

Borrego Water District
MINUTES
Groundwater Management Standing Committee
Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 9:15 a.m.
806 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Attendance: Director: Smiley
Staff: Richard Williamson, General Manager
 Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
 Wendy Quinn, Recording Secretary

Public: Jim Engelke Marshal Brecht
 Clark Shimeall Bob McKee
 Paul Nordman, Pecoff Bill Wright, Roadrunner Club
 Lane Sharman, BWX Rudy Monica
 Mike Hussey Beth Hart
 Bob Moore, Springs at Borrego

CALL TO ORDER
INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Those present introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Director Smiley referred to Item 7, page 1 of the February 11 Minutes. He did not recall that Jim Engelke contested the fact that a water credit equals an acre foot of water per year or that the County would accept that figure. Mr. Engelke was trying to clarify the definition of an Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU). Rich Williamson suggested the second sentence in paragraph 2 of Item 7 be changed to read, "Jim Engelke expressed concerns about the definition of an EDU and recommended it be calculated based on fixture units in accordance with the Uniform Plumbing Code."

On page 2, second full paragraph, Director Smiley requested that the fifth sentence be changed to read, "Mr. Williamson expressed concern that farmers would *increase their water use* prior to fallowing to enhance their credits."

The Minutes were approved as corrected.

CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS

1. Status of USGS/DWR Groundwater Study. Jerry Rolwing reported that the USGS and DWR began this week identifying wells and marking their elevation. Mike Hussey requested that his well be measured, and Mr. Rolwing agreed.

2. Status of Financial Plan & Rate Analysis Study. Mr. Williamson announced that at the April Board meeting the Financial Plan/Rate Analysis consultants would present an update followed by a probable vote in May. The study is focusing on the parcel fee initially, and if the Board approves it in concept, ballots will be sent to all land owners in the District. Director Smiley asked whether the consultants would recommend a method for addressing the agricultural holdings within the District using their own wells, and Mr. Williamson replied that they would.

3. Federal Funds. Mr. Williamson reported that the Omnibus Bill passed Congress yesterday with two items earmarked for Borrego Springs: the southeast importation line (State and Tribal Assistance Grant (STAG) funds) and the De Anza flood control plan (Corps of Engineers).

4. Planning assistance from San Diego County. Mr. Williamson had nothing new to report and asked that the item be removed from the next Agenda.

5. Discussion on Mitigation Policy implementation by both BWD and San Diego County. Mr. Williamson distributed Draft No. 2 (2/16/09) of the Water Mitigation and Entitlement Policy. Mr. Engelke questioned the addition of wording in the first paragraph of Section 1, "and new water demands" (as something that would require mitigation). Mr. Williamson explained that an example would be golf course expansion which changed irrigation needs. Marshal Brecht suggested the sentence be changed to read in part, ". . . a mechanism by which ~~the water demand of new development~~ and new water demands are mitigated . . ." Mr. Williamson concurred.

Paul Nordman recommended that the last sentence in Section 2.f, "This policy sets forth the consumptive use factors for use in determining the amount of water credits a property is eligible to receive," be removed, since the criteria for determining the amount of water credits had not yet been determined.

Mr. Williamson suggested making Section 3 consistent with Section 1 as amended. Lane Sharman asked whether the District would support transfer of credits out of Borrego Valley. Mr. Williamson recommended consulting with the County, citing possible difficulties with the lack of a hydrological connection. Director Smiley asked whether the District would then have to allow a local developer to buy credits out of our basin. Mr. Williamson did not believe we would have to allow this, but Mr. Sharman urged that it be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Williamson requested comments on Section 4.d, addressing water credits for removal of crops other than citrus and turf. He noted Mr. Nordman's concern at a previous meeting concerning the fact that the water use for his palm grove was much higher than estimated in the draft policy. Discussion followed concerning how to keep the policy simple without penalizing the palm growers. It was the consensus that the policy could provide standard credit rates but include a procedure to apply for a variance. Mr. Williamson agreed to combine Sections 4.d and 4.e to outline the variance process. Director Smiley asked Mr. Nordman to prepare a one-page document citing the consumptive use of his crops and the basis for his calculations. Mr. McKee inquired about the definition of one unit of credit per 100 lineal feet of tamarisk removal (Section 4.c). Mr. Williamson explained that one unit equals one acre foot of water per year, or one credit. Mr. Engelke suggested adding a condition that for tamarisk removal credit, the trees must be "live growth," "thriving," "vigorous," or "green." Mr. Williamson requested suggestions on how to verify the health of tamarisk. Mr. Williamson went on to discuss Type 4 credits, proposed in the form of a water resource fee to be used for capital expenditures associated with transportation of new water into the District. This could be used when not many credits were available for sale. Mr. Brecht expressed concern that this would undermine the value of the credits. Director Smiley concurred and suggested the water resource fee be available only when credits were not. Mr. Williamson agreed. Mr. Williamson suggested that Section 4.h be amended to provide an administrative fee of \$100 per credit, rather than \$400. The Committee concurred. Discussion followed regarding the proposed transfer fee of \$100 per credit, and it was agreed to set a maximum of \$1,000.

Section 5 had been modified to provide that both the District and County recognize all four types of water credits. This may be changed as negotiations with the County continue.

6. Status and update on the Agricultural Fallowing program. This item was combined with the previous one.

7. Discussion on handling small mitigation requirements. Director Smiley explained that small mitigation requirements (five units or less) would be satisfied by District-held credits or a water resource fee. Bill Wright asked what would happen if a farmer wanted to fallow 22 credits worth and had a buyer for only 20. Mr. Williamson replied that the District would buy the other two.

8. Update on out of basin water purchases/transfers. Mr. Williamson reported that the Clark Lake property was currently being surveyed, and federal funding has been earmarked for the southeast importation line. He encouraged everyone to attend the town hall meeting on April 1. Mr. Wright requested that he be included in the District's e-mail meeting notices.

9. De Anza Golf Course improvements/water credits. Mr. Brecht reported that De Anza did not have its irrigation system plans yet, so the improvements will probably not begin until next year. He was not sure if they would sell their well to the District, but doubted it.

10. Discussion of future priorities and target dates. Director Smiley announced that the next Board meeting would serve as a public hearing and encouraged all to attend and provide input. Mr. Williamson will have a revised draft. The Integrated Water Resources Management Plan will also be on the Agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m. The next regular Conservation Committee Meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, 2009.