ACWA JPIA Elects Four Executive Committee Members

ACWA News, 06/14/23

On May 8, 2023, ACWA JPIA, a risk pool of California water agencies, elected four Executive Committee members during the Spring 2023 Board meeting.

ACWA JPIA is member-owned, member-governed, and member-driven. The organization is governed by the Board of Directors, composed of one representative from each member agency. The JPIA's Board of Directors elects eight members of the Executive Committee to four-year terms. The ninth position is held by the Vice President of the Association of California Water Agencies, as an ex officio member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee plays a crucial role in the direction of the organization & setting policies that govern one of the largest risk pools in the United States. As a special district, the JPIA's formation and operation, including the Executive Committee, are subject to the provisions of the California Government Code.

During the election, the twelve nominated candidates addressed the JPIA's Board of Directors, describing their backgrounds and experience. Once votes were cast and the votes counted, three new representatives and one incumbent were elected to the

Executive Committee:
- The new members of the executive committee included:
- Szu Pei Lu-Yang, Rowland Water District
- Scott Ratterman, Calaveras County Water District
- David Wheaton, Citrus Heights Water District

The incumbent re-elected to the executive committee was:

- Bruce Rupp, Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District

The JPIA would like to thank all candidates for their commitment to the JPIA and especially thank outgoing Executive Committee member, Fred R. Bockmiller, PE of Mesa Water, for his dedicated years of service.

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Sacramento, Yolo, San Joaquin Communities Brace As Newsom's Plan To Dismantle Environmental Protections Comes Down To The Voting Wire

Sacramento News & Review, June 14, 2023

On June 8, the California Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee held a hearing about new proposals that conservationists say would "gut" the California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA, and other environmental laws at the behest of Governor Gavin Newsom, who wants to include such measures as a package of trailer bills attached to the state budget that must be completed by Thursday.

Newsom's efforts have spurred outrage from environmental justice and fishing groups, along with opposition from both Democratic and Republican legislators. On June 3, over 100 organizations sent a letter to the governor urging him not to weaken CEQA and other protections.

Newsom Administration officials at the hearing claimed the last-minute proposals were urgent, requiring the Legislature to act upon them before June 15. They asserted that California "will risk funding for critical infrastructure like safe drinking water and clean energy" if Newsom is denied.

"The proposals that the Governor brings forward, we don't bring forward lightly into the budget process but because we have to take action now," said California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot. "It is reasonable for us to expect that the more punishing drought is just around the corner or the more damaging flood or the more destructive wildfire. From our perspective, this isn't the case of reforming our systems over years or months, the urgency we bring to this is weeks."

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Chuck Bonham echoed that.

"Whether it's housing, whether it's transportation, whether it's public works, whether it's critical water infrastructure, whether it's renewable energy – almost all of that is going to run through our department for some permitting purpose," Bonham testified. "Every day we delay permitting renewable energy projects is compounding our ability to achieve our goals."

Administration officials and bill proponents also claimed that the legislative package would help create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

"Over the next decade, the state will have the opportunity to invest $180 billion over the next 10-years and create as many as 400,000 jobs across the state – a level of construction and investment not seen since the Governor Pat Brown era," argued Gayle Miller, Senior Counselor to the Governor on Infrastructure and Clean Energy Finance. "These bills will in fact make a difference as to the timing and delivery of projects—we have seen the broadband planning and delivery decrease from 33 to 11 months by implementing many of the proposals you will see here today."

However, legislators and representatives of a large coalition of environmental justice, conservation and public interest groups slammed the attempt to avoid the normal legislation process under the guise of "urgency" and "creating jobs."

Most of the state senators – and all of the representatives of public interest groups – who testified opposed the governor's package of budget trailers aimed at CEQA, while water contractors and corporate agribusiness groups, construction trade unions and the building industry argued in favor of them.

State Senator Brian Dahle emphasized that the future of Californians is on the line "for the environment, our businesses, and future generations."

"We've set goals without a plan," Dahle testified. "We should never do policy based on money in a pot. We are setting ourselves for failure when we don't include the public and we don't have a plan for where we want to go. We cannot get this wrong."

As SN&R previously reported, many California environmentalists have called Newsom's proposal a thinly veiled run-around of the laws that would prevent him from building the embattled Delta Tunnel, a project that opponents have long warned will have devastating effects on communities, farms, businesses and eco-systems in Sacramento, Yolo and San Joaquin counties. During the hearing, State Senator Susan Eggman alluded to that, expressing extreme disappointment about the Governor's "infrastructure" proposals and reminding the committee of the cost of the Delta tunnel specifically. Eggman told her colleagues that the State Water Board needs to finish the Bay-Delta Plan before permitting for the tunnel can even be considered.

"It's disrespectful to all the work we've done to participate in the process," Eggman countered. "The tunnel will have a huge impact on Delta residents and the flyway for birds and animals."

State Senator Mike McGuire said that there's "no way in hell" he could support the trailer bill to ram through the Delta Tunnel project without citizen and judicial oversight.

State Senator Monique Limón had a similar view, noting that it's starting to feel like the public is being "jammed" by design regarding Newsom's trailer bills.

"These changes will be very hard on environmental justice communities, especially when their voices can go unheard, or silenced," Limón stated. "Providing funding to impacted communities is key, but so is mitigating these impacts in the first place."

State Senator Alex Padilla agreed that the process to build the Delta tunnel by reducing CEQA review is the equivalent of having the public and law circumvented by design. Padilla added that the cost for expediency should never be the cost of our legislative process.

"We shouldn't accept the premise here that we're incapable of acting," Padilla warned. "It's more than disrespectful."

Barry Nelson of the Golden Gate Salmon Association brought the committee's attention to the wider problems embedded in Newsom's plan: Nelson highlighted the recent shutdown of salmon fishing on the ocean and rivers in California this year, stressing a

desperate need to protect regional salmon runs and waterways, which calls for rejecting Newsom's trailer bills.

Susan Jordan, California Coastal Protection Network, told the committee the proposals will have major impacts on marginalized communities, and they were not consulted.

"This is a pandora's box," Jordan said, "and these proposals are completely inappropriate and must be rejected."

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