

Borrego Water Coalition Meeting Notes

February 7, 2013

Linda Haddock – Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce
Bill Berkley - Rams Hill
Beth Hart - President Borrego Water District
Dennis Jensen - Oasis Ranch Management Company
Martha Deichler – Borrego Spring Unified School District
Duane Young – Roadrunner Tree Farm
Mike Seley – Seley Ranches
Kathy Dice – Anza Borrego State Park
Jim Wilson - President of Board for Christmas Circle Park
Lyle Brecht – BWD Board Member
Jerry Rolwing – BWD, 14 years in Borrego Valley
Jim Wermers – De Anza Country Club, 20 years in Borrego Valley
David Bauer – Borrego Farms
Jim Bennett – County of San Diego
Tim Ross – DWR
Brian Moniz – DWR
Laura Peters - DWR

Members of the Borrego Water Coalition (BWC) agreed that meeting notes are important for tracking progress. The notes will be subject to the Chatham House Rule, and will include items of discussion and consensus.

The following items were agreed to by BWC members at the January 4, 2013 meeting:

- There is an overdraft in the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin.
- The USGS report will serve as a starting point of agreement regarding the physical state of Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin (BVGB). Members will defer the acceptance of the report until they have had the opportunity to thoroughly review it.

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The BWC members discussed issues and concerns from their personal viewpoint and from the viewpoint of their representative constituencies. Below is a summary of thoughts discussed:

- **The economic viability of the community relies on a stable water supply**
 - The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (Park) and golf courses attract tourists and residents.
 - Park visitor experience is enhanced by the community and businesses in the Valley.
 - The Park, resorts, and agriculture bring jobs and families, and support the business community and schools.
 - San Diego County has authority over land use in the valley, and the availability of a reliable water source is fundamental in the development of responsible growth.

- **Ability to Conserve**
 - There is capacity to conserve in most all of the sectors.
 - Agriculture in general may already be as efficient as current technology allows based on the economically viable crops grown in the Valley. A reduction in agricultural water use most likely requires a reduction in acreage farmed.
 - Other sectors such as golf may be able to reduce and/or change the varieties of grasses used, improve irrigation systems to allow for zone specific watering and varied watering flow rates depending on vegetation.
 - Many may be able to convert to more water efficient landscapes (xeriscapes) and water conserving fixtures and appliances.
- **Concerns**
 - Given the potential cost of water once the upper aquifer is dewatered, what activities will there be enough reasonably priced water for in the future?
 - How urgent is it to make decisions to resolve the overdraft?
 - One of the community's primary resorts recently changed hands. While this will bring in revenue, it has historically had high water use.
 - Declining groundwater levels negatively affect jobs that bring families and children to the community. This results in reduced attendance throughout the school district.
 - Degradation of local desert habitat as water levels decline below root zones throughout the Valley.
 - Cutting back on water use to achieve a balance with natural recharge will mean a change to the current Borrego way of life.
 - Increasing water costs and the need to cut back on water use may reduce the viability of agriculture in the Valley.
 - Where will the money come from to implement solutions to manage the BVGB?
 - What are the present and future economic impacts to the Borrego community of the declining groundwater basin?
 - If efforts are not made now to manage the groundwater basin in a manner that is economically,, environmentally, and socially beneficial to the community, then future state-mandated legislative rules may potentially dictate a less beneficial solution.
- **Hopes**
 - By involving new businesses in the process early we can help them make informed decisions about water use.
 - Increase water awareness in residents and visitors to change personal consumption.
 - Extend the life of the aquifer by 1/3 to 1/2 to allow time to work on long term solution.
 - Create a robust process that can arrive at collaborative solutions to manage the BVGB that can evolve with changing dynamics.
 - Strive for mutually beneficial solutions for all sectors of the Valley's economy.
 - That the community can work together to produce a Borrego future worth living in.
- **General Conclusions**
 - A reasonably-priced freshwater supply is key to the economic viability of the entire community. The issue of groundwater availability and cost affects everyone.
 - Market forces alone are unlikely to resolve the overdraft.

- It is important for the community and visitors to have a gathering place at Christmas Circle.
- All members of the BWC expressed a willingness to work together toward both short and long term solutions to extend and protect the common groundwater resource.
 - Short-term reductions in water use across the community will likely extend the life of the groundwater supply by reducing the overdraft.
 - A long-term solution will likely involve imported water.

Other

- The Borrego Water District’s Town Hall meeting is scheduled for March 27th from 4:00 – 5:30 pm.
- Everyone is strongly encouraged to read the community plan, as it impacts everyone:
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/pds/generalplan.html>

Agenda topics for next meeting

- Discuss process for adding new participants to the BWC.
- Review inputs received to the DRAFT Mission Statement, and agree on Principles of Participation, including the goals and objectives of the BWC.
- Draft and agree on press release for media and to respond to any Town Hall inquiries.