owners to assist SGMA and she thinks that idea should be explored. Motion made by Scott Marcellin to approve the 2025-26 OVGA budget as presented with a second by Mel Joseph. Motion passed.

11. Fish Slough Sub-Basin GSP

Dr. Alpert introduced this item. She stated when the GSP was submitted, it was supposed to be submitted for both sub-basins (Owens Valley sub-basin & Fish Slough sub-basin). By oversight, only the Owens Valley sub-basin was submitted. She stated it is staff's intention to submit the GSP for the Fish Slough sub-basin opening a comment period, with annual reporting requirements. She reiterated we are a low priority basin and the majority of the Fish Slough sub-basin is in Mono County. Scott Marcellin stated Fish Slough is a historical tribal ground and needs to be protected. Sally Manning stated she wanted to remind the OVGA Board that the current LADWP pumping plan for the year does mention that LADWP is considering operating well 386 at least to test it. The well is located at the gravel pits at the base of Fish Slough. She stated when wells 385 and 386, two pumps installed in the 1980's, were turned on, they killed a huge amount of riparian and meadow vegetation on the south side of the river. She stated now LADWP wants to test the wells to see if they will cause an impact and the Fish Slough area has not been mitigated and has gotten worse. Lynn Boulton seconded everything Sally said about the damage done in the Fish Slough area and stated there was an MOU meeting regarding this in March. Kristen Stipanov stated she wasn't aware this was just a technical resubmission. She would like to see more coordination with Tri-Valley on this and she supported Sally and Lynn's previous comments. Lynn Boulton stated the NE spring at Fish Slough has no flow and is dry. Tim Moore stated he believes Lynn is referring to gauge 3208, it is already included in the GSP and he uploads data to DWR from that site. BryAnna Vaughan inquired if Tri-Valley is aware that we are submitting the GSP for the Fish Slough basin and what their stance is. Dr. Alpert stated she notified Tri-Valley and has not received any response to date. Lauren Kelley asked what the 75-day comment period provides, revisions to the GSP? John Vallejo stated it would have influence with DWR on whether they approve the GSP or not. The Board and staff discussed this item in detail. Scott Marcellin made a motion for staff to submit the Fish Slough sub-basin GSP with a second by Mel Joseph. Motion passed.

12. Ordinance 2022-01 Well Registration Program update

Tim Moore provided a PowerPoint presentation on the OVGA well registration & reporting program. He stated 14 of the 51 entities have submitted their information (39 wells). He stated he will provide the well registration list to Board Members.

13. Water Year 2023 OVGA Annual Report

Tim Moore provided a PowerPoint presentation on the 2023 OVGA Annual Report. He stated it is the second annual report, the report is through September 2023, reviewed the management areas, the sustainable management criteria status, and discussed the OVGA data management system upgrade. He recommended opening a 30-day public comment period, sharing the link to the OVGA annual report on the OVGA website and is working on the 2024

annual report. Lauren Kelley stated she likes the maps. Motion made by Scott Marcellin to approve the 2023 Annual Report as written with a second by Sarah Peterson. Motion passed.

14. Meeting schedule

The Board and staff discussed a future meeting with three items, a presentation from Mel Joseph regarding a workshop on conflict of interest, review of annual report public comments, and approval of February 27, 2025, minutes. The meeting will be scheduled for the first week of June or later at a date to be determined. BryAnna asked for the additional agenda item to discuss staffing for the OVGA, costs, etc. and will we impose fees on noncompliance for the well reporting, just discussion, not an action item. Kristen Stipanov asked for minutes to be published sooner. BryAnna Vaughan stated the minutes cannot be published before the OVGA Board approves them and the meetings are infrequent, staff agreed.

15. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:14 pm.