

Borrego Water Coalition Meeting

June 6, 2013

8:00 – 12:00

Borrego Chamber of Commerce

Attendees

Agricultural Representatives –	Dennis Jensen - Oasis Ranch Management Company Jim Seley – AAWARE, Seley Ranches Mike Seley – Seley Ranches Duane Young – Roadrunner Tree Farm David Bauer - Borrego Farms
Recreation -	Jim Wermers – De Anza Country Club Dan Wright – Road Runner Club Bill Berkley - Rams Hill Golf Course Jim Moxham – Borrego Springs Resort
BWD & District Ratepayers -	Marshal Brecht – BWD Board Member Lyle Brecht – BWD Board Member Jerry Rolwing – BWD
School District -	Anne Bogardt – Borrego Spring Unified School District
Public Space -	Jim Wilson - President of Board for Christmas Circle Park
Commercial Businesses -	Linda Haddock – Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce
Watershed and Desert Ecosystems -	Ralph Singer – Anza Borrego Foundation
CA Dept of Water Resources -	Tim Ross, Senior Engineering Geologist Laura Peters, Senior Engineer, WR Brian Moniz, Senior Engineer, WR

General Business

John Peterson, retired from San Diego County, is replacing Chuck Bennett as the alternate contact for Watershed and Desert Ecosystems.

The May meeting notes were approved with minor changes for clarification. Additionally, all were reminded to abide by the Sherman Act by not discussing any business during the meeting, or on breaks, that is not directly related to the over-drafted Borrego Valley groundwater basin.

Update on Webpage

A Dropbox has been set up for use by all BWC members. This will be the electronic file location for all documents created and used by the Coalition.

BWC now has the domain www.borregwatercoalition.com, along with several other related names. This webpage was created for the community and BWC members to refer to documents and links relating to the work of the BWC. Specifically, a copy of the BWC memorandum of understanding (MOU), press release(s), meeting notes, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and other links can be accessed through this webpage.

UCI Meeting

Members of the BWC participated in a scoping session at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego (SBAB) Desert Research Center on May 17. UCI solicited BWC input to develop science questions based on community needs to incorporate into a Water Sustainability and Climate grant proposal they are preparing to apply for National Science Foundation (NSF) funding.

Participants thought it was a good meeting and believe that UCI will provide useful technical support and a broader perspective. UCI's input will potentially be valuable as a plan to manage the basin is being prepared. UCI referred to the Integrated Regional Water Management Planning process (IRWMP) model as a potential path forward for obtaining additional grant funding.

UCI will hold a second, more detailed scoping session on June 14th to determine the technical NSF grant writing assignments and science grand challenges for the NSF grant proposal. Three members of the BWC were invited to participate in that meeting. It is important that these three members actively participate in the development process to ensure that UCI staff understands Borrego's specific issues so the proposal aligns with the practical work of the BWC.

One area the BWC is hoping UCI will include in the proposal is an economic evaluation of the various scenarios identified in the USGS report. Of particular concern is the potential economic impacts to the community of declining water quality as the basin is dewatered, the impact on future pumping costs and the return on investment for the different sectors of the community.

All of the members of BWC have agreed to individually sign a letter supporting UCI's NSF grant proposal.

MOU

An editorial article was printed in the Borrego Sun this week that paints a negative assessment of the BWC's efforts to date.

The members believe that timely information published on the BWC's website may be a way to show Coalition progress, which may help to dispel misperceptions regarding the BWC activities,

Facilitation

DWR has approved BWCs facilitation application. A professional facilitator will hopefully be available beginning in September and working with the BWC through June 2014. DWR will provide background information to the facilitator in advance. The group may have the opportunity to meet with the facilitator before the September meeting.

It was noted that the Borrego Water District (the District) sent a letter to DWRs Chief Deputy Director, requesting a phased approach to including the outlying areas in an initial IRWM plan, should the group decide to develop an IRWM plan, and to request support for facilitation. DWR responded positively to these requests from the District.

Groundwater Management Plan

A discussion regarding the use of the 2002 groundwater management plan (GWMP) could potentially be a useful and inexpensive starting point for developing a GWMP update that would include a managed basin plan. The planning process is independent of a choice by the Coalition for establishing an authority to enforce the managed basin plan either through existing legislative authority (i.e. the District's AB3030 authority), new legislative authority (e.g. modification of the San Diego County's existing Groundwater Ordinance or new legislation from Sacramento) and/or a court stipulation that occurs through an adjudication process (e.g. negotiated settlement or dispute resolution). The goal is to develop a plan and choose an authority mechanism that is affordable and takes into account the full range of economic impacts from the overdraft and incorporates the ongoing basin planning leadership initiative of the BWC.

For example, the District's 2002 GWMP could potentially be the foundation for an updated basin management plan that provides the authority and a funding mechanism to implement the proposed plan, as well as being flexible enough to allow basin planning to evolve over time. Although the District may not delegate its fiduciary authority, the BWC would need to have assurance that a basin management plan that was agreed to by the Coalition and its constituencies could not be unilaterally altered or terminated when succeeding BWD board members take office. One option to assure that a basin management plan has longevity might be to have the plan stipulated by a court once it is adopted by the community.

The Coalition has agreed to investigate the capabilities and limitations of AB3030 (and succeeding GWM state legislation), and to review the 2002 GWMP, then come to the July 11 meeting ready to discuss potential go-forward options. These documents will be put in the Coalition dropbox so all members can read them before the July 11th meeting.

USGS Scenarios

There will be an opportunity to comment on the DRAFT USGS report. The intention of this review is to assist the USGS in producing a report most useful for the Coalition's planning objectives. The DRAFT will be added to the Coalition's dropbox as soon as it is available to the District.

The following scenarios are in the current model simulation:

- Scenario 1: No reduction
- Scenario 2: Reduction of 80% for golf and Agriculture, and 48% for municipal
- Scenario 3: reduction of 40% for golf and Agriculture, and 30% for municipal

Although no new scenarios were identified, a lengthy groundwater discussion ensued as follows:

1. How are the upper, middle and lower aquifers defined?

An aquifer is a body of rock that can store and transmit groundwater. Water can be stored between the grains of an alluvial aquifer or in the fractures of a consolidated rock. For an alluvial aquifer, the spaces between the grains are larger for larger grain sizes.

Bill Moyle defined the three Borrego aquifers by the coarseness of the material identified on well drillers' reports. The upper aquifer has very coarse grains and stores and transmits water very well. The middle aquifer has a mixture of sizes with more fine sediment and does not store and transmit water as well as the upper aquifer. The lower aquifer has mostly fine grains and consolidated sediments which do not hold water very well. Water quality is not well understood for the middle and lower aquifer.

2. Will the aquifer just stop producing one day?

Unlikely. It is typically not a start/stop situation. As the basin approaches the limiting layer, production and water quality often decline. The goal is to extend the life, or glide, as long as possible to lengthen the time before reaching the bottom of the first aquifer.

3. Is the Rams Hill groundwater aquifer fed by a separate watershed?

No. Ram's Hill (RH) lies on the southern flank of the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin (BVGB). Presently, there is no extraction from the Ram's Hill property; all of the water is pumped to the golf courses and RH residences and common areas from the District's production and distribution system.

The southern end of the BVGB contains mainly lower aquifer material with a low storage capacity and low transmissibility. The lower aquifer is older material that is much more compact and can hold very little water. Also, water drawn out of the lower aquifer basin takes a long time to recharge.

4. Is the basin under Rams Hill separate from basin in the north part of the valley?
No. It's the same basin, but fed by a separate canyon. San Felipe drains to the north in the southern part of the Borrego Valley basin.
5. Why are the groundwater levels rising in the RH area?
Water levels are probably rising due to the reduction in extraction in recent years when irrigation was suspended after the golf course was closed. In addition, a fraction of the water applied to outside vegetation percolates into the ground and helps replenish the groundwater aquifer.
6. Does the 40% reduction for golf include current reductions?
No. The numbers do not include current cutbacks at the Borrego Springs Resort and Rams Hill. USGS has asked BWD to gather current water extraction estimates from all the sectors for incorporation into the model. The water use estimates used were based on acreage and crops/vegetation grown.
7. Are there examples of overdraft being resolved without an expensive and adversarial adjudication? Specifically closed basins with sole source aquifer?
Yes. Indian Wells has an adopted GWMP that will be put in the Coalition dropbox. If anyone knows of any outside of California, they are encouraged to circulate information about it.
8. What is the difference between an aquifer and groundwater basin?
Aquifers hold and transmit water. They are created through deposition of eroded materials. Large materials settle out first and finer materials settle out last. Coarser materials hold higher quantities of water while finer materials contain less to no producible water. Therefore, aquifer boundaries are created when fine material accumulates between layers of coarser material.
A basin is dictated by the deposition of material and can be comprised of one or several aquifers that have reasonably well-defined boundaries. For example, the Borrego Valley groundwater basin is comprised of three individual aquifers.
9. Did agriculture settle in the north end of the valley because of the abundant groundwater there?
No. The reason agriculture settled in the north end of the valley was to take advantage of the temperate climate. In the winter, temperatures can be as much as 8 degree higher and a breeze comes through that prevents frost.

Action Items

1. Linda to update website and send letter to editor notifying community of new web address.
2. Laura to put GWMP documents in Dropbox.
3. All members will read the AB3030 legislation and existing 2002 GWMP in preparation for discussion at the July 11 meeting.
4. Jerry will circulate the draft USGS report to the BWC when it becomes available.
5. All will provide Jerry with updated water use numbers, if available.
6. Brian will produce a DRAFT "Accomplishments" write up to document the Coalition's progress to date.