PROVOST&PRITCHARD
CONSULTING GROUP

ADMINISTRATOR FOR SOUTH KERN & OLD RIVER MUTUAL WATER COMPANIES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING SUMMARY
NOVEMBER 12, 2024 AT 5:00 PM

OVERVIEW

The community engagement meeting for the South Kern Mutual Water Company (SKMWC) and Old River Mutual Water Company (ORMWC) was held on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 5:00 PM at the South Kern MWC well site (9820 Par St., Bakersfield, CA 93311). The meeting was also accessible via Zoom and was recorded for future viewing at admin.provostandpritchard.com/south-kern-old-river.

In-person attendees included Steve Spencer, Kristen Bitsberger, and Ryan Jensen from Provost & Pritchard (P&P), along with approximately eight residents—seven SKMWC customers and one ORMWC customer. Additional attendees via Zoom included Hamish Kallem (P&P), Amanda De Anda (P&P), Lindsay Sotomayor from the University of California, Davis – School of Law, and Robert Mullaney from the UC Davis Aoki Water Justice Clinic.

Kristen Bitsberger opened the meeting by introducing Provost & Pritchard and providing an overview of the Administrator Program. She outlined P&P's responsibilities and the roles of their subconsultants. Spanish translation was provided as needed by Ryan Jensen.

Kristen explained the SWRCB's Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) program. P&P was appointed by the SWRCB to manage the SKMWC and ORMWC systems after both failed to meet State regulations and operate sustainably.

WORK UPDATES

P&P reported that samples from both water systems indicate contaminants remain above the maximum levels allowed by the State Water Board. Boring was completed to locate the depth of distribution lines. Lead service line inventories were completed with no lead materials identified in either system. Self-Help Enterprises, the Technical Assistance (TA) Provider, has requested a second round of bottled water applications.

Regarding ORMWC, a line break caused by a vehicle accident prompted an assessment of the system. By October 21, the well pad was replaced, and vacuum breakers were installed at sample and tank sites. A flow meter was also installed to track water production. P&P is working to secure a property easement to improve access to the Old River well site.

P&P has reinstated billing for SKMWC customers and is in the process of paying invoices. There are new homes being built near the well site, requiring coordination regarding the property easement. Residents discussed potential solutions for accessing the well site.

Kristen explained the role of the TA Provider in relation to the Administrator Program. Sixty-percent plans and cost estimates have been submitted, which P&P reviewed and provided comments on. In September 2024, the team attempted to locate water pipelines but were unsuccessful due to the material and conditions of the pipes. One of the community members present provided information on locating the pipes, including an existing map. Additional potholing will occur once funding is approved.

P&P also provided updates on other ongoing plans under the Administrator Program, including the Emergency Response Plan (ERP), Governance Plan, Financial Management Plan (FMP), and the Community Accountability and Engagement Plan (CAEP). P&P emphasized the importance of community surveys, which

will guide communication efforts and ensure successful public engagement. P&P also introduced a new SMS form that residents can sign up for to receive text alerts about the water systems.

WATER QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE

Both systems still have contaminant levels above the maximum contaminant level (MCL) allowed by the SWRCB. Since 2018, SKMWC has been in violation of the MCL for uranium (20 ug/L) and 1,2,3-trichloropropane (TCP) (0.005 ug/L). Recent water quality sampling completed on October 3, 2024, showed SKMWC uranium levels at 26 ug/L. ORMWC has also been in violation of these MCLs since 2023, with uranium at 24 ug/L and TCP not detected in the most recent samples. These results are publicly available on the State Water Resources Control Board's website at: https://sdwis.waterboards.ca.gov/PDWW/.

P&P is prioritizing addressing these deficiencies and implementing a maintenance program. Both water systems are currently under a "Do Not Drink" order due to contaminant levels exceeding safe drinking water standards. A Boil Water Notice has not been issued, as boiling would concentrate contaminants.

Kristen reiterated the new SMS sign-up that would allow residents to receive text alerts for water outages and other emergencies. She emphasized that the SMS feature does not replace the emergency services number. Customers are advised to contact Golden State Water Company at 800-999-0403 or customerservice@gswater.com.

BILLING AND FINANCIAL UPDATES

An update on billing and water rates was provided. Customer accounts have been set up with GSWC, and both systems should be receiving billing. The current rates, set by the previous Board of Directors, are $50 per month for ORMWC and $75 per month for SKMWC. P&P has completed a rate study to assess the true cost of operations and the future rate with the City of Bakersfield. The State Water Board concluded that rates will not increase until consolidation with the City of Bakersfield. P&P has established individual bank accounts for both systems to manage payments and grant funding. Kristen reiterated that the rate will not change and that any other charges will be covered by grant funding.

MAJOR PROJECTS AND PLANS

An update on Technical Assistance was provided. Sacramento State University has been assigned as the Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) overseeing long-term consolidation, with Carollo Engineering as the engineering subcontractor. The UC Davis Aoki Water Justice Clinic will provide legal assistance for consolidation with the City of Bakersfield.

Recent developments for ORMWC include screen casing vents, flow meter, and vacuum breaker installations. An abandoned well was confirmed to be disconnected from the system. Residents were reminded not to touch the system infrastructure.

The Post-Administrator Plan is in progress, with remaining factors including funding and an outline for full consolidation, along with coordination with officials from Bakersfield. P&P will remain the Administrator through consolidation at the City's request. A draft of the Post-Admin Plan is set for completion by March 3, 2025.

FUTURE ENGAGEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

P&P encouraged attendees to remain engaged through future community meetings, surveys, email updates, and the Administrator Program website. The next community meeting is expected in February 2025. For continued public comment, the following contact information was provided: 559-449-2700 and southkernoldriver@ppeng.com.