

Borrego Water District
CORRECTED MINUTES
"8th Annual Town Hall Meeting"
Wednesday, April 1, 2009, 6:00 PM
Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center
590 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Attendance:

Directors: President King, Vice-President Smiley, Secretary/Treasurer Andersen, Mendenhall, Shimeall

Staff: Richard Williamson, General Manager
Allison Burns, Stradling, Yocca, Carlson & Rauth
Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
Jeanne Fredericks, Customer Service Representative
Greg Holloway, Water Operations Supervisor/Safety Administrator
Wendy Quinn, Recording Secretary

Public:

Brian Zwicker	Carol Zwicker
Jack Herrick	JoAnn Herrick
Beverly Kuhrts	Elsa Chambers
Gail Sevrens, CA State Parks	Jan Stubbs, Solana Energy
Bill Mills	Lane Sharman, BWX
Janie Kimball	Fred Kimball
Jim Wermers	Anne Wermers
Marshal Brecht	Janet Brecht
Howard Busby	Jim Engelke
Bobbie Douglass	Michael Douglass
M.E. Wiles	Mike Venture
Jim Melvin	Dick Walker
Ralph Webb	Rosalie Webb
Larry MacWeil	Brian Siefker
Dennis Bostad	Lynda Bostad
Jim Symington	Nikkie Symington
Paul Nordman	Judy Meier, <i>Borrego Sun</i>
Bob McKee	Bill Hartley
Dennis Dickinson	Paul Miller
Rebecca Falk	Beth Hart
Ken Gilstrap	Fred Jee
Tim Ross, CA DWR	Peter Martin, USGS
Tom Fredericks	Claudia Faunt, USGS
Dennis Poston	

Introduction of speakers by Richard Williamson, BWD General Manager. Mr. Williamson welcomed the attendees. Fred Jee introduced the volunteers who would bring microphones to those wishing to speak.

Speaker #1: Kathy King, President of the BWD Board of Directors, Welcome to the Event. President King thanked everyone for attending.

Speaker #2: Richard Williamson, BWD General Manager, Overview of Multi-pronged Approach to Resolving Groundwater Overdraft Issues. Mr. Williamson explained that the District's objective is to create a sustainable and renewable water supply for the benefit of its customers. Efforts are continuing toward identifying importation opportunities and improving conservation practices, including recharge and recovery. Funding is anticipated for the Borrego Springs Water Supply Augmentation Project at Clark Lake and the Southeast Importation Line, which would connect to Imperial Irrigation District or Coachella Valley Water District. Water would need to be purchased elsewhere, but could be transported through their facilities.

Mr. Williamson went on to summarize the water credit/fallowing policy, which provides an incentive for farmers and golf courses to convert to less water intensive uses. A farmer can fallow his land and sell water credits to a developer who needs to meet mitigation requirements. Mr. Williamson invited the public to attend the next Groundwater Management Committee meeting on April 8, when this policy will be discussed in detail.

Speaker #3: Bill Mills, BWD Geologic Consultant, Report on Federal and State Funding Opportunities for Groundwater Management Projects. Mr. Mills summarized funding opportunities for feasibility studies, design and construction leading to acquisition and transportation of a supplemental water supply. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency and Bureau of Reclamation are major federal options, while the State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Public Health, Department of Water Resources and I-Bank offer State funding. Money from the new Economic Stimulus Program is also available. The District has received approval for a low-interest loan from the I-Bank to cover infrastructure, and the EPA is contributing to efforts toward obtaining and routing imported water. Other opportunities include the USDA Rural Water and Wastewater Program for small communities and State and Tribal Assistance funding for the Southeast Importation Line. BWD hopes to partner with the County of San Diego and the Resource Conservation District in order to qualify for funds requiring a regional project.

Speaker #4: Jerry Rolwing, BWD Operations Manager, Progress Report on the District's Conservation Programs. Mr. Rolwing explained that the Conservation Incentive Program includes irrigation audits, irrigation system retrofit assistance, turf removal credit, and rebates for low flow toilets and washers. To date there have been 17 audits, 3 retrofits, 11 turf removal projects, 36 toilets and 19 washers. The turf removal has saved an estimated 69 percent in irrigation, the toilets save 147,401 gallons per year, and the washers 173,280 gallons. The program will continue at least until July 1, 2009, when it will be reevaluated.

Mr. Rolwing reported that the District recently held a workshop for gardeners, in Spanish, regarding water saving irrigation techniques. Another was held on March 26 for the agricultural community, and one is being planned for the do-it-yourself gardeners. As another part of its education program, the District paid for bus transportation for elementary school

students to visit a water exhibit in Balboa Park. The schools are also planning another contest this year, featuring student posters, essays and PowerPoint presentations on water conservation. During last year's Borrego Days, the District had a booth offering conservation information and an exhibit demonstrating one unit of water, which costs \$1.12.

The irrigation audits have emphasized the need for anti-siphon valves and problems with adjustable sprinkler heads. Mr. Rolwing shared information on websites which offer irrigation efficiency information.

Speaker #5: Tim Ross, California Department of Water Resources, Status Report on Valley Water Levels and Well Locating Project. Dr. Ross stated he had been studying the Borrego groundwater basin for the past six years, and is now working with the U.S. Geological Survey and using a computer model to assess various scenarios. The major sources of runoff from mountain areas are Coyote Creek and Borrego Palm Canyon. The groundwater level is dropping, indicating we are removing water from the aquifer faster than it is being recharged. Dr. Ross reported on the current well canvassing, which is locating and documenting wells throughout the valley and determining their status (water level and quality). So far 107 wells have been documented.

Speaker #6: Peter Martin, United States Geological Survey, Status Report on Updating Geologic Model. Mr. Martin summarized the USGS three-year study of the groundwater conditions in Borrego Valley. Currently groundwater is our only source of water, and it is being pumped at three times the rate of recharge. It has been declining by two feet per year for the past 20 years. Data are being compiled and analyzed to assess the impact of farmland fallowing, using an updated computer model. Measurements are derived from 104 stations and 52 wells, and additional information on subsidence is acquired by satellite using InSAR (Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar).

Claudia Faunt of the USGS reported she was updating the 1988 groundwater computer model and combining it with the more recent Henderson-Netto model. She showed statistics compiled to date, indicating a steadily declining water level. Currently, 16,000 acre-feet of water are being removed from storage annually. Mr. Williamson explained that we are not yet at the point in the study to predict how long the aquifer will last, but should have more definitive information next year.

Public comment and question session. Becky Falk asked whether the information presented tonight would be available on the District's website, and Mr. Martin replied that some would be, but other data need to await review and approval.

The next question was what percentage of water use was residential, agricultural and golf, respectively. Assuming residential use is ten percent, the other users should be targeted. Mr. Williamson agreed with the ten percent residential use, and estimated agriculture uses seventy percent and golf twenty. Therefore, if water is imported for domestic use only, it will not have to be a large quantity. Conservation will further reduce the need, and the water credit/entitlement policy will encourage farmers to fallow.

In response to an inquiry as to how much water the farmers were using, Mr. Williamson replied that the District is working to determine that.

Tom Fredericks estimated typical annual usage at 18 to 20 million gallons for farms, 3 to 4 million for golf courses and 1.5 million for residents. He commended the District on its conservation incentive program, then asked about the impact if farmers ceased pumping out of the aquifer. Mr. Martin explained that if pumping is reduced, so is recharge. The water level would still decline, but at a slower rate. The model will provide additional information.

Dennis Poston commended the USGS and BWD for their efforts. He opined that only the ten percent residential users were interested in a sustainable water supply, not the agricultural and golf communities. He asked how we could get these larger users involved in the solution. Mr. Williamson explained that the District is trying to get everyone involved. The water credit and fallowing program targets agriculture, and the golf courses are forming an association in order to become more involved in the District's efforts.

Brian Siefker inquired about the difference between the upper and lower aquifers. Mr. Martin explained that the Palm Springs formation is thick but does not yield much water and has a high salt content. Discussion followed regarding possible additional exploratory wells.

There was a question regarding the impact of declining water levels on water quality. Mr. Martin replied that sampling in existing wells is continuing, and more definitive data are expected later this year. In general, water quality declines with increasing depth.

Closing remarks by Richard Williamson, BWD General Manager: Mr. Williamson reminded everyone again of the Groundwater Management Committee meeting on April 8 at 9:15 a.m. The next Regular Board meeting will be April 22, 2009 at 9:15 a.m. There being no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.