

CWP Mountain Counties Regional Workshop Summary Sonora, CA – April 11, 2008

OVERVIEW

As in the prior update, the 2009 Update of the California Water Plan includes a volume consisting of Regional Reports, which describe the conditions for each hydrologic region in the State – as well as two areas of special interest (the Delta and Mountain Counties areas). Each regional report uses a standardized format in describing the current conditions for each region or area. The content for each report is being developed with the involvement of regional and local interests through a series of public workshops conducted in each region or area.

Each workshop consists of three major presentations to describe: an update on the state of Update 2009 activities; revision of Regional Report outlines, based on previous workshop results; and overview of the initial draft outline. For each workshop, most of the time is dedicated to small group review and comment of the initial draft outline of the Regional Report for that region or area. A workshop for the Mountain Counties area was held on April 11, 2008 in Sonora, CA. Copies of the workshop presentations, handouts, and materials are available on the Water Plan website at 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 and worksheets were used to record ideas generated during the discussions and transcripts of the recorded results are located on the following pages.

Paul Dabbs, Project Manager for Update 2009, made the first presentation regarding the status of major 2009 Update activities. A key element is the integration of the FloodSafe and IRWM (Integrated Regional Water Management) programs with the Water plan. This new content will be reflected in each Regional Report, as well as the scenarios and Resource Management Strategies (RMS). Other additions to the Water Plan include: quantification of scenarios and potential response packages; assessment of climate change impacts and recommended adaptation actions; and incorporation of other State plans with strong connections to the Water Plan.

Outreach efforts to regional, Tribal, and local interests are continuing to expand. A total of six drafts will be available for each Regional Reports and RMS, with opportunities to comment on the five drafts preceding the final report. Workshop sessions for RMS will occur during July and August 2008, with a conference line to facilitate participation. In addition to the feedback solicited for Regional Reports and RMS, review and comment is requested by June 30, 2008 for the Draft Assumptions and Estimate report released at the end of 2007.

In the second presentation, Pierre Stephens with the Central District of the Department of Water Resources (DWR), reviewed the key characteristics of the Mountain Counties area. A recap of the comments heard during the previous workshop was also provided, along with a revised outline for the Regional Report format. In the final presentation, Pierre described each section of the Regional Report for Mountain Counties. Workshop attendees reviewed, discussed, and provided suggestions for each section, as recorded on the following pages.

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Suggestions for Topics in Regional Report Outline

- add sections on history and hydrology in setting

Suggestions for Mountain Counties Regional Report

Setting

- in first paragraph, add “up to Sierra crest
- include a brief section on history – indigenous stewardship and mining, agriculture, timber, and 100 years of Federal land administration
- add a section on hydrology

Watersheds

- a picture is worth 1,000 words: why not have an oversize fold-out map (say 24” by 36”) of the major watersheds to accompany the table of watershed areas? (fold and place in plastic sleeve?) – include fish symbols for ecosystem concerns, waterdrop for volume of runoff in watershed, human stick figure for population, \$ for income, etc. that vary in size (or color) to signify quantity; call out wild and scenic rivers designations (which can restrict strategies)
- identify value of storage in snowpack
- water source is on public land

Ecosystems

- terrestrial species are not mentioned – why not?
- information source: Executive Summary statements in the SNEP report
- include forest management
- this area provides important ecological services for the entire state (natural storage, filtration, conveyance, flood attenuation)

Climate

- discuss the importance of snow pack – how it cools the air, prolongs snowpack release
- page 13-3: precipitation – snowpack is largest volume reservoir in state

Demographics

- use of words like “less” than 2 percent ... and “however” (in the 1st and 2nd sentences) lend a tone that the Mountain Counties is small, but is growing up → suggesting we do not have the population that is meaningful, and that urbanization is the end game of our regions
- information source: Sierra Business Council
- page 13-4: population density – better to exclude federal ownerships
- despite urban growth, disproportionately high amounts of disadvantaged communities (info source: DOF? CABY?)

Land Use Patterns

- massive recreation benefit to entire state
- link land use planning and water planning
- discuss the watershed impacts of Mtn. Counties land use: e.g. open space created by ranching and other ag is of tremendous benefit (flood control, water quality) to downstream communities

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- growth in the urban interface (urban/private and USFS land) creates a risk to the health of the state's source water, by increasing the risk of catastrophic fire
- dependency on wells and septic systems
- economies of scale
- treated water and raw water management plan (county water element in General Plan)

Regional Water Conditions

- information source: FERC re-licensing reports (of last few years) that provide updated excellent information on water use, water quality, and flow trends over recent past – obtain from hydro-power agencies
- in Tuolumne and Calaveras counties, the utility ditch systems serve benefit as stormwater receptors, but they also alter the hydrology of many streams intercepted by the ditch system
- information source: county-based utilities
- we are unique as a hydro area – state needs to be aware of our total water portfolio (supplies and wastewater) and give us credit for recycling (to secondary standards) treated wastewater

Water in the Environment

- page 13-5: identify number of river miles of wild & scenic rivers
- the first two paragraphs provide a description of setting (move to watersheds section), description should focus on those rivers with dedicated instream flows
- note the difference between current hydrographs on regulated rivers v. unregulated rivers (or models of historic unregulated rivers)
- note that in many cases, environmental water is diverted and used by downstream users
- see comment under water supplies, where environmental water dedicated to CVPIA impacts precludes contracted consumptive use

Water Supplies

- page 13-6 instead of conveyance “losses” restate as “inefficiencies” – losses can be considered groundwater recharge ... rather than “losses” (esp. during drought)
- legal entitlements v. actual water received ... how to account for water filings which are not yet rights, but are significant, and should be accounted for (e.g. growth water rights v. water rights filing; legal entitlements v. water received (see New Melones discussion below) – also, TUD ha not received Don Pedro water
- page 13-6: 70% surface water and page 13-7 shows 10% groundwater for single-family use – would it be helpful to list the sources of 30% water supply between groundwater and recycled water? the report states groundwater is developed by individual water users – there are public and private community water supply systems using groundwater and should be mentioned
- provide base information on the reliability and quality of groundwater across the majority of the foothill region
- in Tuolumne County, private wells are hugely important – supplying much more than 10%
- address the state of the science on groundwater in this region and point out what we need to learn (data gaps)
- fire will affect water supply reliability
- ditches have historic, recreational, fire-flow, biological connectivity, and ag water values
- need to address reliability: US Bureau of Reclamation water from New Melones Reservoir is going for CVPIA ecological use (i.e. salinity of San Joaquin River water at

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Vernalis and water temperature adjustment for fish in Stanislaus River) instead of contracted consumptive use for urban, industrial, and agricultural use in San Joaquin Irrigation District and Stockton East Water District. e.g. contraction for 155,000 AF in 1983, conveyance system completed in 1993 and no water has been delivered in all but flood years from 1993 – present; DWR mandated New Melones could only be filled to ½ of capacity until beneficial use contracts were presented for urban and ag use and signed by Central San Joaquin Irrigation District and Stockton East Water District – the water is there, however, the Bureau of Reclamation keeps an enormous amount of water as carry over from year-to-year and refuses to deliver contract water to the water districts. The matter has been pursued in federal courts to no avail – essentially making this contract with Bureau of Reclamation worthless.

Water Uses

- ratio of “exported” water (all water leaving area for other users) / water used in area (e.g. restate flows and exports as 5 of amount used)
- growing trend toward increasing agriculture, especially vineyards
- generalities across this large of a region are tough – there is no way that ag uses ¾ of Tuolumne County water

Water Quality

- contamination “maybe” occurring in ditch systems – rather than “is degraded”
- small water systems
- small water systems, when defunct, can also be taken over by larger regional systems and rectified; bottled water is not always the case
- why do private water wells having contamination have to be mentioned?
- how is growth inducement relevant in water quality?
- page 13-8: abandoned mines add that other water quality issues from mining include pH impacts
- page 13-8: say that water quality “may be” degraded, in some cases, limited areas
- page 13-8: (small water systems) ditch requirements – DHS; definition, don’t lead into proposal of individual well requirements; don’t say “private well” and “unregulated”
- page 13-8: (erosion/sedimentation) terms – “commercial timber harvesting” has state law definitions; also, “sedimentation below foothills dams problem for salmonids”? NO
- page 13-9: groundwater quality – add meeting arsenic with lower drinking water standards is a significant challenge
- water quality deteriorates as water flows towards the ocean, as it picks up contaminants flowing off of streets and roads along the way – as well as runoff from urban lawns and homesites, and industrial and agricultural land runoff
- page 13-9: (restoration) misses meadow restoration with multiple benefits
- page 13-9: (placeholder text) dairies issues are insignificant or nonexistent in Mountain Counties; San Joaquin River wetlands are not in the MC area – delete; FERC process impacts water supply (energy first) then environment

Project Operations

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Water Governance

- mention of absentee governance (e.g. EBMUD, SFPUD) who have water projects serving population outside of the area
- page 3-10: split governance/planning; list of agencies – identify out of region process absentee/out-of-area government bodies and customers ... disconnect

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Flood Management

Historic Floods

- primarily, flooding is mostly localized across the Mountain Counties region with generally low concern overall, but some specific areas of concern

Flood Hazards

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Institutions

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Existing Flood Damage Reduction Measures

- constructed flood protection facilities says “none found in this effort” → not the case, many of the existing reservoirs have flood control volumes
- ditches can reduce the intensity of major storm event flooding
- dams help to control runoff and prevent floods by holding water for release in smaller quantities at a later date
- page 13-11: add that there are lots of flood control reservoirs in region; meadows and flood attenuation effects (land use linkages – helps downstream users)
- page 13-11: flood control and general plan safety elements
- paved areas add much more – is smart growth cluster housing more water efficient?
- page 13-12: OES developed emergency process – county OES

Relationship with Other Regions

- need to find a way to bring powerful downstream interests to the table; currently, they just export their water and resist any regional dialogue ... because they pretty much have everything they want
- CCWD with San Joaquin County using State Area of Origin; conjunctive use
- if don't use – then lose? SWRCB reopen Bay Delta Water Rights proceeding?
- Amador wants 10,000 AF of Mokelumne water, but CCWD wants to retain rights
- difficult to implement – water rights difficult
- IRWM efforts helpful coordinator
- hydro opportunity – ditches, small streams, etc.
- early water rights holders less concerned with inter-regional cooperation – no need
- every agency should exhaust all local options before importing (e.g. San Francisco), get hydro benefit also
- how to influence state policy – source areas should get investment from downstream users (e.g. fuel reduction, stream reconditioning, improve riparian corridors)
- OHV, invasive weeds, fire, and loss of open space are impairing migratory species
- how to make recommendations: exemptions from mandated water quality requirements; funding for mandated water quality regulations
- reuse and efficiency not so helpful, since still usable
- IRWM/local grounds – meet local needs
- concern about recent trend towards fast, major changes: recycled water policy, state stormwater permit changes, sanitary sewer requirements, conservation mandate, etc. ...
- regional meetings – add MCWRA

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Regional Water and Flood Planning and Management

Integrated Regional Water Management

- CABY, Stan-T, MAC
- two others
- should include wastewater districts

Accomplishments

- MCWRA as “one voice” for the area
- organization of region-wide groups such as Mtn. Counties WR Assoc. are now effective
- IRWMs making progress

Challenges

- Area of Origin protections need to be preserved – how will this be seen by new legislators, as disruptive to the Delta solution? the Delta cannot even be modeled to small quantities of water (e.g. 17,000 AF ... so how is it reasonable to usurp the beneficial use in an area, [to provide] for environmental water? being left out of the “room” but not out of the “solution” – legal challenges from Delta solution process impacting upstream supplies
- FERC reduction in supplies (because of increase in environmental water)
- Area of Origin rights (done by EID on American River) – potential to use
- Stockton East and supply from New Melones
- San Joaquin restoration for fish still will have big water quality problems – effects only lower reservoirs, not upper watersheds – but downstream changes do impacts upstream storage and supplies
- biggest challenge is fiscal – need funds
- need to develop or further study wells in foothill region and how land planning decisions may affect groundwater or other water sources

Drought and Flood Planning

- fish are not at the “same table” as everyone else who has to conserve during drought
- drought: every region needs to diversify their water portfolio

Looking to the Future

Future Scenarios

- protection, management, and enhancement measures for Sierra water – as a state asset
- a dry and thirsty California as a result of too much planning and not enough action in the way of reservoirs, conveyance systems, and groundwater recharge with winter flood releases

Climate Change

- increased rain-on-snow events, increased mud slides, increase in silt displacing water in reservoirs, increased risk of fire

Response Strategies

- partner with USFS, state and federal land managers to reduce fuels
- use permeable surfaces for Mountain Counties development
- limit septic systems
- optimize ditch values

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- groundwater recharge with winter flood releases from reservoirs
- dams and reservoirs must be built NOW to catch the expected earlier runoff from the snowpack for use later in the year when it is needed for irrigation and urban use
- develop upstream/downstream inter-regional conjunctive use/water transfer programs to meet future development water needs in Sierra Nevada and meet critical overdraft needs of valley – occurring in Mokelumne River area through the Mokelumne River Forum
- developing land use strategies to cluster development to economically serve water/wastewater needs v. existing sprawl of wells and septic systems

Implementation Next Steps

- exemption from AB 2175, 20% water conservation mandate, one size does not fit all
- start now planning and constructing reservoir sites – Temperance Flat and Las Vaqueros have been studied to death ... build them NOW
- build, build, build
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Water Portfolios from 1998 - 2005

- some categorization of the class of hydrologic year (dry, above normal, etc.) for the 8 years of 1998 – 2005 would be helpful to know what year types the data represent
- the water allocation graph (in presentation) is misleading – the large block of water allegedly allocated to Wild & Scenic Rivers and instream flows is almost all appropriated by downstream users ... i.e. it's not the “environment” taking most of Mountain Counties water, but downstream users (in our area: TID, MID, SFPUC)

Selected References

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