Santos
753
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
OF THE TURLOCK IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Turlock, California
26 February 2019

The meeting of the Board of Directors of the Turlock Irrigation District was called to order at 5:30 p.m. in regular session on the 26th day of February 2019. Present were: Directors Rob Santos (Vice-President), Michael Frantz (Secretary), Joe Alamo and Ron Macedo, General Manager Casey Hashimoto and Executive Secretary to the Board Tami Wallenburg. Absent was: Director Charles Fernandes.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

MOTION APPROVING CONSENT CALENDAR

Moved by Director Macedo, seconded by Director Alamo, that the consent calendar consisting of the following be approved:

A. Minutes of the regular meeting of February 12, 2019 and the special meeting of February 19, 2019.
B. Demands against the District represented by check numbers 381234 to 381583, inclusive, in the amount of $18,876,495.86.

All voted in favor with none opposed (Director Fernandes was absent). The Vice-President declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Two members of the public asked questions regarding the State Water Boards decision on the SED and also what the District’s plans are for the amount of water currently in the Don Pedro reservoir due to the storm. Vice-President Rob Santos responded stating these questions would be answered during the upcoming presentations.

WATER REPORT

Utility Analyst-Hydrology Olivia Cramer reported on current water conditions and forecast. Accumulated precipitation measured at the three mountain stations in the Tuolumne River watershed from September 1, 2018 to present total 30.17 inches, or 122.4 percent of normal to date. Snow sensors show 116 percent of average when compared to April 1 of last year, the statewide average to date is showing 138 percent. San Francisco reservoirs contain 531,499 acre-feet and the Water Bank is at 570,000 acre-feet of credit. Don Pedro contains 1,674,585 acre-feet. Average combined releases are at 3,740 cubic feet per second with most going to the river. Computed natural flow is averaging 6,647 cfs, and Turlock Lake contains 24,829 acre-feet of water.
The weekly watershed report shows Don Pedro elevation at 800.5 feet, half a foot higher than the previous week.

Ms. Cramer then reviewed the precipitation forecast analysis. The analysis performed was for the time period of January 1, 2016 through February 19, 2019 for the Cherry Valley and Hetch Hetchy locations. She noted that the analysis was done with the assumption that observed data is representative of actual precipitation. Ms. Cramer reviewed several graphs comparing Forecast vs. Observed data and how the error percentages fluctuate depending on the different ratios with errors more common when there is less than one inch of precipitation. The analysis showed a pattern of slight over-forecasting in some areas as weather patterns can change within an hour and not just daily.

Several questions were asked from the public regarding the impact to Don Pedro elevations caused by back to back storms and if there were plans to open the spillway. Chief Hydrologist Wes Monier stated staff continues to implement short and long term planning in regards to releases. They began increasing flows the previous week in anticipation of the storms and rising rivers. Staff plans to continue the higher releases and then drop down with expectations of remaining a foot below flood zone. There are no plans to open the spillway at this time and staff will continue to monitor the forecast. Several members of the public asked questions regarding plans for future water storage, aquifer recharging, and communications with the Army Corp of Engineers. AGM Water Resources Tou Her responded stating Turlock Lake and the canal system were the only storage facility the District utilizes besides Don Pedro. He also noted there were no plans to recharge this year as the District does not have an active recharge program nor the facilities to do so. Director Santos commended Ms. Cramer on an excellent presentation.

UPDATE ON DON PEDRO RELICENSING/SED

Director of Water Resources & Regulatory Affairs Steve Boyd presented an update on the relicensing process for Don Pedro. The governing and regulatory agencies involved in the process include the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. and California Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) having the authority to issue the license for non-federal hydropower projects. FERC can renew licenses for a term of 30-50 years and must give equal consideration to developmental and non-developmental values. Section 401 of the Clean Water Act applies to hydropower project (re)licensing and requires the applicant to obtain certification from the state water quality agency. Utilizing scientific data combined with public/resource agency input, TID created the Tuolumne River Management Plan (TRMP) which was submitted to FERC. Once submitted, other agencies are then able to comment. An important issue to FERC is the recreational aspect of the river so a recommendation was made to improve the rafter take-out at the upper end of Wards Ferry Road. Other agencies desired more flow other than what was indicated in the plan, including the SWRCB who was already working on the Substitute Environmental Document (SED). The carry-over storage requirement of the SED removes operational flexibility and cuts water storage in Don Pedro by 50 percent. The SWRCB does not consider dry years in their SED requirement of 40 percent unimpaired flow which devastates our region in multiple dry years. Due to downstream diversions outside of the Districts control, TID will have to put more than 40 percent down the river to ensure that 40 percent is in the river 52 miles after initial releases. Several agencies and members of the public commented and submitted alternate plans during the SWRCB’s public hearing process but Phase 1 of the SED was ultimately approved by a 4-1 vote in 2018. A member from the public asked if predation was
ever considered by the SWRCB as being the main culprit of the low number of salmon making their way back up the river. Mr. Boyd stated a 2012 study confirmed over 90 percent of smolt are consumed by larger fish, mainly bass, so increasing flows is not going to fix the problem. Staff from TID, MID and CCSF (partners on the Tuolumne River) also presented their scientific study to federal agencies in Washington D.C. to help them understand the science is correct. The trip was considered a success in some areas and within weeks of the visit staff met with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFW) where all of the data from the TRMP document was unpacked and reviewed. Paul Souza of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife stated he believed the science we used would work but was opposed to the fish hatchery portion. Staff recommended an alternative habitat improvement plan on the Tuolumne and Mr. Souza supported that concept. The USFW worked with District staff to create a plan to manage spill water and improve conditions for fish, and once finalized the USFW submitted a letter of support to FERC stating the Districts TRMP plan was acceptable. Governor Brown then appointed Chuck Bonham to work with parties interested in voluntary settlements agreements. The District’s TRMP plan was presented to the SWRCB but they were hesitant to adopt it based on the predation plan. One member of the SWRCB, Joaquin Esquivel, felt the plan had some merit and recommended an amendment to the original vote. The amendment included District staff assisting the California Natural Resources Agency in completing a Delta watershed-wide agreement by March 2019, and then to incorporate that agreement as an alternative for a future, comprehensive Bay-Delta Plan update by December 2019. Mr. Boyd then reviewed the status of the lawsuit filed against the SWRCB by the San Joaquin Tributaries Authority on behalf of the TID, Oakdale Irrigation District, South San Joaquin Irrigation District and the City and County of San Francisco and provided website information on where the public can keep up to date on both the relicensing process and the SED. FERC will also hold public meetings to receive comments on the recently released Draft Environmental Impact Study scheduled for Tuesday, March 26th from 1:00-4:00 p.m. and 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the Double Tree Hotel in Modesto. Members of the public asked questions regarding the newly appointed chair of the SWRCB and if the District felt optimistic with the new appointments. Mr. Boyd stated he felt the attitude in Sacramento was changing and although the process has been frustrating, he said progress has been made and remains hopeful. He emphasized that although farmers and ranchers see the impact of low water years quicker than others, this topic impacts everyone in the region. A member of the public commended the TID Board and staff for the immense amount of work put into protecting water rights for the central valley.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Director Frantz, seconded by Director Macedo, that the regular meeting of the Board of Directors be adjourned.

All voted in favor with none opposed (Director Fernandes was absent). The Vice-President declared the motion carried.

Tami Wallenburg
Executive Secretary to the Board of Directors