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Summary of 2015 Informational and Oversight Hearings by the Committee on Natural Resources and Water

1. February 11, 2015: Well Stimulation and DOGGR oversight

SNRW conducted its 5th oversight hearing in 4 years on well stimulation, fracking, and related technologies. The hearing focus was on the continuing implementation of SB 4 and fracking regulations by the oil and gas regulator (the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR)) and the Water Boards. The Water Boards are involved because of the groundwater monitoring requirements in the state's oil and gas fields. Legislative oversight will continue because important statutory deadlines for implementation continue in 2015, DOGGR has been known to miss statutory deadlines, and ongoing review of implementation is necessary to ensure that the standards in SB 4 are met. It is extremely important to the Legislature that these fracking regulations are implemented completely not only to provide confidence to a public that may not trust DOGGR, but also to protect water supplies and water quality.

2. February 24, 2015: Department of Parks

The committee has had multiple oversight hearings on the Department of Parks and has been engaged for many years in a series of reform efforts including the review, at this hearing, of the final report from the Parks Forward Commission which called for fundamental changes in the department. Testimony was provided from several non-profits and other members of the public on ways that the department could improve its relationships with outside partners and the need to increase outreach to communities without adequate parks. Those ideas, as well as the suggestions in the Parks Forward Commission report, will be pursued in legislation by Senator Pavley and Mr. Levine, the chair of the policy committee on the Assembly side, and also in a parks bond proposed by Senator de Leon. This hearing was conducted jointly with Assembly Water Parks and Wildlife Committee. SB 204 (Pavley) and AB 549 (Levine) were both signed by Governor Brown and implemented many of the recommendations from the Parks Forward Commission. In recent months, the department has added a new classification for park superintendents who are no longer required to be police officers, is proposing a new reservations system, has installed credit card readers at many of its parks, developed a new Google parks app for smart phones, and convened an internal review team to improve internal changes at the department.

3. February 25, 2015: Financing Local Stormwater Projects

To followup on recent stormwater legislation and potential funding from the water bond, the committee heard from many witnesses about the great potential for stormwater capture and re-use, especially during these years of drought. At the same time, the witnesses cautioned that

these projects will take a high degree of coordination among multiple local governments. Financing such projects is also tricky and in some cases would require a 2/3 vote from within those local governments. Any legislation would need to reflect the specific circumstances of the affected area. In a drought, we need to recognize the value of projects to capture and re-use storm water and to consider storm water an asset.

4. March 10, 2015: **Underground Injection Control program**

SNRW conducted a joint oversight hearing with SEQ on the class II Underground Injection Control (UIC) program for oil and gas wells in the state which confirmed that many violations of regulations are occurring. Numerous news stories in the last 8 - 9 months have highlighted significant problems with the program. At the hearing DOGGR and the Water Boards acknowledged as much, including rampant violation of the state's regulations by DOGGR. Over 2500 oil and gas injection wells are under review and are being investigated for contaminating good quality groundwater. Legislative oversight will continue given the serious shortcomings in the program. The chair, as well as other members, have pending bills to address this issue.

5. May 12, 2015: Joint Hearing with Budget Subcommittee 2: Resources:
The Administration's Response to the Drought: Challenges and Opportunities

In March 2015, the Legislature passed two bills to continue to address the multi-year drought facing the state. AB 91 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 1, Statutes of 2015, appropriated: \$267 million for water development, including water recycling, desalination, and drinking water quality projects; \$131 million for direct drought response including food assistance, emergency drinking water, protection of fish and wildlife species, invasive species protection, and funding for emergency water supply and education; and, \$660 million for urban and rural flood capital outlay projects, and for flood assistance. AB 92 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 2, Statutes of 2015, responded to the drought by: (1) providing assistance to disadvantaged communities by creating the Office of Sustainable Water Solutions within the State Water Resources Control Board to help communities access funds; (2) increased the Department of Fish and Wildlife's enforcement authority for illegal diversions, mainly from illegal marijuana cultivation; and, (3) expanded the use of existing program funding to provide emergency drinking water to communities in need.

At this hearing, the two committees heard testimony from the Administration on the implementation of AB 91 and AB 92, as well as a discussion about additional needs to be addressed during May Revision..

6. August 25, 2015: **Independent Science Study on Fracking**

This hearing thoroughly reviewed the complete results of the independent science study on hydraulic fracturing. This was a study required by a 2013 regulatory bill on fracking, SB 4 (Pavley). At least in part because of this oversight, the Budget bill (AB 93, c. 10, Stats. 2015) and the Public Resources Budget trailer bill (SB 83, c. 24, Stats. 2015) included enhanced

resources and new requirements for DOGGR and the Water Boards, particularly with respect to the UIC program and the aquifer exemption process. (Joint with the Assembly Natural Resources Committee)

7. October 28, 2015: **Flood Management in California: Are We Ready For El Nino?**

This was a hearing in Los Angeles that generated intense interest from the press and the public regarding preparations for El Nino and the likely flood, stormwater, and water supply implications for the state.

8. November 26, 2015: **California's Water Challenges in the 21st Century: Assessing California's Chronically Under-Funded Water Needs**

Water experts in California from a wide variety of organizations and backgrounds testified regarding drinking water, ground water, storm water, flood control, and infrastructure, and conservation and stewardship issues that are unresolved in California.