

TUSCAN WATER DISTRICT
Board Meeting Minutes – March 18, 2026

DATE: March 18, 2026

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) Board Room, 326 Huss Drive, Chico, California 95928

Directors Present: Rich McGowan, Steve Koehnen, Rayme Antonowich, Andrew Mendonca, Bill Chance, Craig Knight, Brian Mori, James Paiva, Todd Turley

Staff Present: Tovey Giezentanner, General Manager; Joe Hughes, Legal Counsel (via remote video; departed following closed session)

Others Present: Joe Turner, Geosyntec; Mike van den Enden, Geosyntec; Kamie Loeser, Christina Buck, Joanne Kidd, Anne Dawson, Susan Schraeder, Jim Graydon

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

President McGowan called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. President McGowan led the Board and attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

President McGowan noted that Legal Counsel Hughes had joined remotely but would have limited availability and indicated that the Board would move to closed session once Counsel Hughes was prepared to participate.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes — February 18, 2026

The Board considered the minutes from the February 18, 2026 Board meeting for approval. Director McGowan identified one correction: the reference to Joe Connell should reflect his role as a past UC Cooperative Extension Service representative, not as the Agricultural Commissioner.

Action: Motion by Director Mori, seconded by Director Antonowich, to approve the February 18, 2026 Board meeting minutes as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Finances and Payment of Bills

Three invoices were presented separately for Board consideration.

- **Joe Hughes, Legal Counsel:** \$2,908.00.

Action: Motion by Director Knight, seconded by Director Antonowich, to approve payment. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Giezentanner and Associates:** \$7,500.00.

Action: Motion by Director Turley, seconded by Director Knight, to approve payment. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Provost and Pritchard:** \$1,206.00 for preliminary work performed in January on the Rock Creek/Keeper Slough report. GM Giezentanner confirmed the firm is continuing work under a total contract amount of \$10,000.00.

Action: Motion by Director Mori, seconded by Director Koehnen, to approve payment. Motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

Prior to convening closed session, President McGowan requested that the public be excused. Legal Counsel Hughes participated remotely.

The Board reconvened to open session approximately 10:00 a.m. President McGowan stated that there were two items discussed in closed session and directed Counsel Hughes to contact GM Giezentanner to negotiate a pending item on behalf of the Board. President McGowan stated there was nothing further to report out at that time.

5. Cash Management Account Structure

GM Giezentanner presented an organizational chart and supporting narrative of the proposed cash management account structure for the District, including how funds would flow from the County's special benefit assessment process and, potentially, future grant awards. Board questions:

- **FDIC Coverage.** Director Chance raised a question regarding FDIC insurance coverage, noting that deposits exceeding \$250,000 would not be fully insured. President McGowan noted the intent was to keep the main checking account balance below that threshold, with the bulk of funds held in the investment account. GM Giezentanner confirmed the District would operationalize a practice of keeping the main checking account balance under \$250,000, except potentially in connection with a large project.
- **Authorized Signers.** Director Turley asked for clarification regarding authorized signers, noting that other districts sometimes authorize all board members to sign in order to ensure two signatures can always be obtained. GM Giezentanner confirmed that the resolution could be amended to align the authorized signers with the existing NorCal National Bank account setup. Director Antonowich recalled that the existing account was structured to allow all officers of the Board to sign. GM Giezentanner agreed to confirm the existing account language with NorCal National Bank and ensure the resolution language was consistent.

Two resolutions were presented for adoption: (1) a resolution regarding the segregation and accounting of grant funds, and (2) a resolution regarding the authorization for the establishment and management of a grant investment account. Both resolutions were subject to the amendment discussed above regarding authorized signers.

Action: Motion by Director Mori, seconded by Director Mendonca, to approve both resolutions as amended to align authorized signer language with the existing NorCal National Bank account structure. Motion carried unanimously.

Action Item: GM Giezentanner to confirm authorized signer language with NorCal National Bank and ensure consistency with the adopted resolutions on cash management.

No public comment.

6. 2026-27 Budget Planning

GM Giezentanner presented an overview of budget planning for fiscal year 2026–27 (packet pages 23–27) and a draft budget framework for 2026–27.

Director Turley indicated he had comments on the draft and preferred to work through the details rather than adopt the framework as presented. He proposed forming a focused ad hoc committee to work with the General Manager and return to the full Board with a recommendation at the next meeting.

President McGowan called for volunteers. Director Antonowich and Director Turley volunteered to serve on the budget ad hoc committee. President McGowan indicated he would also participate.

The Board received the information and directed that a Budget Ad Hoc Committee — consisting of Directors Antonowich, Turley, and President McGowan — work with the General Manager to develop a 2026–27 budget recommendation for consideration at the next regular meeting.

No public comment.

7. Presentation — Groundwater Recharge Enhancement / Dry Well Technology

Joe Turner of Geosyntec, a hydrogeologist, presented on groundwater recharge enhancement (GREF) technologies, including the use of dry wells and related infiltration features.

Presenter Background. Mr. Turner described his extensive experience in hydrogeology, with particular relevance to local groundwater recharge work. He noted his prior involvement with the Tuscan recharge project and current work assisting Butte County on its groundwater recharge project. He referenced career-long familiarity with dry well technology, beginning with well abandonment projects at UC Agricultural Stations dating to 1989 and evolving into active recharge applications. He is currently engaged on a dry well pilot project for the City of Stockton’s Delta Water Treatment Plant and has collaborated with organizations such as River Partners and Ducks Unlimited on dual-use pond recharge strategies. Mr. Turner noted that Geosyntec authored the State Water Board’s guidance document on dry wells, developed primarily around stormwater management applications in the Los Angeles basin.

Terminology and Regulatory Framework. Mr. Turner recommended reframing the terminology from “dry wells” to GREF to avoid regulatory and public-perception complications. He explained that under U.S. EPA classification, a dry well — defined as any injection feature deeper than it is wide — qualifies as a Class V Underground Injection Control (UIC) well, requiring registration with EPA rather than a formal permit. He clarified that if a vertical recharge feature is constructed in close proximity to the groundwater table, the State Water Board is likely to treat it as direct injection, requiring a Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) permit. Features maintaining adequate soil separation — such as infiltration trenches or tile drains — are more likely to be viewed analogously to infiltration ponds and may not require a WDR. However, any project using treated water will require a WDR regardless of design. He

emphasized that even when permitting may not be required, water quality evaluation should remain a project priority.

Technology Types. Mr. Turner described several related recharge enhancement approaches:

- Dry wells / vertical injection features: Perforated casing driven to depth, often gravel-filled, used to bypass low-permeability surface soils and reach more permeable subsurface strata.
- French drains / infiltration trenches: Gravel-filled trenches serving a similar function horizontally; common in other regions but less prevalent locally.
- Tile drains: Originally used to remove shallow groundwater; now being evaluated in reverse — introducing water beneath root zones in agricultural settings to avoid orchard damage while achieving recharge.

Reasons to Use These Technologies. Mr. Turner outlined several scenarios where recharge enhancement features are preferable to conventional infiltration ponds: where permeable soils are located too deep for cost-effective pond excavation; where available land area is insufficient for pond construction; in agricultural settings where surface flooding would damage orchards; for flood reduction and stormwater management benefits; and for water quality improvement through soil filtration.

Site Assessment and Data Needs. Mr. Turner outlined the initial data requirements for evaluating a potential recharge enhancement site, including geology and hydrogeology, available land and site constraints, water source characteristics, conveyance, timing, water rights, and permitting. He noted that a target infiltration rate of approximately one foot per day is considered excellent by SGMA standards, with half a foot per day as a practical lower threshold. Sediment was identified as the primary operational concern, as excessive sediment loading causes clogging. Mr. Turner recommended the SGMA Data Viewer and GeoTracker as primary online resources for preliminary site assessment.

Geophysical Screening. Mr. Turner described the use of Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) survey data as a first-cut screening tool for identifying candidate recharge areas within a basin, noting that AEM is not definitive and should be followed by finer-resolution investigation such as TTEM geophysical surveys, permeability testing, water quality sampling, and installation of monitoring wells.

City of Stockton — Delta Water Treatment Plant Case Study. Mr. Turner described an active project for the City of Stockton where a feasibility study concluded that surface soils in the upper fifteen feet were insufficiently permeable to support the target recharge volume of 30,000 acre-feet per year. The adopted solution combines shallow pond construction excavated to approximately three to four feet with large-diameter gravel-filled French drains extending approximately fifteen feet below the pond bottom, reaching a more permeable subsurface zone. The groundwater table at the site is approximately fifty to sixty feet deep, providing adequate separation. The project encompasses approximately seventy acres across multiple ponds, with a target infiltration rate of one foot per day. Mr. Turner noted a design tradeoff: his preferred approach would have incorporated a central perforated pipe within the gravel-filled trench to allow for rehabilitation, but the constructed design uses gravel-only trenches, which will perform well for an estimated fifteen to twenty years before requiring full excavation and re-gravel when clogging occurs.

Board Questions.

- **VOC Plumes.** Director Chance raised a question regarding the presence of volatile organic compound (VOC) plumes on the west side of Chico and how groundwater recharge activities can be conducted without exacerbating contamination. Mr. Turner responded that the key analytical question is whether recharge activity would negatively affect the behavior or remediation of an existing plume. He noted that in some cases, introducing clean water can dilute contamination rather than worsen it. He described a specific project site where recharge is occurring into an aquifer above the level of the known plume, with approximately twenty feet of separation, and noted that Comanche Creek acts as a hydraulic barrier between the project site and the contaminated zone.
- **Levee Height.** Director Mendonca asked about the height of levees constructed around infiltration fields. Mr. Turner clarified that dry well and tile drain systems do not require levees, as the infrastructure is installed below grade, and that berm height for infiltration ponds is a site-specific engineering calculation.
- **ASR vs. Dry Wells.** Director Mori raised the distinction between aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wells and dry wells. Mr. Turner explained that a conventional ASR well involves direct injection and extraction from the same well — capable of very high volumes but requiring WDRs and distinct maintenance considerations. He noted that dry wells can become functionally equivalent to injection wells if their depth brings them into direct contact with the groundwater table.
- **Minimum Separation.** Director Turley asked about the minimum required separation between a dry well and the groundwater surface. Mr. Turner responded that the water boards generally expect at least twenty to thirty feet of separation, though guidance continues to evolve. He advised operators to consult directly with their applicable regional water board.
- **Stockton Design Details.** President McGowan asked about the depth of the recharge features and the location of the permeable zone at the Stockton site. Mr. Turner provided the requested explanations.
- **Managed Aquifer Recharge Opportunity.** Director Mori expressed appreciation for the presentation, stating that managed aquifer recharge — particularly given the layered geology of the North State — represents a significant opportunity on both sides of the Sacramento River, and acknowledged that the presentation demonstrated a pragmatic framework for addressing water quality concerns while achieving recharge objectives.

Reference Materials. Mr. Turner concluded by summarizing reference links provided in the final slide, including the IRWC dry well fact sheet, OEAH dry well regulation guidelines, the Geosyntec/State Water Board guidance document, the Elk Grove Prop 84 dry well project example, the Mustang Creek pilot study, and a conference presentation addressing dry wells and other recharge approaches. Mr. Turner also noted an additional recharge-focused conference is scheduled at the end of March 2026.

No public comments were received. No formal action was taken on this item.

8. General Manager Report

8A. Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Update

- *SGM Implementation Grant:* GM Giezentanner provided an update on the Vina GSA and Tuscan Water District's role within that structure. He explained that the Vina GSA received a SGMA grant approximately two years ago and has been actively working to deploy those funds across a range of projects and study areas. The grant period is scheduled to conclude at the end of March 2026, with limited extensions available for certain items.
- *TWD Update to Vina GSA:* GM Giezentanner noted that Tuscan Water District had not previously provided a formal update to the Vina GSA since the GSA's formation. At the Vina GSA's request, he presented to the Vina GSA Board at its March 11, 2026 meeting on behalf of Tuscan Water District and provided two documents:
 - A high-level summary of the categories of activity TWD has been pursuing
 - A governance overview describing what TWD is designed to do, what it can and cannot do under LAFCO conditions, and how projects will move forward.

8B. Ad Hoc Committee Updates

GM Giezentanner presented informational updates on the two ad hoc committees, noting that no Board action was required. Both ad hoc committees met on March 11, 2026.

- **Surface Water Ad Hoc Committee.** The committee had been tasked with reviewing the draft final surface water feasibility analysis. One set of comments was received from Director Mendonca. GM Giezentanner indicated that he intended to consolidate all final comments by March 20, 2026, and noted that the analysis is in generally good shape, though he remained open to receiving additional comments from Board members.
- **Recharge Ad Hoc Committee.** The committee discussed the Rock Creek Keeper Slough flood mark concept evaluation being prepared by Provost and Pritchard. The firm had provided a good initial work product and received feedback from the committee requesting certain adjustments. Provost and Pritchard are currently incorporating that feedback, with a revised product expected within one to two weeks.

No formal action was taken.

8C. Form 700 Filing Reminder

GM Giezentanner provided an informational reminder regarding the annual Form 700 (Statement of Economic Interests) filing requirement. He indicated that he would print the prior year's Form 700 for any Board members who had not yet completed the current year's form and would personally follow up to ensure completion and signature before the April 1, 2026 deadline.

No formal action was taken.

8D. Caltrans / Highway 99 Drainage Project

GM Giezentanner reported that TWD staff met with Caltrans District Three regarding a planned project involving drainage pipes under Highway 99. Caltrans has indicated it intends to raise the roadway and route runoff into lateral ditches discharging into Keeper Slough. GM Giezentanner expressed concern that this approach is inadequate given the volume of water involved and noted

that TWD is exploring alternative Caltrans funding sources — potentially accessed through BCAG — that would allow for land acquisition to address the drainage and recharge issue.

8E. Upcoming Topics — April and May 2026 Meetings

GM Giezentanner provided a forward-looking overview of anticipated agenda items for the April and May 2026 Board meetings:

- 2026-27 Budget finalization
- Plan Evaluation and Amendment process
- Domestic Well Mitigation Program and Well Ordinance Update processes; Director McGowan requested the Board be kept informed and expressed interested in Board participation.
- Water Transfer Policy
- Demand Reduction Strategy reports
- 2026 Board elections, anticipated for discussion as the Board approaches the May and June timeframe, with elections scheduled for November 2026

No formal action was taken.

9. Board Member Announcements, Reports, and Requests for Future Agenda Items

The following items were identified as areas of interest by board members:

- South Vina Extension: President McGowan expressed interest in receiving an update on this item.
- Durham Mutual Water Company (DMWC) Irrigation Main Conditions Assessment and Upgrade Recommendations: President McGowan requested an update on recent meetings related to this project.
- Caltrans / Highway 99 Drainage Project: GM Giezentanner reported that TWD staff met with Caltrans District Three regarding a planned project involving drainage pipes under Highway 99. Caltrans has indicated it intends to raise the roadway and route runoff into lateral ditches discharging into Keeper Slough. GM Giezentanner expressed concern that this approach is inadequate given the volume of water involved and noted that TWD is exploring alternative Caltrans funding sources — potentially accessed through BCAG — that would allow for land acquisition to address the drainage and recharge issue and mitigate the need for raising Highway 99.

Adjournment