

BWC FAQ

1. What is the Borrego Water Coalition?

The Borrego Water Coalition (BWC) is a group of approximately 17 community members participating in monthly meetings representing interests on behalf of Anza-Borrego State Park, recreation, agriculture, public use areas, the Borrego Water District, resorts and lodging, the Borrego Springs Unified School District, and commercial businesses. Their purpose is to address the significant risks associated with over drafting the Borrego Valley groundwater basin and to work toward a “plan” to reduce same. The intent is to ensure that all the various Community interests are represented and have a voice in the conversation including agriculture and recreational golf courses who have the greatest potential for reducing the overdraft. It also includes the Borrego Water District and other institutions with authority to implement change.

2. What information has been provided to the public by the BWC?

Periodically, the BWC holds public meetings to update the Community on their discussions, receive public input and answer questions concerning the BWC’s current and future goals. There have been two public meetings to date: the first was held on January 14, 2014, the second on June 12, 2014. Information concerning the presentations and exchange of information at both public meetings is available under the “PUBLIC MEETINGS” tab on this website.

3. Who started the BWC?

Initially, those participating in the BWC were selected by the California State Department of Water Resources (DWR) who brought together major water users in the Borrego Valley to commence a “stakeholder” process for addressing the overdraft. “Stakeholders” is a term often used by governmental agencies to describe representative of various community interests. DWR sought to ensure that all stakeholders’ interests were represented by the members who make up the BWC. The BWC simultaneously sought to limit its size to ensure that it can efficiently discuss and work through a wide range of issues. The BWC believes that its current makeup has the right balance between adequate representation of diverse stakeholder interests and the number of members. As a result, its meetings are not currently open to the public or the press.

4. What progress has the BWC made?

Initially, the members of the BWC had to define goals and objectives for the group. Those goals are set forth in its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed on March 29, 2013 and revised on December 5, 2013. The MOU is available on the “HOME” page of this website. Thereafter, by consensus, the BWC began identifying potential paths to address the various issues associated with water management in the Borrego Basin and cooperatively drafted a document entitled: Draft Discussion Document: Basin Management Objectives and Strategies for Borrego Valley Groundwater Management Plan Update – 2014. It represents a starting outline to be revised as public input, expert analysis, technical data, governmental restrictions and legal authorities, among others, are defined. See the “HOME” page and the June 2014 public presentation.

5. What authority does the BWC have?

The Borrego Water Coalition is a thought leadership forum whose responsibility is advisory. The BWC has no specific legal authority and its recommendations will not abridge the statutory or fiduciary responsibilities of any public regulatory agency. The goal is to develop recommendations to present to the Community at large and to the various governmental agencies with legal responsibility for enacting or enforcing water regulations.

6. Are there “experts” working with the BWC?

The BWC is working collaboratively with several organizations that specialize in technical issues related to the overdraft. They include being able to secure technical answers to specific questions related to water issues in the Borrego Basin from the Department of Water Resources’ (DWR) employee, Tim Ross (Ph.D.), who regularly attends its meetings and offers technical advice when appropriate. In addition, the BWC has signed a collaborative agreement with the University of California at Irvine for “yet to be defined academic services” related to the overdraft’s adverse effect on the Community. It has had the benefit of technical presentations by representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation and others seeking to address the issues. In the spring of 2014, DWR contracted with an economist, Dr. Roger Mann, to provide an economic analysis of the overdraft. DWR also contracted for professional facilitation services for Dorian Fougères, Ph.D., Senior Mediator, Director, Southern California Office, Center for Collaborative Policy, California State University, Sacramento.

7. Why will the BWC be successful in finding a solution to the overdraft when others have failed?

In the past, there was a limited exchange of information between major water users. There was no shared vision or goal among the parties. Neither did each clearly understand the needs and concerns of the other. However, as the BWC members have openly discussed their various needs around the table and have made a commitment to working together, a commonality of issues has been expressed that makes the potential for creating a realistic and palatable solution possible. The common goal is to preserve the Community we live and work in. The commitment is to share in the changes necessary to accomplish that goal. The recommendations and outline being developed is designed to be flexible, able to incorporate new developments that emerge with time. The assistance of a professional facilitator in the early development of these recommendations will enhance the potential for the process to be in good faith, fair and equitable.

8. How does the BWC keep the Community informed?

The BWC publishes minutes of its monthly meetings on this website, tab “SUMMARIES”. They also periodically issue press releases and invite community input and questions at its public meetings. Members of the BWC are each responsible for reporting to their constituents and are available to answer questions.

9. How are costs associated with the BWC being paid?

Currently, all stakeholders participating in the BWC are doing so as volunteers. The Chamber of Commerce has volunteered its facility for the meetings. Historically, the DWR has contracted for the services of both the facilitator and economist. However, the facilitator’s DWR contract expired as of June 2014. Finding his services invaluable, the members of the BWC have agreed to fund his services through November 2014.