

**Borrego Water District**  
**MINUTES**  
**"10<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Hall Meeting"**  
**Wednesday, March 30, 2011, 4:00 PM**  
**Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center**  
**590 Palm Canyon Drive**  
**Borrego Springs, CA 92004**

**Attendance:**

Directors Present: President Hart, Vice-President Lyle Brecht, Secretary/Treasurer  
Marshal Brecht, Estep, Shimeall

Staff: Jerry Rolwing, Interim General Manager/Operations Manager  
Kim Pitman, Administration Manager  
Greg Holloway, Water Operations Supervisor/Safety Administrator  
Diana Del Bono, Administrative Assistant  
Heather Davidson, Customer Service Representative  
Jeanne Fredericks, Customer Service Representative  
Wendy Quinn, Recording Secretary

Public:

Clark Shimeall	Ray Delahay
Lyn Loerke	Lucy Larson
Sue Salt	Doug Wilson, MTR
Ray Shindler	John Peterson
Timothy Ross, CA DWR	Harley Hartman
Gwenn Marie, BVI	Grace Caldwell, BVI
Cathy Rose	Kathy Johnston
Cathy Gay	Jim Bennett
Kathy Bussey	Kent Smith
Jim Wermers	Anne Wermers
Diane Hydoski	Judy Meier, <i>Borrego Sun</i>
Jim Dice, CA Parks & Rec.	Joan Leopold
Tracey Alexander	Lara Maxwell
James Johnston	Julian Peabody
Buck Barrie	Mary Delaney
John Delaney	Rebecca Falk, RRR
Richard Gray	Joan Kirk
Dennis Dickinson	Jim Engelke
Briana Ross, ABF	Mark Jorgensen
Bob Phillips	Louise Phillips
Kathy Brigham	J.P. Lohr
Jan Stubbs, Aguasol	Larry March
Richard Russell	Dick Troy
Greg Young, Cocopah	Lane Sharman
Michael Spick	Peter Martin, USGS
Claudia Faunt, USGS	David Born
Saul Miller	Bill Wright

**Introduction of speakers: Beth Hart, President of the Board of Directors.** President Hart welcomed the attendees and introduced the Board, staff and speakers present. She noted that \$5.7 million of the District's \$6.5 million in reserves had been expended during the past three years, with another \$7.5 million obligated. In response, the new Board has eliminated health

care benefits for Directors, reduced legal expenses (\$477,000 over the past three years) and did not replace the previous General Manager (\$787,000 for three years' salary, expenses and benefits). Jerry Rolwing, the Interim General Manager, has declined additional compensation. Some of the Board members have declined compensation. President Hart commended and thanked the District staff and the community for their support. She also acknowledged the members of the public who have participated in District committees and encouraged others to do so.

**Speaker #1: Gary Haldeman, review the agenda and how Q & A will be handled.** Mr. Haldeman informed the attendees that comments and questions would be limited to three minutes at the end of the presentations.

**Speaker #2: Beth Hart, President of the Board of Directors, where we are now.** President Hart's comments were included in her introductory remarks.

**Speaker #3: Tim Ross, Department of Water Resources, well monitoring program.** Dr. Ross reported that the DWR had been working with BWD for eight years, and embarked on a new program a year and a half ago. Through the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM), the Department is monitoring 515 basins and sub-basins. The goals are to encourage local participation in determining the groundwater elevation and provide assistance. He hopes to establish a statewide groundwater monitoring network to identify long-term trends. BWD has elected to become a groundwater monitoring agency under the program and is working to develop a plan for submission to DWR.

Dr. Ross presented a graph depicting groundwater elevations in Borrego Springs from the 1950s through 2012 (projected). They are steadily declining. The levels were obtained from 35 monitoring wells in the basin.

**Speaker #4: Jerry Rolwing, Interim General Manager, grants and investigations update.** Mr. Rolwing outlined three current and potential grant funded projects: The Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) projects, the State and Tribal Assistance Grant (STAG), and the Bureau of Reclamation Basin Study. The IRWM projects are administrated by DWR through Proposition 84 funds and require regional participation. BWD's partners are the County of San Diego and the San Diego County Resource Conservation District. We are part of the Colorado River Regional Hydraulic Area, which includes the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area, Borrego Water District, Canebrake County Water District, two community services districts and four Native American Indian reservations. The IRWM Stakeholders Subcommittee has been meeting monthly since January 2010. They submitted an unsuccessful planning grant application but plan to try again.

The STAG is administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. BWD received an earmark in 2009 for a feasibility study regarding an importation pipeline. Study areas include San Felipe Creek, Clark Lake and Alegretti Farms, among others. We are awaiting a reimbursement payment of \$135,000.

The Bureau of Reclamation Basin Study will assist in identifying sources of water which might be imported into Borrego Springs. The study includes Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Water District and the San Diego County Water Authority. BWD is

required to match the \$425,000 grant, but may contribute in-kind services which are already been completed.

**Speaker #5: Peter Martin and Claudia Faunt, United States Geological Survey, Summary of work progress.** Ms. Faunt summarized the USGS work to date in assessing groundwater conditions and subsidence in the Borrego Valley. We face the problem that groundwater is virtually our sole source of water, and pumping exceeds recharge by four times, causing an annual decrease of two feet. With the declining water level, quality could deteriorate. The USGS objective is to improve understanding of the groundwater data and incorporate it into a groundwater flow model. They have reviewed historical data and surveyed 79 wells. Ms. Faunt explained that the largest recharge areas in the Borrego Valley are Coyote Canyon and Palm Canyon. The study includes updating information on their geology and hydrogeology, as well as investigation into the three aquifers (upper, middle and lower).

Based on information from the model, Ms. Faunt outlined three hypothetical scenarios: (1) taking no action for 50 years; (2) reducing agricultural production by half for 50 years; (3) cessation of agriculture with a 25 percent increase in recreational pumping and a 25 percent increase in municipal pumping over the next ten years; and (4) cessation of agriculture and recreational pumping while doubling municipal pumping over the next ten years. Scenario (1) would result in a 140-foot draw-down of the aquifer, (2) would produce a draw-down of 40 to 70 feet, and (3) and (4) would require less than half the current level of pumping overall.

Mr. Martin explained his study of data on the chemistry of 150 wells, particularly the total dissolved solids (TDS) levels in the three aquifers. Information on the middle aquifer is particularly important because the upper aquifer will eventually be dewatered. The middle aquifer has higher TDS, and in some areas is not potable. The study also addresses the age of the aquifer. He showed a map indicating in some areas, particularly around Coyote and Palm Canyons, it is less than 50 years old. In other areas, however, it ranges from 1,000 or 2,000 years old to as much as 25,000.

Future plans include completion of updates to and calibration of the model, conducting and analyzing predictive simulations, analysis of additional water quality data and preparation of a final report.

**Speaker #6: Lyle Brecht, Vice President of the Board of Directors, overdraft strategy and rationale.** Director Lyle Brecht pointed out that aquifers rarely run out of water. Our concern is the economic impacts of drawing out more water than is replaced, increasing the cost of pumping and treatment. This is a worldwide issue. He emphasized the importance of the community working together to address the problem.

Director Lyle Brecht continued with comments on the recent decline of BWD's cash reserves and credit rating, while still facing the overdraft of the aquifer. Prior strategy emphasized future water importation and assumed grant funding. The current Board's strategy is to return the District to fiscal stability by 2013; determine legal options and rights of pumpers and associated costs by 2014; complete legal, policy and economic work necessary to determine how the water credit program can be used to facilitate mitigation requirements by the end of 2011; work with the USGS and Bureau of Reclamation to fully define the basin and identify options for managing, storing and supplementing our water supply (studies to continue until

2012); and determine how the studies of San Felipe Creek, Clark Lake and other potential water sources can benefit us by the end of 2011. Public help and support in these efforts is welcome.

**Public comment and question session.** A concerned citizen asked how much depth remained in the north basin, why is the "army well" rising, why has it taken eight years to measure the overdraft, and how much has this cost. Dr. Ross replied that the north basin is declining more rapidly because of the agriculture in that area. The army well is in an area where there is almost no pumping. Mr. Rolwing stated that the District has been aware of the aquifer overdraft for at least 12 years, but for a long time there were many who didn't believe it. The cost of studies has been approximately \$6 million to date.

Kathy Brigham asked why the public was not made aware of the depletion of the District's cash reserves and what is being done to assure that this will not happen again. President Hart didn't know why the public had not been made aware, but to avoid this in the future, budget criteria are being established and will be reviewed at a workshop on April 6.

Mark Jorgensen asked what evidence the USGS had to indicate the overdraft would not impact the State Park's resources. Mr. Martin explained that they were looking at resources in Coyote Canyon, which is disconnected from the Borrego aquifer system. Other areas of the park, such as Clark Lake, could be impacted.

Richard Russell inquired about the high base water rate, possible reduction of District staff, County inspection fees, expensive studies and water credits. Mr. Rolwing explained that the base rate was established by the Board in 2004 to maintain adequate income through the summer when many residents leave. A consultant is currently reviewing the District staffing level. Mr. Rolwing explained that the District is working with the County to address inspection fees. Director Lyle Brecht responded to Mr. Russell's concern over the expensive studies, maintaining that it was money well spent and that the District assists in the studies. Solid information is required to establish policy, address the overdraft and manage the District efficiently. Mr. Rolwing explained that the water mitigation requirement was instituted by the County to alleviate the depletion of the aquifer.

Kent Smith asked the USGS representatives what value their study has provided and at what cost. Mr. Martin replied that data from DWR and prior USGS studies were compiled to enhance and develop the model into a tool which can facilitate future planning.

Lane Sharman suggested scheduling workshops to develop an action plan on potential adjudication and importation. President Hart concurred.

Rebecca Falk requested a review of Mr. Martin's presentation of the age of the aquifer at various locations, and he complied.

Clark Shimeall suggested that the State Park, BWD and USGS combine resources to replace the two gauging stations which are no longer operable. Mr. Rolwing reported that the District is investigating options and has discussed it with the park.

Mr. Russell asked how much it would cost to bring water in from El Centro or another area. Mr. Rolwing replied that the Basin Study would help to determine that. The current estimate is \$3,000 to \$6,000 per acre/foot, depending on the source.

Mr. Russell further inquired whether the State Park would allow BWD to route a pipeline through park property. Mr. Rolwing had not yet determined that.

Tracey Alexander inquired about depression depths. Ms. Faunt replied that the groundwater level had dropped less than six inches over the last 20 years. In response to Mr. Alexander's next question concerning horizontal conductivity and water flows, she replied that flows could travel in all directions, but usually went north to south. Mr. Alexander inquired about contamination of drinking water by nitrates. Mr. Martin explained that using the model, we can determine how many years it would take before nitrates reached the production wells. Mr. Rolwing added that the District monitors nitrate levels annually and has seen very little degradation. Mr. Alexander asked whether the large water users have agreed to reduce their usage. Mr. Rolwing explained that farmers and golf courses are motivated to conserve because of high pumping costs. However, those that own their own wells are free to use them as they choose. Mr. Alexander suggesting using ground tarps, and Mr. Rolwing noted that many farmers use mulch.

Another question for Dr. Ross dealt with what the DWR data tells us about the aquifer. Mr. Ross explained that it tells us what happens in the basin, forms the basis for modeling and provides data on recharge.

Ms. Falk inquired about the percent of recharge from Palm and Coyote Canyons. Ms. Faunt replied there were approximately 1,300 to 1,800 acre-feet from Coyote Canyon and 800 acre-feet from Palm.

Another attendee asked whether the slides presented today could be made available on the BWD website. Mr. Martin agreed to do so, pending release from the USGS.

Mr. Russell asked whether the decline in groundwater could precipitate a collapse in the ground. Mr. Rolwing explained there was not much evidence of compression or subsidence.

The next question was whether golf courses and orchards could go into the lower aquifer for irrigation to save water at the higher elevations. Mr. Rolwing explained that using the upper aquifer is much more efficient, and Mr. Martin added that the lower aquifer is not suitable due to TDS.

Saul Miller expressed concern regarding the overdraft and District money management. Director Lyle Brecht stressed the importance of all water users in the valley working together to address the overdraft.

Richard Gray suggested an economic model of declining values.

Judy Meier asked Director Lyle Brecht whether he envisioned an adjudicated basin. Director Lyle Brecht explained that there are five methods of determining water rights in California, two legal and three regulatory. He found the latter preferable.

Dick Troy commended the presenters on their clear information.

Mr. Alexander expressed concern that the large water users would drive water rates up.

Ms. Faulk inquired about the location of wells with high nitrate content. Mr. Rolwing replied that some had been discovered in the past and shut down. New wells have lower perforations to address this issue.

Bill Wright, a long-time property owner and resident, offered any needed assistance to the Board.

**Closing remarks by Gary Haldeman:** There being no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.