

BORREGO WATER DISTRICT TOWN HALL PRESENTATION
CLOSING STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT HART
MARCH 30, 2016

Tonight you have heard what we've been up to this past year. You've learned how the Community is responding to the overdraft, how the District is planning to address the consequence of the overdraft, how the State of California has set a time clock to advance our dealings with the overdraft and how the overdraft is driving the economic considerations of the District's planning costs. Our message is factual, instructive and hopeful.

You might remember that I am originally from Seattle. Seattle had its hard times, most notably in early 1970's when the "Boeing Bust" came and the giant aerospace employer shed 2/3 of its over 100,000 employees. Pessimism was rampant and it was believed that Seattle could not recover. Someone used a bill board to forecast Seattle's end – it read: "Will the last person leaving Seattle, please turn out the lights..."

There are those in Borrego that are equally pessimistic, believing that the end is near for our Community. That is not how this Board views are current circumstances. Instead, our message is one of hope along with a realistic approach that says – it's not going to easy, but it will be worth it.

Unlike so many communities that face hard times and difficult choices, there is something different about this town. We have real hope because people from diverse positions and with

differing needs are willing to work together to solve problems. There are groups within the Community who are already actively addressing the overdraft and its consequence with the specific purpose of ensuring our Community's future. Instead of waiting for the State or some other governmental agency to apply a "one size fits all" remedy for the overdraft with little or no consideration as to the local reality that is here, we are working to retain local control, address local issues and create practical resolutions to local problems. More than 3 years ago, the Department of Water Resources drew together a group of the largest pumpers in the Basin and asked them if they could work together to address the overdraft. Eventually named the Borrego Water Coalition (BWC), this was the first group in 30 years willing to stop pointing fingers and trading insults, instead, sit together, listen, learn from each other and trust enough to look at the problem. Local people with local knowledge able to think through local issues.

Now, with the advent of the State's Groundwater Sustainability Act, locals will have an even more powerful voice in the outcome of water issues as coalitions of ratepayers, independent well owners and other stakeholder groups are added to the collaborative process. Here's our task: to design a Groundwater Sustainability Plan to bring our Basin into balance within the State's time frame.

The District in cooperation with San Diego County will provide the governmental oversight, but our goal is to provide for the greatest level of local input before finalizing any decisions.

And, instead of waiting until the 2020 deadline, the District is attempting to complete its plan no later than 2017. Why? Because as Director Brecht just outlined, the overdraft is costing you and I money that could be better spent addressing the problem.

Some assume that there is no realistic method for addressing the overdraft, except through a legal challenge. Challenges may come, but we have ample evidence it can be done cooperatively. Farmers and golf course owners are good business people. They are careful planners and some are already considering how to leave the Basin. Others are working toward an exit strategy that works for them. Some will want to stay the course. We also have been told that there are foundation and other organizations with funds willing to facilitate the departure of agriculture from the Valley. These organizations are waiting to act once they are assured the cooperation within our Community is real and the resolutions we are proposing are defensible and effective.

Because of our past work and the funds ratepayers have put forward to address the problem, we are ahead of the curve in many areas. We already have a USGS study that establishes the overdraft, the basin's average annual recharge rate, and the basin's size. We also have a solid framework upon which to establish a stakeholder process to provide local input. We have recommendations from the BW Coalition and a commitment of cooperation from other groups within the Valley willing to add their expertise to our efforts while creating a plan. However,

because its government, there are several other moving parts yet to be resolved. The Department of Water Resources will not issue its approval standards for Sustainability Plans until this summer. The District and San Diego County are in process to create a Memorandum of Understanding that provides for the greatest local input from our Community. Once these elements are in place and finalized, the District will move forward as quickly as practicable to begin defining the various elements of the Plan and its cost that will be paid by all pumpers in the Valley.

Here's where you come in. We want your input. We want your participation in the process. While the BWC has historically met in private, all stakeholder processes going forward within the frame work of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan will be public pursuant to the Brown Act. The more ideas brought forth in the planning process, the more efficient and effective the Plan will be. Our goal is to be government at its best: participatory, consensus driven, inclusive and diverse. We can not accomplish our goal without the support of Community members willing to work along side us. Please consider being an active part of Borrego's future and participate, attend our monthly Board meetings, and check our website for updates.

Before I accept questions, I want to extend a sincere thank you to the members of the Community who are already participating in the process. You know who you are and you are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank the Water District's staff and managers. Without their commitment to the

District, we would not be as far into this process as we are or as successful. I specifically want to thank Jerry Rolwing, our general manager, who recently announced his intent to retire this summer. We not only wish him the very best, but look forward to working with him as a consultant to the District to provide additional consistency and support as we move into the next phase of planning to address the overdraft. Thank you Jerry, you are a great asset to this community.