

Minutes of the Casitas Municipal Water District  
Board Meeting Held  
January 23, 2008

A meeting of the Board of Directors was held January 23, 2008 at Casitas' Office, Oak View, California. Directors Word, Hicks, Handley, Kaiser and Baggerly were present. Also present were Steve Wickstrum, General Manager, Rebekah Vieira, Clerk of the Board, and Attorney, John Mathews. There were two staff members and nine members of the public in attendance. Director Word led the group in the flag salute.

1. Public comments.

Brian Brennan, City Councilmember for the City of Ventura announced he will be working as the liaison to Casitas. He asked for an open dialog for any concerns and commended the board for taking on the mussels and for community dialog with stakeholders. In addition he spoke regarding the Solar Challenge and the request for funding \$1,000 for a team from Buena High School to compete. He added that we want kids to understand the resource and understand the opportunity for jobs in this area. President Word added that Buena High School is outside of the district. It was suggested that Brian work with Ron Merckling to put the information on the agenda.

Director Handley arrived at 4:33 p.m.

David Wilson, resident of the City of Ventura and a Marine Biologist who is associated with Buena High School spoke briefly on Quagga mussels. He suggested that we set aside feelings on certain groups when we have to make a science based decision. He provided some new research on Quagga control for lakes that have them in place. He added that the state hired a panel of scientists a year ago and you are one of the only organizations that do any of the recommended things. He thanked the Board for their proactive stance and offered his services as a Marine Biologist.

2. Board of Director comments.

Director Hicks commented that is nice to see the canal running to keep the lake full.

3. Consent Agenda

APPROVED

- a. Minutes of the January 5, 2008 Board Meeting.
- b. Minutes of the January 9, 2008 Board Meeting.
- c. Minutes of the January 9, 2008 Special Meeting.

On the motion of Director Kaiser, seconded by Director Hicks and passed with Director Baggerly abstaining from b & c as he was not present, the consent agenda was approved.

4. Bills

APPROVED



conservation to keep us on track and it is the focus of this district to prepare for long term drought. It was an extremely dry year.

There was discussion regarding evaporation and safe yield with Mr. Wickstrum explaining that we are right on schedule. Larry Yuva asked if being close to the safe yield would affect new allocations. Mr. Wickstrum explained that there have not been very many more allocations and we have gone through our last issuance of allocations. Out of the 200 on the list had about 40 or 50 that came to the table and bought an allocation. Growth is slow in this area and we have not had that kind of demand. Safe Yield is a number with that model. As we go through time we will have years at 15,000 acre feet and we can swing to 24,000 acre feet.

On the motion of Director Kaiser, seconded by Director Baggerly and passed the Hydrology Report was approved.

7. Action Items

- a. Recommend scheduling of a special meeting to discuss the Quagga mussel issue and direct staff to determine date time and location of the meeting and to gather additional information for the special meeting.

APPROVED

President Word explained that because of the attendance at the last meeting and our citation from the fire department we need to address where and when the meeting will be held and what additional information that we might be getting or that we want staff to get and determine how much time to allocate for that. This is a vital issue that is coming before us and affects not just us, it affects the community, the city, other companies, lake users, water users, the rate payers and it will be aired fully before a decision is made. Our last meeting was to gather information and unfortunately it came out that it was the decision making meeting.

Brian Roney reported that since the last board meeting, the board directed staff to gather information on possible solutions and we begun gathering information from Met and two vendors that have cleaning machines. We also have information on new R & D on bacteria. The information is evolving. It will be presented in a PowerPoint fashion. Other issue is if there is a direction to pursue a machine we should visit the site and see it in operation to see if it is worth pursuing. They are fielding lots of calls and questions on this issue. Once the meeting is set we would like to do a press release and talk about what actions we are taking at the gate. Boating activity will be increasing in the next month.

Director Kaiser added we have to keep in mind the potential for invasion on multiple fronts with the Zebra mussel to the north and the Quagga to the South. Director Handley appreciated the PowerPoint presentation from Lake Mead and asked that a portion be incorporated into the presentation.

Director Baggerly added science here is paramount in whatever decision we make. Suggest that we have at the meeting Dr. Ted Grosholtz from UC Davis and Andrew Cohen who wrote the state action plan for Quagga Mussels in 2007. We would also like some calculations of the cost associated with Quagga mussels. We need to have a calculation of costs associated to the decline of the fishery and water quality, maintenance cost and what it would mean to the people of this district. President Word added we have talked about a lot of things. No boats, boats that are here, boats that can be stored here. We need to explore all of those before we could make a sound decision on what we are going to do. Director Kaiser added looking at the possibility of an expanded storage area. He asked about the protocols and procedures and if staff are prepared by manual or direction on what to do? Mr. Roney explained that a manual has not been developed and we are updating the training. We are discovering things we had not anticipated like a boat that has a built in ice chest that appeared to be a live well. Director Kaiser replied that a living document is better than no document. President Word added we need to establish procedures. Director Kaiser added procedures for zero tolerance. Does that relate to boats, float tubes, kayaks, etc. Staff needs to know what zero tolerance is.

Director Hicks asked Ron to determine figures from districts in the Midwest that are dealing with the problem. What is their Quagga budget for last year? Ron replied that there are many lakes in recreational facilities that are doing boat inspections, and they are paid for by boating fees and the states in the Midwest are working together.

Director Kaiser expressed his amazement that there has not been a declaration from the State of California. What is happening in the way of Federal legislators and what is Sacramento doing. Mr. Roney explained that at the Federal level nothing is happening. At the State level the governor determined an incident command system. Department of Fish & Game is the lead department, they passed a senate bill but have little funding and resources. Boating & Waterways have to defer to DFG. It is a mess; no one is taking a lead. Director Baggerly suggested that Brian Roney and Rob Weinerth use all of their influence with bass groups to come together and work constructively with this effort.

Director Handley had concerns about the effect the Quagga mussel could have on the treatment plant. Shell debris could cause problems from dead mussels. Mr. Wickstrum replied that is something we will try to put our hands around. All we can do is estimate what we can think of. President Word asked about the involvement of fisheries biologist. Mr. Wickstrum answered he had not been very involved at this point.

Gary Lumas, a retired police officer and fisherman thanked the board for doing something to prevent the infestation. We have a big bass fishery and it is known in Japan. We have several fishermen here and we want to maintain it as a big bass fishery. As a fisherman I will do whatever it takes and will cooperate

fully. Let's not do anything until the science comes to that conclusion. The neighboring lakes are waiting to see what you do. It will set the tone for everyone else. Get the studies in before we make a bad decision.

Larry Yuva stated that when the district first started discussing this he was impressed. Now you are discussing having a special meeting and I was disappointed. I sent a letter to the editor and when I went to the lake I was not impressed. I fish too. The thing is before you. Consider science and consider the rate payer. You have to deliver the water. Fishermen are secondary. There is no reason not to declare a temporary closing of the lake. Every day that ticks by you are risking infestation. The inspection is silly. It is ridiculous you have not taken the first step of closing the lake. Your job is to protect me the rate payer, not the fisherman, the scientist or businessman. I am opposed to paying for a wash machine and you spending money like that. Make the fishermen pay for that thing.

Ralph Steele residing at 1579 Orchard Drive addressed the Board. During the special meeting held on January 9, comments were made concerning potential impacts of the Quagga mussel on Lake Casitas and the water treatment and distribution system. You also heard from people who live outside the District who want to bring their boats here to go fishing. In addition, you heard from owners of boating and fishing business who don't want you to close the lake to outside boats. With reference to today's agenda action item #7 a. it is clear that you are going to consider directing staff to gather additional information for the forth coming special meeting concerning the impending Quagga mussel invasion. The comments that I would like to offer at this time are comprehensive and are intended to assist both staff and the Casitas Board of Directors in preparing their findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future action.

I would like to begin by trying to make several clear comparisons between the potential impacts of the Quagga mussel on people who live and work within the Casitas District and depend on a healthy lake and those who do not depend on it such as outside boaters. Before making the comparisons, I would just like to say that over 50 years ago local community leaders recognized that western Ventura County could no longer rely on local surface and groundwater. Subsequently, Congress authorized the Casitas Dam and later, in the mid-seventies, authorized purchasing the surrounding watershed. One reason for purchasing the watershed was to decrease the amount of nitrogen that was flowing into the lake from cattle manure. As some of you may recall, the nitrogen contributed significantly to blue-green algae blooms and a horrible odor and taste in the water. For reference, I was one of the county staff members that participated in the nitrogen impact studies conducted in the early seventies. Also, I have participated in many other surface and groundwater studies since then. To bring my historical review to a close, it is relevant to mention that if Quagga mussels become established in the lake that blue-green algae blooms could occur again – but the causes will be different.

Now, back to the comparisons. The lake was proposed, authorized, funded, and built to meet the needs of water for local residents, along with commercial industrial and agricultural uses. In contrast, recreational uses such as boating and fishing are considered beneficial uses, but they do not fall into the categories of needs that were used to support funding the Lake Casitas dam in the first place. The first comparison can be made related to cost because as the mussels establish colonies in intake pipes, valves, pumps, and the treatment facility, cost will increase by millions of dollars per year and these costs will have to be passed on to the District's customer but the boater won't have to pay the increased costs because they don't have to come through the entrance gate and pay increased fees at all.

For the second comparison, as increased costs are passed on to the District's customers, the impacts on irrigated agriculture could be so devastating that crops that have been marginal for years will finally be taken out of production but the boaters who are begging to be allowed in the lake won't have to worry because they are not local ranchers.

For a third comparison, some people have expressed a concern that even a temporary closure of the lake that would be intended to allow staff and the Board enough time to implement quarantine and decontamination procedures could negatively impact Lake Casitas' staff and local support businesses. However, if the mussels get established there might not be a need for any staff to serve boaters, fishermen and campers because recreationists usually do not visit waters that are clogged with algae nor do they tend to camp by waters that stink. But, the boaters who are begging to be allowed to keep using the lake as if the possibility of Quagga mussel contamination did not even exist won't have to worry because they don't have to come back to the lake after it is ruined.

For a fourth comparison, Quagga mussels will deplete the food chain, the big bass fishery will be lost, huge algae blooms will return as bad or worse than 30 years ago, the lake will stink and the water will taste bad. Oh, by the way, after this happens, the out of district boaters who are begging the Board not to close the lake now while it is still usable, will no longer come back after the lake is ruined because they don't have to come back.

For the fifth comparison, as the District's customers become aware of the full impacts of an infestation of Quagga mussels and that this invasion could have possibly been prevented by the Casitas Board taking prudent early action it is likely that the Board may be recalled. But, the boaters who are begging to be allowed in the lake just one more time won't have to worry because they are not going to be facing a recall vote.

For the sixth comparison, if the Quagga mussels become so prolific that they interfere with the lake's capability of meeting the fire flow water requirements adopted by the County Fire Department and the Fire Insurance industry, it is likely that fire insurance rates will increase but boaters don't have to

worry because they don't live within the District and won't have to pay higher local fire insurance rates.

For the seventh and last comparison, if Casitas can not continue to produce a reliable source of odor free water, as a result of the Quagga mussel being introduced, then it would be logical to assume that property values could fall dramatically and that litigation to recover costs, plus damages, might result but out of area boaters do not have to worry because with only a few exceptions they do not own local property.

In summary, to waste precious time listening to out of area boaters continuous pleadings to keep using the lake, while staff and the Board needs this vital time to find a failsafe solutions to prevent the Quagga mussel larva from getting into the lake, is really putting the cart before the horse. Even if all the boaters and fishermen pledged to provide monetary compensation for the tens of millions of dollars in increased costs that may be experienced by the District and its water users in increased operating costs there simple is no realistic replacement for the water supply that is stored in the lake. In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the Board adopt an emergency measure prohibiting the entry of any boat through the gate until suitable equipments is found for decontamination and it is tested and found 100% effective, or that a quarantine procedure is identified that is 100% effective. My point is to save the lake first and then allow outside boats back in only after effective decontamination and quarantine procedures have been proven totally effective in protecting the lake for all its vital local uses. After the lake has been protected then we can talk about boating and fishing.

Larry Elsure residing at 230 North Pueblo commented that he is an angler and a concerned member of the community and an American. After hearing from Mike Giusti and Ron Cervanka I felt I had a better understanding of what we are up against. The Quagga mussel is an enemy that affects water in California. We are faced with enemies. Men and women are ready to address the enemy and be victorious. They are properly trained and not fearful. This starts with information, what to look for, be more aware of what going on around us. We are at risk every day. If we live in fear none of us would leave our homes. What kind of life would that be? We have not become the most powerful nation living in fear. It is an enemy we need to defeat. This information is coming forth daily. 20 years ago did you think we would have cures for cancer? Protecting the watershed is everyone's concern. The Only true way to keep anything from entering the lake is to put a glass dome over it. More eyes out there the better chance to prevent Quagga and other substances from entering the lake. If you close the lake to day boat usage you are removing that many more troops from the front line. We are in battle. There are weapons to protect us. In closing, when you make your final decision do so not out of fear, with proper trained equipment and people you can defeat this enemy.

President Word stated the need to establish the date and place of the meeting. It was determined that the meeting would be either February 20<sup>th</sup> or

March 4<sup>th</sup> at a location to be announced. The meeting would start at 5:30 p.m. Mr. Wickstrum asked if there would be an action item on that agenda. Director Baggerly thought there should be the capability for an action.

On the motion of Director Handley, seconded by Director Hicks and passed, the meeting will be scheduled for either February 20<sup>th</sup> or March 4<sup>th</sup> and begin at 5:30 p.m. at a location to be determined.

- b. Recommend approval of a water billing adjustment to Mr. Van Der Kar.  
APPROVED

Mr. Van Der Kar brought this request to the board. He has some acreage on the Rincon area and he had a meter that ran fast. This is not a common occurrence. He sensed something was wrong. The meter ran 14% fast. We made a billing adjustment. Casitas Rates and Regulation allow for a billing adjustment for four months. Two things he felt should have been done. We have a plus or minus 5% they went to 5% did not take it to zero. I see no problem taking it to 0%. He wanted to go back farther than 4 months. We need to stick to the standard of the rates and regulations. I looked at a neighbor with an avocado ranch next door. Mr. Van Der Kar was using 30% less than the neighbor. I recommend giving him an adjustment for the 5% and go forward.

On the motion of Director Baggerly, seconded by Director Handley and passed the above recommendation was approved.

- c. Recommend approval of the weather based irrigation controller rebate program.  
APPROVED

On the motion of Director Baggerly, seconded by Director Kaiser and passed the above recommendation was approved.

- d. Resolution authorizing a grant for recreation irrigation upgrades.  
ADOPTED

Ron Merckling explained that this is a bureau grant with 50% match up to \$50,000. We are proposing irrigation upgrades at the recreation area.

The resolution was offered by Director Handley, seconded by Director Kaiser and passed by the following roll call vote:

AYES:	Directors:	Baggerly, Kaiser, Handley, Hicks, and Word
NOES:	Directors:	None
ABSENT:	Directors:	None

Resolution is numbered 08-02.



8. Information Items:

- a. Recreation Area Report for December, 2007.
- b. Fisheries Report for December, 2007.
- c. Monthly cost analysis for operation of Robles, fisheries and fish passage.
- d. Schedule of 2008 Committee Meetings.
- e. Letter from Michael Thames regarding the Quagga Mussel.
- f. News Articles of interest
- g. Investment Report

Director Hicks asked why camps were down. Mr. Roney explained that there were some cold spells that may have scared some customers. Mr. Wickstrum asked if it could be related to the increased fuel costs.

9. Closed Session

Public Employee Performance Evaluation (Govt. Code Sec. 54957)  
Title: General Manager

President Word moved the meeting to closed session per Government Code 54957 at 6:07 p.m. At 6:20 p.m. President Word moved the meeting back into open session stating the discussion in closed session was the performance evaluation of the General Manager and no specific action was taken. He then adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

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Secretary