

# **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

## **SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT JUNE 24, 2025**

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District was held on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the Buellton City Council Chambers, 140 West Highway 246, Buellton, California.

Directors Present: Robert Dunlap, Steve Jordan, Larry Lahr, and Brett Marymee

Director Present (teleconference): Philip Carpenter

Others Present (in-person): Bill Buelow, Frank Costa, Paeter Garcia, Randy Murphy, Amber Thompson, Steve Torigiani (Young Wooldridge), and Kristin Worthley

Others Present (teleconference): Brett Stroud (Young Wooldridge), and Theresa Jurotich (Raftelis)

### **1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

President Lahr called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Ms. Thompson called roll. Four Directors were present in person and one Director was present via teleconference, providing a quorum.

Director Carpenter attended the meeting via teleconference from Tower Bank House, Near Sawrey, Ambleside, LA22 0LF United Kingdom. No members of the public joined Director Carpenter at that location.

### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Lahr led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **3. ADDITIONS, IF ANY, TO THE AGENDA**

There were no additions to the agenda.

### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Kristin Wortley, on behalf of the City of Lompoc, thanked the Board for the delay in considering setting groundwater charges for Water Year 2025-2026. She invited the Board or staff to make a presentation to the City of Lompoc and contact City of Lompoc staff regarding the WMA GSA Loan Contribution Agreement.

### **5. CLOSED SESSION**

The Board convened in to Closed Session from 5:33 p.m. to 6:05 p.m. to discuss the following item:

- a. Conference with Legal Counsel – Pending Litigation (Gov. Code, § 54956.9, subd. (d)(1)): In the matter of Petition for Change of City of Solvang for Water Right Permit No. 15878 (Application A022423), which authorizes diversion of water from the Santa Ynez River (underflow) in Santa Barbara County, pending before the State Water Resources Control Board Office of Administrative Hearings.
- b. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation (Gov. Code, § 54956.9, subd. (d)(2)): Significant exposure to litigation (Three Matters).

**6. RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION / CLOSED SESSION REPORT**

At 6:05 p.m., the Board reconvened into Open Session. President Lahr reported no action was taken.

**7. Review and Consider the Rate Study Report by Raftelis and Adoption of Resolution No. 736 Making Findings and Determinations, Establishing Zones, Setting Rates and Levying a Groundwater Charge for Water Year 2025-2026**

Mr. Torigiani reported that three letters regarding the FYE 2026 Rate Study were received on June 17, 2025 from Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1, City of Solvang, and City of Lompoc. Staff and legal counsel reviewed the letters and prepared a response to comments in those letters. Mr. Buelow distributed a memorandum dated June 24, 2025 regarding Response to Comments on FYE 2026 Rate Study. Mr. Torigiani reviewed some of the responses. Ms. Jurotich, Raftelis, provided a presentation on the FYE 2026 Rate Study report.

Discussion followed. Public comments were made by Mr. Garcia and Mr. Murphy.

Director Jordan made a **MOTION** to adopt Resolution No. 723, Making Findings and Determinations, Establishing Zones, Setting Rates and Levying a Groundwater Charge for Water Year 2025-2026, with correction to the years on page 6 and correct any non-material typos. Director Marymee seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by the following Roll Call vote:

AYES, Directors: Carpenter, Dunlap, Jordan, Lahr, and Marymee  
 NOES, Directors: None  
 ABSENT, Directors: None

**8. CONSIDER REFUND REGARDING CORRECTED GROUNDWATER STATEMENT**

Director Lahr announced that he is the Trustee of the Trust for Buell Ranches, recused himself from the discussion, and left the meeting room.

Mr. Buelow reported on a refund request received from Rancho Jonata, Inc. regarding a meter reading error that caused a significant error in overreporting of groundwater production on the Rancho Jonata and total over payment of \$59,902.33. Discussion followed. Public comments were received.

Director Jordan made a **MOTION** to apply the over payment as credit to the June 2025 Groundwater Production Statements submitted for all Buell properties and refund the remainder of the over payment balance by check to Rancho Jonata. Director Dunlap seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0-1 by the following Roll Call vote:

AYES, Directors: Carpenter, Dunlap, Jordan, and Marymee  
NOES, Directors: None  
ABSENT, Directors: Lahr

**9. REPORTS, ACTS BY BOARD MEMBERS, QUESTIONS OF STAFF, STATUS REPORTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, OBSERVATIONS, AND OTHER MATTERS, AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS NOT REQUIRING ACTION**

Director Marymee reported the Urban Water Institute Conference is scheduled for August 20-22, 2025 in Mission Bay and that he plans to attend. Mr. Buelow provided additional information about the Urban Water Institute and that he also plans to attend the conference.

Director Marymee reported that the Southern California Water Coalition will have a quarterly meeting and lunch at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley on July 18, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**10. REQUESTS FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AGENDA**

There were no requests.

**11. NEXT REGULAR MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 16, 2025, 5:30 PM, AT BUELLTON CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 140 WEST HIGHWAY 246, BUELLTON, CALIFORNIA**

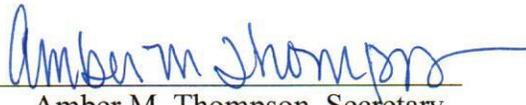
The next regular meeting of the Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 5:30 p.m., at the Buellton City Council Chambers, 140 West Highway 246, Buellton, California.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

President Lahr adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.



Larry Lahr, President



Amber M. Thompson, Secretary

**RESOLUTION NO. 736**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF  
THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
MAKING FINDINGS AND DETERMINATIONS, ESTABLISHING ZONES,  
SETTING RATES, AND LEVYING A GROUNDWATER CHARGE  
WITHIN THE DISTRICT FOR THE WATER YEAR 2025-2026**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Water Code section 75560, et seq., an engineering investigation and report (entitled Forty-Seventh Annual Engineering and Survey Report on Water Supply Conditions of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, A Summary of Findings for the Previous Water Year (2023-2024), Current Water Year (2024-2025), and Ensuing Water Year (2025-2026), dated March 3, 2025) was duly prepared by the District’s consulting engineer, Stetson Engineers, Inc. (hereinafter “Annual Report”), which Annual Report delivered to the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District’s (“District”) Secretary on or before the regular meeting of the District’s Board of Directors (“Board”) in March of 2025 as required by Water Code section 75570, and, as detailed herein below, the Annual Report was made available for public examination as required by law, submitted to and approved following a public hearing by the District’s Board at its April 23, 2025 meeting pursuant to Water Code section 75570 et seq., and provides specific factual data and other evidence to permit the District to make findings and determinations as required by law including Water Code section 75574; and

**WHEREAS**, the District duly noticed a public hearing pursuant to Water Code section 75570 et seq. and in accordance with Government Code section 6061, for the April 23, 2025 meeting of the District’s Board, which notice, among other information, provided notice of receipt of the Annual Report and hearing thereon and invited all operators of water-producing facilities within the District to examine such report and appear and submit evidence concerning the groundwater conditions and the surface water supplies of the District; and

**WHEREAS**, the Annual Report among other evidence presented at the April 23, 2025 hearing and meeting of the District’s Board was in accord with and in support of the continuation of such a groundwater charge on all water-producing facilities within the District to finance the District activities and purposes as set forth in Water Code section 74000 et seq., for the water year 2025-26; and

**WHEREAS**, evidence was also presented at said hearing and meeting regarding benefits of the District’s activities which different zones of the District enjoy; and

**WHEREAS**, continuation of such a charge is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act by Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(8); and

**WHEREAS**, the only comments submitted prior to or at said hearing and meeting regarding said Annual Report were submitted by the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1 (“Improvement District No. 1”) via email dated April 23, 2025 at 3:59 p.m., and those comments were addressed at the hearing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Annual Report was approved and accepted by the Board of Directors at said April 23, 2025, board meeting, with the approved version of the Annual Report being dated March 3, 2025, and filed with the District, which includes findings and determinations set forth on pages 10 and 11 of the Report; and

**WHEREAS**, after approval of the Annual Report, amended statements of groundwater production were filed with the District with regard to Zone D production, which were accounted for in connection with the findings and determinations required to be made pursuant to Water Code section 75574, which are specified below; and

**WHEREAS**, this District performs essential regulatory activities in managing, protecting, conserving, augmenting, replenishing, and enhancing the water supplies for users within the District, including groundwater resources within the District. The groundwater charge rates herein establish a reasonable relationship to each user’s burdens on or benefits of the District’s activities including those activities described on pages 2 through 4 of the Annual Report; and

**WHEREAS**, groundwater charges herein established are levied upon those electing to pump groundwater (as defined in Water Code section 75502, including, but not limited to, percolating groundwater and Santa Ynez River underflow and subsurface water that flows in known and definite channels) and to the extent of groundwater pumping, and such charges enable the District to perform its essential regulatory activities to manage, protect, conserve, replenish, augment, and enhance the water supplies for users within the District, including groundwater resources within the District; and

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary for the District to continue to provide these activities, which require concentrated, coordinated action on behalf of all District water users, including groundwater users within the District, who by their extraction of groundwater burden the underlying groundwater basin and benefit from the District’s services in a manner that non-payers do not, rather than to leave such activities to individuals who could neither afford nor effectively act to protect or augment their water resources as individuals; and

**WHEREAS**, the groundwater charges fund the continuation of groundwater management services performed by the District to mitigate the burdens imposed on the groundwater basin within the District by groundwater extractors for the benefits of the groundwater basin; and

**WHEREAS**, the District has commissioned preparation of a Rate Study Report by Raftelis to, among things, develop a financial plan and conduct a costs of service study for the District and demonstrate its groundwater charge rates are necessary to cover the reasonable costs of the District's activities and are allocated to persons extracting groundwater within the District in a manner that bears a fair or reasonable relationship to the benefits received from the District's activities consistent with Proposition 26 (California Constitution, Article 13C, § 1); and

**WHEREAS** Raftelis prepared a Rate Study Report dated June 5, 2025, which report was made available for public inspection and review, distributed to the members of the Board, posted on the District's website, and presented to, discussed with and considered by the District's Board of Directors at its meeting of June 24, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, such groundwater charges do not exceed the reasonable costs of the District carrying out its activities, and the manner in which the costs are allocated bears a fair or reasonable relationship to the payor's burden on or benefits received from the District's activities consistent with applicable law, including Proposition 26; and

**WHEREAS**, while property taxes can be used to finance a portion of the costs of the District's activities, existing limitations on property tax revenues which historically were used to finance District purposes preclude continuation of District activities without additional financing; and

**WHEREAS**, the District first implemented a groundwater charge prior to January 1, 1982, to implement the transition from the property taxation system in effect prior to June 1, 1978; and

**WHEREAS**, the groundwater charges are reasonably related to the District's activities, including regulatory and groundwater management services, and the need to maintain appropriate financial reserves for such purposes, and do not generate a surplus for general revenue purposes; and

**WHEREAS**, District staff has determined that continuation of groundwater charges is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act by Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(8); and

**WHEREAS**, this Board determines that it is in the best interest of the residents, landowners, and water users within the District, including persons operating ground water-producing facilities, that a groundwater charge and several zones be established within the District, and that a groundwater charge be levied at the rates provided for herein within those zones upon those persons who elect to produce groundwater from a water-producing facility within the District.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by this Board of Directors as follows:

1. The foregoing recitals of fact are true and correct;
2. The Board hereby approves the “Rate Study Report” prepared by Raftelis dated June 5, 2025;
3. The Board hereby makes the following findings and determinations pursuant to Water Code section 75574:
  - (a) The average annual overdraft for the immediate past ten (10) water years (July 2014-June 2024): 1,650 ± acre-feet;
  - (b) The estimated annual overdraft for the current (2024-25) water year (July 2024-June 2025): 4,900 ± acre-feet;
  - (c) The estimated annual overdraft for the ensuing (2025-26) water year (July 2025-June 2026): 1,200 ± acre-feet;
  - (d) The accumulated overdraft as of the last day of the preceding (2023-24) water year (June 30, 2025): 133,900 ± acre-feet in terms of accumulated dewatered storage. Accumulated overdraft as defined in Water Code Section 75505 is nominal, at this time;
  - (e) The estimated accumulated overdraft as of the last day of the current (2024-25) water year (June 30, 2025): 137,800 ± acre-feet in terms of accumulated dewatered storage. Accumulated overdraft as defined in Water Code 75505 is nominal, at this time;
  - (f) The estimated amount of agricultural and special irrigation water to be withdrawn from the groundwater supplies of the District for the ensuing (2025-26) water year (July 2025-June 2026): 29,125 acre-feet of agricultural water and 1,6505 acre-feet of special irrigation water;
  - (g) The estimated amount of water other than agricultural water or special irrigation water to be withdrawn from the groundwater supplies of the District for the

ensuing (2025-26) water year (July 2025-June 2026): approximately 11,290 acre-feet;

- (h) The estimated amount of water necessary for surface distribution for the ensuing (2025-26) water year (July 2025-June 2026): approximately 3,000 acre-feet scheduled to be delivered by the Central Coast Water Agency to contractors within the District;
- (i) The amount of water, which is necessary for the replenishment of the groundwater supplies of the District: 133,900 ± acre-feet to completely replenish accumulated dewatered storage;
- (j) The amount of water the District is obligated by contract to purchase: The District is not obligated by contract to purchase water.

4. The Board hereby establishes the following zones within the District:

Zone A: District portion of the Santa Ynez River alluvial channel from San Lucas Bridge downstream to the Lompoc Narrows, as depicted on Figure 2, Page 14, of the “Forty-Seventh Annual Engineering and Survey Report on Water Supply Conditions of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, A Summary of Findings for the Previous Water Year (2023-2024), Current Water Year (2024-2025), and Ensuing Water Year (2025-2026)” dated March 3, 2025, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Zone B: District portion of the Lompoc Plain, Lompoc Upland, and Lompoc Terrace groundwater subareas, as depicted on said Figure 2;

Zone C: All other portions of the District not included in Zones A, B, D, E, and F, as depicted on said Figure 2;

Zone D: District portion of the Buellton Upland subarea, as depicted on said Figure 2, including that portion of the principal groundwater aquifer in Zone D that underlies the alluvial aquifer in Zone A;

Zone E: District portion of the Santa Ynez Upland subarea, as depicted on said Figure 2;

Zone F: District portion of the Santa Rita Upland subarea, as depicted on said Figure 2;

5. A groundwater charge is hereby levied against all persons operating ground water-producing facilities, and the following rates are hereby established and applied to all

water produced from such facilities within each zone as shown below for the fiscal year 2025-26:

|                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Zone A (all water types) | \$22.00 per acre-foot |
| Zone B (all water types) | \$14.80 per acre-foot |
| Zone C (all water types) | \$9.20 per acre-foot  |
| Zone D (all water types) | \$9.20 per acre-foot  |
| Zone E (all water types) | \$9.20 per acre-foot  |
| Zone F (all water types) | \$9.20 per acre-foot  |

6. The Board hereby finds and determines, based on substantial evidence including information provided in the above-referenced Annual Report and Rate Study Report, that the rates set forth above bear a fair or reasonable relationship to the groundwater producers' benefits on, or burdens received from, the District's activities that are funded by these fees.
7. The Board hereby establishes the following methods to compute the amounts of water produced from a ground water-producing facility within the District:
  - (a) If the well production is metered by a flow meter, then the meter reading will be utilized.
  - (b) If the well is not metered, but has a separate electric meter, then production may be determined from electrical consumption and pump test results, if available. Annual pump tests shall be run whenever possible with the results of the most recent test used to verify and/or adjust meter readings.
  - (c) Production may be estimated based upon type of water use, estimated applied unit use, area irrigated, and types of crops grown on land, or number of connections or persons served, or type and quantity of units produced.
  - (d) Other criteria may be recommended by the District's engineer from time to time which will allow the Board to determine with reasonable accuracy the amount of water produced from a ground water-producing facility.
8. In accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(8), the Board hereby finds said groundwater charges are for the purposes set forth therein including meeting the District's operating expenses, purchasing or leasing supplies, materials or equipment, and meeting financial reserve needs and requirements, as demonstrated in the Rate Study Report.

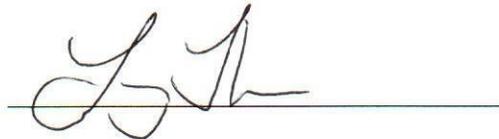
The foregoing resolution being on motion of Director Jordan, seconded by Director Marymee, was authorized by the following vote:

**AYES**, and in favor thereof, Directors: Carpenter, Dunlap, Jordan, Marymee, Lahr

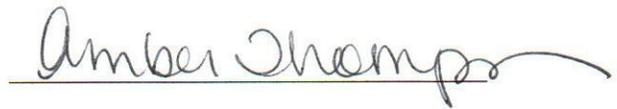
**NOES**, Directors: none

**ABSENT/ABSTAINING**, Directors: none

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing resolution is the resolution of said district as duly passed and adopted by said Board of Directors on the 24th of June 2025.



Larry Lahr, President



Amber M. Thompson, Secretary