PROVOST&PRITCHARD
CONSULTING GROUP

ADMINISTRATOR FOR SOUTH KERN & OLD RIVER MUTUAL WATER COMPANIES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING SUMMARY
MARCH 20, 2025 AT 5:30 PM

OVERVIEW

The community engagement meeting for the South Kern Mutual Water Company (SKMWC) and Old River Mutual Water Company (ORMWC) was held on Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the South Kern MWC well site (9820 Par St., Bakersfield, CA 93311). The meeting was originally scheduled for March 6, 2025, but was postponed due to rain.

In-person attendees included Hamish Kellam, Kristen Bitsberger, Amanda De Anda, and Alejandra Lopez Gonzalez from Provost & Pritchard (P&P), along with approximately eight residents – seven SKMWC customers and one ORMWC customer. Spanish translation was provided by Alejandra.

Hamish opened the meeting by introducing Provost & Pritchard and providing a brief overview of the Administrator Program. He outlined P&P's responsibilities and the roles of their subconsultants.

WATER SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Both systems continue to have contaminant levels exceeding the maximum contaminant levels (MCL) set by the SWRCB. SKMWC exceeds the MCL for Uranium (most recent samples recorded on January 2, 2025, at 24 µg/L) and 1,2,3-Trichloropropane (TCP) (most recent samples recorded on January 2, 2025, at 0.0091 mg/L). ORMWC exceeds the MCL for Uranium (most recent samples recorded on January 2, 2025, at 22 µg/L), while 1,2,3-TCP was within the MCL. However, 1,2,3-TCP remains a contaminant of concern due to historic fluctuations above and below the MCL. 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 operational deficiencies and has implemented a maintenance program. Both water systems remain under a "Do Not Drink" order due to contaminant levels exceeding safe drinking water standards. Hamish answered residents' questions regarding water quality and captured information of residents interested in bottled water services. Multiple households requested an increase in bottled water deliveries, potentially up to ten bottles per month, if permitted by the program. Hamish will forward this information to Self-Help Enterprises, the organization managing the bottled water program.

WORK UPDATES

For ORMWC, recent work included repairs to a main line break that occurred in a resident's backyard on Friday, January 24, 2025. Repairs were completed the same day. Power outages due to PG&E technical failures occurred on January 29, 2025, and February 7, 2025, with power restored the same day. Repeat bacteriological samples were taken and submitted to the lab for processing following the outages, as required by DDW. As part of planned maintenance, a service line will be re-buried behind the Los Amigos Market to prevent further damage from heavy vehicle traffic.

For SKMWC, the system experienced the same power outages as ORMWC. Two homes are currently having their permits reviewed by Kern County for construction of two residences near the South Kern well site. P&P intends to provide will-serve letters for the properties on behalf of SKMWC, with liability clauses and provisions included. An access easement for the well site is already in place.

BILLING AND FINANCIAL UPDATES

P&P completed a rate study to assess the true cost of operations and the projected future rates following consolidation with the City of Bakersfield. The SWRCB concluded that rates will not increase until consolidation is complete due to affordability concerns. P&P reiterated that their work is not funded by system operations and maintenance (O&M) funds.

MAJOR PROJECTS AND PLANS

A Post-Administrator Plan for each system was submitted to the SWRCB on March 3, 2025. P&P outlined details of the recommended consolidation project, "Alternative 1", to the community. This was one of four alternatives explored by the technical assistance (TA) engineering consultant, Carollo.

The water system service lines leading to homes will also be replaced in the consolidation project. Some residents raised concerns about homes with backyard connections. Hamish clarified that these connections will be relocated to the front of properties for ease of operations, and homeowners will be consulted individually during the transition. In order to have their service lateral funded by the SWRCB, each household will likely need to sign a release of liability for construction completed on their private property. This will be determined and negotiated closer to construction.

The project's next steps involve securing funding and coordinating with Bakersfield officials. At the City's request, P&P will continue to serve as the Administrator throughout the full duration of the consolidation process.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

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 to be held in June 2025. For continued public comment, residents may contact: (559) 449-2700 or southkernoldriver@ppeng.com.

P&P reiterated the new SMS sign-up would allow residents to receive text alerts for water outages and other emergencies. The SMS feature does not replace the emergency services number. For 24-hour assistance, customers are still advised to contact Golden State Water Company at (800) 999-0403 or customerservice@gswater.com.