

BETH HART'S COMMENTS ON POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE BORREGO WATER COALITION TO THE BORREGO WATER DISTRICT
NOVEMBER 19, 2014

Some folks may ask, "Why are these policy recommendations being presented to the Borrego Water District's Board now?" The simple answer is that it's time. It's time if we care about our Community and our property values. It's time if we want to maintain local control of the groundwater basin that underlies the Valley where we live and avoid the often very expensive costs associated with a groundwater overdraft.

- The State also believes it's time. On September 16, 2014, Governor Brown signed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requiring that ground water be managed within the State.
- Each Basin with groundwater is required under the Act to draft a plan to ensure the future sustainability of ground water in that Basin. The Legislation permits a Groundwater Sustainability Agency to determine if an overdraft exists and take actions to reverse it if one does.
- In the Borrego basin, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has already established that a severe overdraft exists. Their first study was completed in 1982. The overdraft then was around 6,000 acre-feet per year (AFY).
- In 2010, the BWD contracted with the USGS to conduct a second \$500,000 study that established the overdraft currently is around 13,400 AFY. There is no credible scientific controversy that an overdraft exists or that it is not serious;
- Currently, the impact of the Legislation is being reviewed, but some of its key elements are clear and known. If there is an overdraft, it must be managed and the Basin returned to balance within an approximate 20-year period beginning no later than 2020.
- There must be a clear plan for returning the Basin to sustainability with penalties for failing to comply.
- The plan must be evaluated by the California Department of Water Resources and meet specific criteria to be defined by mid 2016. If the Plan does not meet DWR's

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standards, the State Water Resources Control Board can then take control of the Basin. Extractions and/or water use is to be metered and monitored.

- It's yet to be determined whether the County, the Borrego Water District, or a combination of public bodies will be tasked with the duties outlined in the new Legislation. But one thing is clear, this is the right time.

To the credit of the BWC and its varied Community members, many of the elements required by the new legislation are already under discussion within our community. Drawn together over two years ago out of a genuine concern for the Basin, the BWC has cooperatively been considering what can be done to address the overdraft.

The policy recommendations offered today represent the work and agreement of the Coalition as a whole including representatives from all sectors of the Borrego community: agriculture, recreation, commercial, public agency (e.g. the State Park), and municipal users of water in the Valley.

We wish to thank all the members of the Coalition on behalf of the Board for this exceptionally useful set of policy recommendations for any Groundwater Sustainability Plan developed for the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin. Obviously, much more work is required to develop a plan that meets the standards set by state regulatory agencies and to put such policies into effect. However, without a sound set of fundamental policies with which to begin, these tasks become infinitely harder.

The District's task now is to explore with the wider public in the community the new legislation and the recommended policies to determine how they can be integrated into a State approved Groundwater Sustainability program. Our desire is to begin that process after the first of the year and report to the Borrego community in March during the District's annual Town Hall Meeting.

Thank you again for your service to ensure the future of the Borrego Community.