

Anza Borrego Desert Planning Region Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

Tuesday September 20, 2011
1:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Borrego Water District (BWD)
806 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs, CA 92004

DRAFT NOTES

Action items are shown in italics

Attendees:

Jerry Rolwing, BWD	Michael Rodriques, Anza- Borrego Desert State Park	Dale Schafer, Center for Collaborative Policy
Lyle Brecht, BWD	Brad Ray, Seley Ranches	Tish Berge, RMC
Beth Hart, BWD	Judy Meier, Borrego Sun	Rosalyn Prickett, RMC
Eleanor Shimeall, BWD	Clark Shimeall, Resident	Crystal Mohr, RMC
Marshal Brecht, BWD	Don McKelvey, Resident	
Anna Aljabiry, DWR		
Lauma Jurkevics, DWR		

Agenda:

Welcome and Introductions

- The group made self introductions, and Tish Berge gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

Review Outcomes of Last Meeting, July 19, 2011

- Jerry Rolwing discussed the previous meeting, which was a Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of Borrego Water District (BWD) held on July 19, 2011.
- Mr. Rolwing noted that during the previous meeting the group discussed the IRWM process that has been completed to date within the Anza Borrego Desert (ABD) IRWM Region (Region). This process included development of a draft IRWM Plan and submittal of a Planning Grant application in 2010, which was not funded by Department of Water Resources (DWR).
- Mr. Rolwing explained that at this meeting the group discussed that now is a good time to re-group and move forward with the Region's IRWM process, including hiring RMC to write a Planning Grant Round 2 application and increasing stakeholder input in the process.
- The group discussed stakeholders that they would like to add to the process, including:
 - Majestic Pines Community Service District (CSD);
 - Canebrake County Water District (CWD);
 - Jacumba CSD;
 - Terwilliger Valley located in the northern portion of the Region;
 - Salton CSD;

- Golf course interests;
 - Business interests;
 - More agricultural interests; and
 - More residents.
- Lyle Brecht inquired about two deliverables from the July 19th meeting, including a letter of invite to all potential stakeholders and a draft MOU to participants of the IRWM Program.
 - Mr. Rolwing noted that the invite has been sent out, and that they have received a draft MOU from DWR that could be modified for the Region.
 - Dale Schafer noted that the stakeholder focus is recommended to engage other players that were not previously included in the process and increase general participation.
 - Ms. Schafer gave an overview of outreach activities completed to date, which include multiple interviews with representatives of such organizations as the golf community, State Parks Department, Chamber of Commerce, Community Sponsor Group, and the Resource Conservation District of San Diego County. She noted that there is a lot of support, and that people would like to work together to achieve consensus. Many people felt that previous IRWM decisions were made by a few players and did not necessarily have regional buy-in.
 - *Dale Schafer to send Jerry Rolwing a list of all stakeholders on her contact list to ensure that they are also on the IRWM stakeholder list.*
 - Ms. Schafer noted that she is currently working with Ali Taghavi for RMC-Wrime on developing a scope for technical support.
 - Tish Berge noted that she spoke with Mr. Taghavi, and he is recommending that the Region produce a “State of Basin” report, which provides better definition of the existing groundwater overdraft issue and also provides possible solutions.
 - There was a question if the State of Basin report would need to cover more groundwater basins than the Borrego basin and discuss issues within other parts of the Region. It was clarified that while the IRWM Plan must cover all issues throughout the Region, special studies in the Planning Grant application and individual projects can be focused to address a specific issue within a specific geographic location.

IRWM Goals and Objectives

- Tish Berge provided an overview of DWR’s Program Preferences, which IRWM-related items such as the IRWM Plan and IRWM grant applications must meet to be successful.
- Anna Aljabiry noted that it is not enough to simply use the key words expressed in the program preferences, but rather that applications and plans will only receive points for meeting the program preferences if they include language that clearly demonstrates how the preferences are met.
- Rosalyn Prickett added that often IRWM regions evaluate items through the lens of DWR’s Program Preferences at the beginning of the process as part of the project or study selection process to ensure that these items truly meet such preferences.

- Tish Berge then provided an overview of the Region's current goals and began a discussion with the group on how they would potentially like to expand on the existing goals or determine new goals.
 - Lyle Brecht noted that the overall vision/purpose of the IRWM Program is to solve a fairly large, looming, complicated, and expensive problem (groundwater overdraft) in a sustainable way. He noted that the Region is currently reaching an economic cliff regarding this issue where if they do not do something the problem will become increasingly (possibly prohibitively) expensive by requiring such things as additional treatment and land use changes. On this note the Region needs to establish a managed basin to avoid potential future costs. Mr. Brecht added that while the Borrego basin does not cover the entire Region, it does supply water to most of the Region's population.
 - Mr. Rolwing added that he would like to add groundwater quality and flood control into the list of the Region's main issues.
 - Clark Shimeall noted that parts of the Region, specifically Canebrake are on the verge of having no water. Due to infrastructure issues and the reliance on a single groundwater well, this region is a small disaster (earthquake, storm, etc.) away from losing their entire water supply.
 - Beth Hart noted that she would like to add the idea of exploring such options as using the Borrego basin as a storage basin for San Diego County, which would require establishing a pipeline or route for bringing in and retrieving water.
 - Lyle Brecht noted that he has heard that no other region will be involved with storage and recovery or other groundwater activities until the Borrego basin is managed.
 - Rosalyn Prickett noted that there is an opportunity to establish relationships with neighboring IRWM regions, and that the IRWM program is a good opportunity for meeting with other regions to discuss potential inter-regional ideas.
 - Don McKelvey noted that the Region is missing a large potential revenue source in terms of flood insurance. He noted that there are likely other revenue streams available, which the Region should explore.
 - Beth Hart noted that on the topic of flooding, flood retention basins on such areas as Coyote Creek should be explored to look at costs, feasibility, and analyze if flood flows could be captured and reused.
 - Lyle Brecht noted that in addition to overdraft, groundwater pumping could exacerbate water quality issues. It was noted that it is possible that reducing groundwater pumping could allow contaminants from agriculture or other sources to seep deep into the groundwater aquifer. It was also noted that while there are high nitrates in some groundwater wells, nitrates have been found in the local groundwater for a long time and it is possibly due to natural rather than man-made sources.

Meeting Goals and Objectives

- Tish Berge presented the proposed goals and objectives for the meeting at hand, and inquired if anybody in the group had additions.

- Lyle Brecht asked about how the Region is to prepare a vetted Planning Grant Proposal with review and input. He would like to ensure that the stakeholders have a chance to review the application before it is sent to DWR.
- Beth Hart added that as a member of the Board of BWD, she would like to know how she can be involved to help and support the Region in this application process.
- Tish Berge replied that she would like to ensure that there is an appropriate amount of time between soliciting/receiving input and preparing the comprehensive application package, especially when considering that the application needs to be completed on a fairly short timeline.
- Dale Schafer noted that from her perspective the team can help the process by getting stakeholders to the table and increasing participation. She added that the group needs to work on getting the community on-board with the IRWM Program, and making sure that everyone knows this is not just a water district issue, because the issues at hand impact everyone.
- Lyle Brecht inquired if the work with Ali Taghavi regarding the State of the Basin report would be compiled in time to include within this process? He noted that he is interested in addressing this issue through a data-driven process.
- Anna Aljabiry noted that the technical assistance grant for Mr. Taghavi's work is currently held up at the Department of General Services (not DWR). She noted that this is a long process, and she is unable to estimate when the grant contract will be finalized.
- Mr. Lyle Brecht noted that in the future the Region will need to address these types of bureaucratic issues that are potentially hindering work.

IRWM Plan and Funding Opportunities

- Rosalyn Prickett introduced this item and gave an overview of the Purpose of an IRWM Plan.
- Ms. Prickett also discussed IRWM Plan Update requirements, and noted that the scope of the Planning Grant Application will be sure to include all of the latest IRWM Plan requirements. She noted that while the DWR requirements denote what items must be included in the Plan, they do not dictate how these things are accomplished. In this way the Region has flexibility to adopt DWR's requirements to their specific issues and goals.
 - Beth Hart inquired if the IRWM Plan requirements are something that stakeholders should be familiar with and understand.
 - It was noted that while a general understanding of the guidelines may be helpful, stakeholders do not need to go through and clearly understand the entire guidelines package.
- Ms. Prickett then explained the difference between planning projects and implementation projects with respect to the IRWM Program.

- Lyle Brecht noted that from a political perspective the Region has been “studied-out,” and they would prefer not to use that term and instead refer to studies as “plans/alternatives development.”
- Ms. Prickett noted that both the Planning Grant and Implementation Grant applications must contain a 25% funding match, which can be sourced from a variety of non-state sources (including federal sources).
- Anna Aljabiry noted that there is a waiver of the funding match for disadvantaged communities (DACs), which are defined as communities with median household incomes less than 80% of the statewide average.
- Rosalyn Prickett noted that as a general rule, individual projects and plans/alternatives development may request a DAC waiver, but the overall application package must have a 25% match. This means that other components of the application will need to put forth more than a 25% match to make up the difference.
- Anna Aljabiry noted that while Rosalyn is correct in her assessment, the 25% overall match policy is a general rule, and DWR is open to working with the region on this issue.
- Lyle Brecht asked how the budgets are generally scoped for work. Do individual proponents do this?
- Rosalyn Prickett responded that generally it is recommended that the folks slated to complete the work also complete the budgets. If this is not an option, RMC can work with the RWMG to complete detailed and accurate budgets.
- Rosalyn Prickett also noted that the plans/alternative development must be relevant to and included within the IRWM Plan. These items must also have a direct nexus to water issues. It was asked if these items could include legal analysis. Rosalyn Prickett responded that scopes can be beyond engineering studies, but that the outcomes must be weaved into the IRWM Plan.
- Ms. Prickett then gave an overview of eligible applicants, noting that the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park qualifies as an eligible applicant.

Review of Prop 84 Planning Grant Round 1 Submission

- Jerry Rolwing gave an overview of the previous Planning Grant Application, noting that it scored 36 points, which was not enough to be funded.
- Anna Aljabiry noted that more detail needs to be included within the Work Plan and Schedule. There needs to be more information to describe to DWR what will actually be done, and what the work will achieve.
- Dale Schafer noted that she thinks the process should include stakeholders as much as possible to increase success.

Development of Prop 84 Planning Grant Round 2 Submission

- The group discussed the proposed schedule, and Anna Aljabiry noted that while DWR is not certain when the final Project Solicitation Package (guidelines) for the Planning Grants will be released, they are working on finalizing the February 2012 deadline. She added that DWR anticipates the next round of Proposition 1E

applications to be due in June 2012, and the next round of Proposition 84 Implementation grants to be due in October 2012.

- Next, Tish Berge led the group in a discussion regarding submittal of the next (Round 2) Planning Grant Application.
 - Ms. Berge noted that the main focus will be on the Work Plan, and that RMC wants to ensure that there is consensus regarding tasks and plans/alternatives development.
 - Anna Aljabiry noted that if the group is looking to obtain Proposition 1E funding, they will need to have an IRWM Plan adopted by June 2012, and any projects proposed for funding will need to be within the Plan.
 - It was asked if the Plan has to be amended every time new stakeholders or projects are proposed.
 - Rosalyn Prickett replied that generally IRWM regions have a “living” project database that is open to be amended without requiring IRWM Plan amendment.
 - The group then discussed the feasibility of having an IRWM Plan in place by June 2012. The group noted that while this is a tight timeframe, it has been done in other regions.
- Tish Berge provided an overview of the (proposed) items within the Preliminary Draft Work Plan Outline:
 - Task 2-1: Integrated Flood Management through Invasive Species Control
 - The group noted that flooding is a serious issue, which is anticipated to increase with climate change. Therefore, this plan/alternatives development will include a climate change component.
 - As far as invasive species are concerned, the group discussed tamarisk and Saharan mustard. The group was unclear if these invasive species pose issues relating to groundwater supply and flooding. These hypotheses could be explored within the plan/alternatives development.
 - It was also mentioned that cane in Canebrake can cause a lot of damage relating to floods.
 - The idea was brought up of including retention basins within this plan/alternatives development.
 - The group discussed issues relating to flooding, and how flood diversion could potentially alter existing hydrologic patterns. Analysis will have to take these issues into consideration, especially when concerning re-routing water within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.
 - Task 2-2: Develop a Comprehensive Groundwater Management Program
 - The idea behind this plan/alternatives development would be to take the region a couple steps further toward groundwater management.
 - It was noted that this item should be considered as a portion of a future Groundwater Management Plan (GWMP). It should include

analysis of mechanisms (and their costs) of how to implement a GWMP and how to get all users to pay for a sustainable groundwater solution.

- It was inquired about who is going to manage coordination between this item and the State of the Basin report. Generally RWMG staff will take care of managing these efforts, but RMC can help manage as long as these efforts fit within the budget.
- The group discussed information sharing, and the need to develop a database or other mechanism for gathering and storing information so that it can be easily shared with stakeholders. The group decided that at this point meetings are the best place for information sharing.

DWR Report

Please refer to conversation above.

Next Steps

- Lauma Jurkevics noted that DWR anticipates releasing a Climate Change handbook in October 2011.
- Meetings:
 - The group discussed best days to meet and how many stakeholder meetings should be held. It was noted that one per month (4) prior to the Planning Grant Application may not allow enough time for stakeholders to provide input and maintain involvement. The group decided that they would convene one full stakeholder meeting per month with ad-hoc workgroups as necessary.
 - *RMC to put together a proposed calendar (schedule) to share with the group. RMC to also provide guidance to Jerry Rolwing regarding coordination.*
 - *RMC to provide information to group regarding improvements that can be made to website to increase information sharing capabilities.*
- Mr. Don McKelvey noted his concern for potential environmental roadblocks and how policies such as climate change analysis would impact the Region.