

LAS POSAS BASIN POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, February 1, 2024, 3:00 P.M.

In Person:

Calleguas Municipal Water District, 2100 Olsen Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84816327542?pwd=Y-bN4zt674FOphU6wRyxXw9swYTqvA.9bNuXf3yWwBZyrae>

Webinar ID: 848 1632 7542

Passcode: 400774

NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Las Posas Basin Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) will hold a meeting at 3:00 P.M. on **Thursday, February 1, 2024**, in the Board Meeting Room of the Calleguas Municipal Water District and via Zoom.

AGENDA

A. Call to Order

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Roll Call

D. Agenda Review

E. Public Comments

F. PAC Member Comments

G. Regular Agenda

1. Approve the Minutes of the January 18, 2024 Meeting

2. Recommendation letter on Assessment and Budget Items

The PAC will discuss the attached draft recommendation letter to the Watermaster concerning collection of the annual assessments.

3. PAC Administrator and TAC recruitment

The ad hoc nominating committee has completed initial interviews to review candidates for the Technical Advisory Committee. The committee chair, Rob Grether, will provide a brief update on progress to date and the PAC will discuss the interview process.

4. Closed Session – Public Employee Appointment

Pursuant to California Government Code 54957, regarding the appointment of consultants to the Technical Advisory Committee, the PAC will enter into closed session.

H. Future Agenda Items

This is an opportunity for PAC members to present items for consideration on future committee agendas.

I. Adjourn

LAS POSAS VALLEY BASIN POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the January 18, 2024 Meeting

The Las Posas Valley Basin Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) held a meeting at 3:00 P.M. on Thursday, January 18, 2024, in the Board Meeting Room of the Calleguas Municipal Water District Office and via Zoom.

- A. **Call to Order:** Chair Prichard called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.
- B. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- C. **Roll Call:** All PAC members were present as follows:
 - 1. Calleguas Municipal Water District - Ian Prichard (Chair)
 - 2. Zone Mutual Water Company - John Menne
 - 3. Ventura County Waterworks District Nos. 1 and 19 - Joseph Pope
 - 4. Commercial - Scott Meckstroth
 - 5. Watermaster (non-voting) – Farai Kaseke (via Zoom)
 - 6. East Las Posas Large Agriculture - David Schwabauer
 - 7. East Las Posas Small Agriculture - Josh Waters
 - 8. East Las Posas Mutual Water Company - Laurel Servin
 - 9. West Las Posas Large Agriculture - Rob Grether (Vice Chair)
 - 10. West Las Posas Small Agriculture - Richard Cavaletto
 - 11. West Las Posas Mutual Water Company - Steven Murata
- D. **Agenda Review:** There were no requested changes to the agenda.
- E. **Public Comments:** One member of the public stated that he had not received notification of this meeting nor of the Adjudication. He was referred to the Watermaster section on the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency website to get complete information on the Adjudication and to verify that his contact information is accurate.
- F. **PAC Member Comments:** There were no PAC member comments.
- G. **Regular Agenda**
 - 1. Approve the minutes of the December 21, 2023 meeting: Richard Cavaletto moved to approve the meeting minutes from the December 21, 2023 meeting. John Menne seconded the motion, which passed with unanimous consent.
 - 2. PAC scheduling: There was a proposal to consider changing the start time of the regularly scheduled PAC meetings to 9:00 A.M. due to some potential conflicts with board meetings of Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency and the Association of Water Agencies during certain months. After reviewing the pros and cons of changing the meeting start time, it was unanimously agreed that the meeting schedule would remain unchanged, and any relevant scheduling conflicts would be handled as needed. No changes will be made to the 2024 Regular Meetings calendar at this time.
 - 3. Committee Consultation – Water Year 2023/2024 Annual Allocation: In accordance with Section 4.2 of the LPV Adjudication Judgment (Judgment), the Watermaster requested consultation with the PAC prior to publishing the Annual Allocation Calculation for Water Year 2023/2024. Vice-Chair Grether explained that the schedule included 73 acre feet of Conditional Domestic Allocations that have not yet been granted. Vice-Chair Grether made a motion to advise the Watermaster that the schedule should be revised to reflect the adjusted numbers. David Schwabauer seconded the motion and it passed with unanimous consent. The PAC members

indicated that they would like to see the revised schedule before it is submitted to Watermaster and to the FCGMA board.

4. **Water Year 2023-2024 Watermaster Budget:** The PAC had a discussion of issues to consider prior to the upcoming review and comparison of the FCGMA and Watermaster budgets which will be performed this winter by the FCGMA Fiscal Committee. Several issues were raised by PAC members and by members of the public as follows:
 - a. When will the budget comparison be completed? This will affect the timing and amounts to be billed to the WMID owners. Watermaster stated that the budget will be completed sometime this winter and should be received by the PAC for review in March. Watermaster must present their proposed budget to the FCGMA board in April 2024.
 - b. Watermaster stated they will hire additional staff to perform its Watermaster duties. The PAC is interested to know how many employees and what the expected additional cost and hourly pay rate will be.
 - c. Several PAC members expressed concern about the billing of the assessments to fund the Watermaster budget. It was suggested by multiple PAC members that the Watermaster should perform the billing and collection of the assessments, and not the mutual water companies. It was determined that the language in Section 4.7.1 of the Judgment is somewhat unclear on this issue.
 - d. Chair Prichard agreed to prepare a letter from the PAC to the Watermaster proposing the PAC's suggested timing of the assessment payments, the proposed interpretation of Section 4.7.1 of the Judgment which would determine the assessment billing practices, and a request for accelerated completion of the Fiscal Committee's budget comparison. There was general consensus from all members of the PAC, and the letter will be presented and reviewed at the next PAC meeting on February 1.
5. **Judgment Important Dates:** There are multiple "important dates" listed in the Judgment which require the PAC and TAC to review and evaluate projects related to Basin optimization by certain dates. At a recent FCGMA board meeting, the timeline for the PAC to provide its approval for the Initial Basin Optimization Plan was shortened from 73 days, as provided in the Judgment, to 35 days. Chair Prichard made public comment at the January 12, 2024 special Watermaster meeting, where the Watermaster approved the Initial Basin Optimization Plan scope of work, requesting that the TAC and PAC be afforded the full 73 days provided by the Judgment. The PAC acknowledges that the formation of the PAC was delayed by the FCGMA's filing of two Motions to Stay, and the whole timeline was affected. The PAC will consider whether to request an updated schedule of all due dates; the Watermaster stated that the end due dates for delivery of studies and reports to regulators are not negotiable, and there is little time to reschedule these projects.
6. **PAC Administrator and TAC recruitment:**
 - a. Seventeen candidates have expressed interest in serving on the TAC; this includes a mix of engineers and hydrogeologists. The nominating committee (previously referred to as the "hiring committee") has narrowed the list to six strong candidates who will be interviewed via Zoom by the nominating committee on Monday, January 22, 2024.
 - b. The finalists will be presented to the PAC for a panel-style second interview within the following few weeks.
 - c. Hiring recommendations for the TAC Administrator and two TAC representatives are anticipated to be presented to the Watermaster/FCGMA board on or before their board meeting on February 28, 2024.

- d. Recruitment for a permanent PAC Administrator is on hold until more information is available about the duties and the budget for this position.
- H. Future Agenda Items: No additional future agenda items were requested by PAC members.
- I. Adjourn: With no further business on the agenda, Chair Prichard adjourned the meeting at 4:46 P.M.

Submitted by Caroline Wesley

Gene West, Chair
Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

February XX, 2024

Chair West:

At its January 18, 2024 meeting, the Las Posas Valley Basin Watermaster Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) reviewed the January 2, 2024 committee consultation request from the Watermaster regarding Water Year (WY) 2023 Allocations. Please consider this letter the PAC's Recommendation Report regarding that consultation.

A review of the allocations revealed that the Watermaster inadvertently included 73 acre feet of Conditional Domestic Allocations in its calculation that, to the PAC's knowledge, have not yet been granted and should therefore be excluded from the calculation. The Conditional Domestic Allocations included were 24 acre feet to Hypericum, 24 acre feet to Butler Ranch, and 25 acre feet to Del Norte Water Company. Dr. Farai Kaseke, the Watermaster representative on the PAC, indicated that the Conditional Domestic Allocations would be excluded and that the Annual Allocations would be recalculated. The PAC is meeting again on February 1 and 15, 2024, and would appreciate an opportunity to review the corrections. Besides that, the PAC confirms that the methodology to calculate the Annual Allocations appeared correct.

In addition to reviewing the annual allocation calculation, the PAC discussed the timing and collection of the assessments. The PAC recommends billing the assessment in installments and billing each WMID directly.

The PAC recognizes that the FCGMA budget has been carrying Watermaster expenditures since work began in the wake of the Judgment execution in July 2023. PAC members and our constituents supported the Judgment and understand that the Watermaster Assessment is part and parcel to the Judgment. However, many of our constituents are very concerned about the timing of this new cost and the impact it will have on their operations' cashflow. Some operators anticipate needing to take out bridge loans to pay the assessment ahead of growing season. The PAC considers it reasonable for the Watermaster to be mindful of its cashflow and not incur costs well ahead when it collects assessments. To meet these objectives and keep things simple, the PAC recommends the Watermaster collect assessments in four equal quarterly installments.

For WY2023, given where we are in the calendar, the PAC recommends an initial assessment billing for all expenditures-to-date with subsequent billings at the third and fourth quarter of the WY (approximately April and July).

The PAC recognizes that the FCGMA Fiscal Committee intends to analyze the Watermaster budget in depth and understands that effort is slated to begin this winter. We hope the report on expenditures-to-date, which we assume is a simple report from County accounting, can precede that effort. We would welcome that information at the County's earliest convenience and would support billing the first installment of the assessment on that amount.

Regarding the method of billing, the PAC recommends the Watermaster bill individual allocation holders directly. The list of individual allocation holders is appended to the Judgment, and as the Watermaster is

ultimately responsible for any nonpayment of assessments anyway, it seems most efficient for the Watermaster to keep the entire billing process within its administrative structure.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Watermaster's January 2 committee consultation and offer these additional recommendations. We are at your service should you have any other questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ian Prichard, Chair
Las Posas Valley Basin Watermaster Policy Advisory Committee

DRAFT