

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY – JUNE 12, 2014

BORREGO WATER COALITION

Thursday, June 12, 2014, 4:30 pm to 7 pm

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1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Borrego Water Coalition (BWC) organized a public meeting for the purpose of providing an opportunity for concerned citizens to learn about and provide feedback on the BWC’s draft policy recommendations.

The meeting was opened with a welcome by Martha Deichler, BWC member. Following a thank you to the community members in attendance, she introduced Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS, as the facilitator for the evening’s meeting.

Mr. Fougères reviewed the agenda, meeting goal, and meeting ground rules. He noted that several Coalition members would be co-presenting a 30-minute PowerPoint that provides an overview of the BWC’s draft policy recommendations, and the remainder of the evening’s time would be reserved for questions and dialogue.

He also noted that this meeting built on the January 2014 public meeting, which described the basic structure and purpose of the BWC. All of the associated documents and information from January is available on the BWC website at www.borregowatercoalition.org.

Mr. Fougères invited the public to submit comments on the draft policy recommendations via written form:

- Comment window is open until July 31st
- Comments should be submitted to Mr. Fougères at dfougeres@ccp.csus.edu
- Comments can be anonymous if preferred

The 13 members of the Coalition who were in attendance introduced themselves. Many members of the more than 40 public attendees also gave self-introductions at this time.

2. Presentation of Proposed Managed Basin Plan Concepts

Several members of the BWC, including Martha Deicher, Jim Moxham, Kathy Dice, Jim Seley and Jim Wermers, co-delivered a presentation on the Coalition's proposed managed basin plan (plan) concepts that are to be described in detail in the draft policy recommendations document. The full presentation can be referenced at: http://www.borregospringschamber.com/bwc/public_meetings.htm

The following key points were discussed:

- The overarching goals are to create a groundwater management plan that is acceptable to the State, to seek funds for plan implementation, and to avoid adjudication.
- The presentation was intended to introduce the major concepts behind the plan.
- While there are still core components of the plan that require further development, significant progress has been made by the BWC, and trust among members continues to grow.
 - BWC has been consulting with various experts, including economists and hydrogeologists, to develop the specifics of the plan.
 - BWC has committed to continue jointly working on the plan for the next several months.
- This plan demonstrates Borrego's serious commitment to solving major water supply problems, attempting to find a path that takes the basin from overdraft to balance while meeting the time constraints outlined by current drafts of the State legislative bills.
- By being proactive with developing a plan, Borrego is working to maintain local control and preclude the State from otherwise instituting regulations that determine what is done in Borrego.
 - If the State takes control of the water basin, associated costs for water could greatly increase.
- The plan will ultimately be presented to the Borrego Water District for considered adoption, as the BWC does not have authority to implement a plan or regulations.
 - BWC will serve in an advisory capacity to the District on future plan implementation.
- The plan must include milestone objectives for water reduction. Metered wells relate to a State requirement where water use/reduction efforts are measurable.
 - It is likely individuals will be responsible for installation of meters.
 - As an example of cost (for actual meter only), a 1" meter is approximately \$100, and a 10" meter is approximately \$3,000.
 - It is not yet determined who will monitor the meters. Possibly a "water manager" who is appointed by the Coalition and the District.
 - There may be small fees instituted for reading monitors and administrative costs. Fees will remain reasonable if local control is maintained.
 - Many other areas of the State have been doing something similar for decades.
- The plan includes water reduction objectives applicable to all sectors: municipal users including private homeowners, businesses including recreation, and agriculture.
 - Agricultural footprint in the valley will need to be greatly reduced.
- There are currently eight bills before the legislature covering a realm of water issues (extraction, quality, sustainability).
 - Associated efforts by the BWC and District remain ahead of the State's mandated timeline.
 - A governance component to the plan has not yet been developed, as State requirements in this regard are currently undefined.

- A financing strategy for plan implementation is required by the State, and the BWC continues to work on this section with advice from a third-party economics consultant.
 - It is clear that the Valley will need to greatly reduce the impact of agriculture, as agriculture uses the bulk of the Valley's water resources.
 - Prospective financial compensation for the reduction of agriculture will likely come from future development.
 - Another area to be explored is the purchase of agricultural land by private donors for repurposing (such as for inclusion as part of Anza-Borrego State Park).
- In conclusion, it is in the community's best financial interest to plan and act now to ensure water for the future.

3. Comments, Questions, and Discussion

Following the presentation, public participants were invited to provide feedback and input, ask questions about, and discuss any parts of the Coalition's structure and activities. The following is a summary of the discussion in Question/Answer format:

Who is the "state agency" that was being referred to? Is it the California Water Board?

- In most cases, it is the State Legislature. The Legislature has become significantly more interested in groundwater regulation since the drought began.
- Currently the State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Water Rights has very little or no access to the groundwater that was on private property.
- Department of Water Resources released Bulletin 118 in 2009, categorizing medium and high priority basins for overdraft severity. Borrego is classified as medium priority.

Will there be a water manager hired and a staff to administer the plan? Will the costs for employing these individual(s) be shared with all ratepayers?

- Yes. The water manager will be tasked with ensuring community members are in compliance with reduction efforts.
- The Coalition will be recommending some system to balance how water users share costs, such as by water usage.

Are there currently any plans to eradicate invasive tamarisk trees?

- Please refer to Page 4 of the Detailed Actions Analysis Memo produced by economist Dr. Roger Mann, posted on the BWC website. The removal of tamarisk is discussed, and the expense for tree eradication is also considered.
- Using an educated estimate of water usage by tamarisk trees, a savings of 350 AFY is possible, with an associated cost of \$500,000 for eradication. These values require comparison for economic viability.

If tamarisk trees are eradicated, what other trees can be used for windbreaks?

- Mesquite, paloverde, and a variety of native plants.

Can the Coalition provide the community with an update on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) study?

- A draft is near completion, with the possibility of publishing by the end of the year.
- Dr. Timothy Ross, California Department of Water Resources, participated in several BWC meetings and provided scientific information about the water basin for consideration.
- A Bureau of Reclamation study is coming out soon as well.
- Both documents will be posted on the District and BWC websites when they become available.

What conversations, if any, has the BWC had with stakeholders from various sectors, specifically those from the industrial energy sector?

- A member commented that BWC has had conversation with several folks, and are using these personal correspondences to figure out a fair and balanced approach to water reduction for the whole valley.
- A member commented that their farm uses solar panels, and these panels only require washing twice a year. There is no measurable difference in water use due to this, though he is unsure if the impact would be perceptible from large-scale solar efforts.
- As a point of reference, 1 million gallons of water is equivalent to 3 AF. Borrego has a minimal replenishment of 5,000 AFY.
- NRG Solar used millions of gallons to establish their facility. There is also a new solar company, Invenergy, and they are using large amounts of water in an effort to control dust. These companies state the community is obligated to sell them water because the community approved the projects. The County seems to be making decisions that override the Water Board.
 - The BWC is grappling with water usage in the valley and land planning that is done by the County (such as building of solar plants).
 - Solar farms may also impact the possibility of future tourism and thus incoming tourism dollars.
 - This is a primary example of why Borrego must maintain local control and work together with the County to meet water reduction goals. This issue is recognized by the BWC.
 - BWC invited a County representative to the last BWC meeting and raised many of these same concerns.
 - Simultaneously, the BWC is organizing a subcommittee to meet specifically with Supervisor Bill Horn on these, and related, issues.

What is the Coalition's current best estimate of the costs to retire all agricultural water uses?

- Members were not sure of a specific value. One member suggested approximately \$40-70 million. One can refer to Dr. Roger Mann's economic analysis posted on the website.

Has USGS conducted any studies on water loss due to faults (hydrogeology)? And secondly, do farmers use as much water as they tend to declare?

- Yes, USGS and Department of Water Resources have conducted myriad hydrogeological studies. Borrego is not a sealed basin, some water spills over our basin.
 - USGS has created a model of the valley (using drill logs, wells, etc.) and cannot realistically find the exact location underground of where the water is spilling over.

- It could take as much as 100 years for water to percolate from the surface to reach the water table.
- Contrarily, groundwater recharge has also been documented within weeks of big flood events.

Is the recharge affected by the State's drought condition?

- Not enough information is available to conclusively determine yes or no.
- Recharge in Borrego is tied to big flood years.
- The last big flood event was August 2013 (due to monsoons that hit the mountain ranges).

Regarding policies, who makes the final decisions?

- This is to be determined. The District has authority to adopt an updated groundwater management plan. Other decisions may involve different authorities yet to be determined.

Regarding funding, potential development of the valley could be far in the future, and there are not that many residents in Borrego to carry the financial burden of this plan. Could the cost of this plan make people want to leave the valley?

- Developers purchase a certain number of acre-feet-per-year of water credits, and use only a fraction of it, so it does not cost the homeowner much for consumption reduction.
- Reductions are State mandated.
- Further, everyone must comply with County flood policies.
- There are proposed development project plans for "no net rise" in water use, with a 20-year span for compliance (an average of water use). The demand for development, however, is unknown.

ACTION ITEM: BWC to include quick-links on the website to the eight water-related bills currently in the legislature.

Please confirm that Borrego maintains local control unless the State imposes control. Second, once a final plan is adopted, how many years will Borrego work to come into balance?

- Per State mandate, the BWC plan is proposing 20 years for balance of the water basin to be achieved, though there may be some exceptions granted by the State.
- If BWC is successful in completing this plan by fall, the District may formally adopt it at that time. The District would then present the plan for adoption by the State.
- The District has until October 2015 to complete the update to their groundwater management plan. The reason the BWC is focused on getting this plan to the District by fall is to increase the potential of securing state Integrated Regional Water Management grant funding.
 - To be eligible for any State funding assistance a District must have an adopted, community-based groundwater management plan.
- As it is an election year, there is some belief that the Governor wants some kind of legislation passed by Labor Day, which would outline a more concrete timeline for adoption.

Did a community plan get adopted yet?

- Yes, in summer of 2011. It is a component of the general plan.

The fuel that is going to run this plan to success is enthusiasm! Borrego is a microcosm, and it would be great if Borrego could be the example to other Districts.

- Several community members echoed this statement, and further accolades were given for the community lowering its water use by 60% in the last four years.

4. Closing Remarks

Mr. Fougères provided the following reminders:

- The website where all materials and meeting announcements are posted is www.borregowatercoalition.org.
- The comment window for the draft policy recommendations will be open until **July 31st**.
- Comments may be submitted via email to Mr. Fougères at dfougeres@ccp.csus.edu
- The Coalition will be doing a bit of work over summer and all through fall on finalizing the policy document. A complete draft will be available in November/December, when it is presented to the District.
- Members of the public are also welcome to attend the District's meeting in the fall to provide further comments.

In closing, Ms. Deichler thanked all present and restated her enthusiasm for the immense community support for this effort. Ms. Deichler and her fellow Coalition members are extremely encouraged by the accomplishments that can be made when working together as a community.

5. Attendance

Borrego Water Coalition Members

1. Lyle Brecht
2. Martha Deichler
3. Kathy Dice
4. Linda Haddock
5. Beth Hart
6. Dennis Jensen
7. Jim Moxham
8. Jerry Rowling
9. Jim Seley
10. Jim Wermers
11. Jim Wilson
12. Duane Young

Public Participants

13. Jeanne Beck, Borrego Sun
14. Rich Caldwell, BSCSG
15. Ray Delahay, Borrego Water District
16. Dan Dunir

17. Paul Gordon
18. Greg Holloway, Borrego Water District
19. Jim Juice
20. Victoria Kahn
21. Maureen Kirby
22. Joan Leopold, BSCaC
23. Gwenn Marie, Borrego Valley Association
24. Mary Bea McCaffray
25. Jan Naragon
26. Susan Percival, CCE
27. John Peterson
28. Paige Rogowski, ABF
29. Sue Salt
30. Blanche Santa Dune
31. Maggie Schneider
32. Susie Shippey
33. Brian Siefker, Southwest Development Company
34. Joe Tatusko
35. Carole Thompson
36. Geo Thomspson
37. Sam Webb
38. Astrid Webb
39. Anne Wermers
40. Katie Wilhelm

Facilitation Support

41. Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS
42. Meagan Wylie, Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS