

## Water Plan Regional Workshop Summary – Coachella, CA

### OVERVIEW

The 2009 update of the California Water Plan, Bulletin 160 (Water Plan) is based on a collaborative approach that engages a wide range of stakeholders and the public in a variety of ways. The Water Plan team is receiving recommendations from a standing Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from 18 State agencies, and an Advisory Committee, with 39 representatives from organizations representing statewide interests. The involvement of regional and local interests is brought in through a series of public workshops conducted in each hydrologic region.

Each workshop consists of three major presentations to describe: the Water Plan, Regional Reports, and regional approach. Immediately following each presentation, workshop participants engage in brainstorming discussions in a small group format. A workshop for the Colorado River region was held on July 26, 2007 in Coachella, CA. Copies of the workshop presentations, handouts, and materials are available on the Water Plan website at [www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/materials](http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/materials).

A brief recap of the presentations is provided in the following paragraphs and the remainder of this document provides a summary of the small group discussions. Flip charts were used to record ideas generated during the discussions and transcripts of the flip charts are located at the end of this document.

Kamyar Guivetchi, Manager of Statewide Water Planning for the CA Department of Water Resources, presented an overview of the Water Plan Update process. This presentation described the approach and structure for the 2005 Update, as well as the process for the 2009 Update – including meeting schedule and opportunities for involvement, key activities and work products, and related content. The major sections of the Update include: data on water supply, use, and quality; water planning scenarios; water management strategies; Regional Reports; and reference materials and technical reports. Following this presentation, workshop participants were asked to identify additional items that should be considered for inclusion in the Water Plan.

In the second presentation, Mark Stuart, Chief of the Southern District for the Department of Water Resources (DWR), reviewed the Regional Report for the Colorado River hydrologic region. Each regional report describes regional data and hydrologic conditions, regional challenges and accomplishments, and regional water planning efforts. The discussion related to this presentation asked for suggestions to improve the content of the Regional Report for the Colorado River region. Participants were also asked to identify and provide contact information for good sources in obtaining and verifying regional data sets.

The final presentation, by Judie Talbot, workshop facilitator, recapped the regional approach proposed for Update 2009. This approach uses regional workshops, an annual regional forum, and an annual plenary session to bring in local perspectives, issues, and concerns into the Update process. The ensuing discussion asked for recommendations to: improve the proposed approach; encourage the continuation of regional dialogue on water management; and identify others who need to be part of the regional conversation on water.

The workshops also included brief presentations on related statewide water initiatives, including the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) grants program, Flood Safe program, and Statewide Water Analysis Network (SWAN). The SWAN is an open forum of technical expertise that serves as a technical advisory group to Update 2009.

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### ***DISCUSSION ON WATER PLAN CONTENT***

After hearing the presentation on the approach, content, and structure of Update 2009, workshop participants were asked to brainstorm other topics that should be considered for inclusion in the Water Plan. Workshop attendees were specifically asked to think about regional issues and concerns that might benefit from additional attention. Key themes that emerged during the group reports included:

- a. water transfers, water rights, and water quality (lower quality source water to a higher quality water area): a concern was noted several times about State Water Project water being exchanged for lower quality Colorado River water and impacts to groundwater quality; water quality from retired agricultural surface water rights is another concern
- b. reliability of the State Water Project: annual allocations and long-term average supplies; conveyance infrastructure; and Delta issues (including pump shutdowns)
- c. effects of Quantification Settlement Act (QSA) projects on local water supply (e.g. lining of the Coachella aqueduct)
- d. funding and incentives: for water recycling, conservation, disadvantaged communities

Other topics that were identified by group reports include:

- e. education and outreach on water issues (similar to “Flex Your Power”)
- f. risk (including emergency response and adaptability)
- g. Salton Sea issues
- h. invasive species

### ***DISCUSSION ON REGIONAL REPORT CONTENT***

The discussion groups suggested a wide range of additional topics that might be included in the Regional Reports:

- a. regional data:
  - need universal and standardized datasets
  - a hydrologic study of the Coachella Valley is needed, including disadvantage communities, movement of water (replenishment)
  - describe regulatory setting and how agencies make decisions (understand how the Water Plan factors into agency decisions)
- b. water supply/demand/quality data:
  - bucket for bucket exchange transfers fail to address water quality aspects
  - examine how contractors serve water to their customers
  - synchronize water quality and water supply; expand discussion on water quality
  - monitoring networks need to address long-term impacts on issues and contaminants of concern (e.g. septic and Colorado River recharge)
  - describe, coordinate, and expand existing data and monitoring efforts
  - describe existing conservation efforts – give examples and models; work with building industry on conservation
  - report on efforts to improve local infrastructure (pipeline replacement, purple pipes)

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- c. challenges:
  - tertiary treatment is needed for Colorado River recharge to match quality of existing groundwater supplies
- d. resource management strategies:
  - look at whether tiered billing rates work
- e. regional planning:
  - show regional water management plan boundaries
  - need integration of priorities
  - include information on regional relationships and coordination with other agencies (Bureau of Reclamation, Water Boards, Department of Public Health)
  - need to fairly balance multiple, sometimes conflicting, perspectives – power and influences rests with wholesalers (v. multiple retailers); smaller districts need to be engaged and empowered to sit at the table with larger districts
  - the needs of disadvantaged communities must be represented and addressed, including provisions for matching funds
  - policies and regulations must be coordinated and enforced
- f. reference materials:
  - provide examples of building codes and landscape guidelines that promote water conservation

### ***DISCUSSION ON REGIONAL APPROACH, OUTREACH, AND NETWORKING***

At the workshop, participants expressed that DWR is using the right approach in asking for regional input. Additional strategies and contacts for suggested for enhancing regional outreach and involvement:

- a. tailor workshops to regional issues:
  - a regional approach must focus on implementation and show demonstrated results; interim steps must work towards ultimate goals
  - have agencies summarize projects in their regions
- b. expand outreach and representation:
  - coordinate with different jurisdictions (e.g. water districts, cities, and counties)
  - get representation for various interests and jurisdictions of different sizes
  - smaller districts have staffing constraints
  - better outreach and more notice for workshops
  - include:
    - the building industry/architects, golf courses, resorts
    - representatives from watermaster areas
    - small environmental and watershed groups
    - councils of governments (COGs)
    - landscape industry – irrigators, etc.

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### **CLOSING REMARKS**

At the close of the workshop, Kamyar Guivetchi and Mark Stuart expressed thanks to all those who attended and participated in the session. A special thank you was extended to Coachella Valley Water District for hosting the workshop.

A final reminder was given to participants on contacts for the Water Plan: Chang Lee is serving as the point of contact for regional coordination in the Southern District. He can be contacted via email at [clee@water.ca.gov](mailto:clee@water.ca.gov) or by phone at (818) 500-1645, ext. 250. Paul Dabbs, provides general oversight for Update 2009 and can be contacted via email at [pdabbs@water.ca.gov](mailto:pdabbs@water.ca.gov) or by phone at (916) 653-5666.

**CWP Regional Workshop – Flip Chart Transcripts  
Colorado River, July 26, 2007**

**Table A**

*Regional considerations to include in Update 2009:*

Top issues:

- Delta issues including pump shutdowns
- consider water quality in transfers (low quality source water to a high quality water area)
- focus on risk (including emergency response and adaptability)

Other issues:

- focus on conveyance and water rights (physical vs. paper)
- recognize that the Colorado River hydrologic region has several unique social and environmental areas
- storage concerns (both internally and externally to the region)
- Quagga Mussels and other invasive species (clogging infrastructure)
- Salton Sea issues

*Suggestions regarding regional reports:*

- define and show the overlap of regional water management plan boundaries
- power and Influence rest with wholesalers vs. the multiple retailers
- bucket for bucket transfer does not hold when you consider quality

*Regional outreach and networking:*

- DWR is using the right approach; we like the fact we (the region) are being asked for input
- missing pieces: be careful, could get too many at the table. Double-edged sword.
- must implement suggestions. Must see physical results.
- enabling goals (interim steps toward ultimate goal)

Who shouldn't be invited?

- High level elected politicians (for planning process)

**CWP Regional Workshop – Flip Chart Transcripts  
Colorado River, July 26, 2007**

**Table B**

*Regional considerations to include in Update 2009:*

- surface water use (instead of groundwater supplies): from agriculture, treating it for potable
  - high treatment costs
  - water rights issues
  - conversion of land use (use groundwater for urban use)
  - retired agricultural uses lead to water quality issues
- big question: what to do with retired agricultural water rights
- moving water: 2 state contractors, 170,000 acre-feet of State Water Project entitlement; however, no physical connection, need to trade water from the Colorado River which is lower quality
  - despite population growth, there is no way to move water

*Suggestions regarding regional reports:*

- hydrologic study of valley is needed (need City of Coachella Water Authority and Mission Springs Water District, as well as working with Indio on disadvantaged communities)
- integration of priorities
- movement of water (replenishment)
- synchronization of water quality and water supply)
- need similar data sets
- recharge / exchange water
- long term impacts – need to tie into monitoring networks to measure issues and contaminants of concern (e.g. septic), e.g. Colorado River recharge
- show groundwater monitoring that examines trends
- describe existing data / monitoring efforts
- expand: coordinate surface / groundwater monitoring
- need a universal database
  - the Water Boards' Groundwater Ambient Monitoring Assessment (GAMA) program is inadequate
- IRWMP: smaller districts need to be engaged and empowered to sit at the table with larger districts
- disadvantaged communities:
  - need more involvement
  - representing the needs of the disadvantaged
    - septics
    - can't fund treatment; monitoring systems
    - fees, matching funds
- describe relationships with other agency planning efforts (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Water Boards, California Department of Health Services)
- describe how other agencies make decisions
  - answer the question: what does the Water Plan mean to me in the region?

**CWP Regional Workshop – Flip Chart Transcripts  
Colorado River, July 26, 2007**

**Table B, cont'd.**

Regional issues:

- give examples of building codes and landscape guidelines that are friendly to water conservation
- fairly balance conflicting perspectives; because different groups have input on planning issues, the larger, more powerful interests usually prevail.
- jurisdictional issues:
  - policies not enforced, coordinated
  - regulations conflict
  - cannot get all parties to the table
  - cannot get all parties to agree
  - some things get left off the table
- examine tiered billing rates: does it work?
- Better data and information is needed for the Water Boards

*Regional outreach and networking:*

- get variation of representation from smaller water districts (variety of sizes and interests)
  - show that things are happening with smaller districts, not just big ones
  - small districts have staff constraints that make it hard to attend workshops
  - majority of water delivered to majority of people via smaller districts
- IRWMP contact database: Marilyn McKay, Mission Springs Water District
- coordinate among different jurisdictions (e.g. water districts, cities, and counties)

**CWP Regional Workshop – Flip Chart Transcripts  
Colorado River, July 26, 2007**

**Table C**

*Regional considerations to include in Update 2009:*

Top issues:

- have smaller IRWMP within each region (watersheds)
- examine what effect the Quantified Settlement Agreement (QSA) projects have on local water supply (e.g. lining of Coachella Aqueduct)
- monitor effects of contamination in imported supply (e.g. expand discussion on water quality) and the water table
- better public outreach for statewide and regional basis (i.e. “Flex Your Power” campaign)

Other issues:

- reexamine State Water Project (SWP) allocations in Coachella Valley
  1. obtain input from working group on what has been discussed today
- water supply issues in other regions – how does that impact supply here?
- recycling water – fund allocation to smaller regions to start or continue programs (i.e. feasibility)
- credits or incentives from State for land use changes and water conservation – maybe water allocation

*Suggestions regarding regional reports:*

- include a comprehensive discussion of geohydrology of the Coachella Valley
- show existing conservation efforts – give examples and models
- give estimates of water use by land uses
  1. have a specific breakdown of uses (i.e., landscaping) and water losses (i.e. evaporation)
- examine how contractors serve water to their customers
- report on efforts to improve local infrastructure (i.e., replacement of local pipelines) and purple pipes
- expand discussion of water quality
- discuss how water restrictions are not uniform – highlight disparities between different areas
- are we looking at what is best for California (as a whole) – not just from a water standpoint?
  1. evaluate potential for solar power
- impacts of septic tanks on local supply
- maintenance program for septic tanks
- work with building industry on conservation efforts

*Regional outreach:*

- better outreach and notice of workshops
- bring more people to the table; more 1 on 1 conversations
- have agencies summarize projects in their regions
- emphasize key DWR contacts and let them know how to contact with more ideas and information after the workshops

**CWP Regional Workshop – Flip Chart Transcripts  
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**Table C, cont'd.**

- group session format works well
- separate contractor from water purveyor
- include:
  1. building industry
  2. golf courses, resorts
  3. representatives from watermaster areas
  4. representatives from small environmental groups and watershed groups
  5. councils of governments (COGs)
  6. landscape industry – irrigators, etc.
  7. architects (w/ golf courses, resorts)