

Coachella Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Program Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) Outreach

Thursday May 20, 2010
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Coachella Valley Water District
85-995 Avenue 52
Coachella, CA 92236

DRAFT NOTES

Attendees:

DAC Workgroup

Sergio Carranza, Pueblo Unido
Miriam Torres, EJCW
Jennifer Hernandez, CRLAF
Rita Sonnenberg, Desert Edge
Betty Leehan, Desert Edge
Cindy Nana, Desert Edge
Anna Vargas, Poder Popular
Jose Huerfa, Poder Popular
Anna Aljabiry, DWR

CVRWVG

Marilyn McKay, MSWD
Mark Krause, DWA
David Tate, DWA
Katie Ruark, DWA
Dan Parks, CVWD
Patti Reyes, CVWD
Paul Giera, IWA
Andrea Riesgo, IWA
Tom West, RMC
Roselyn Stewart, RMC
Daniel Cozad, IPM

Meeting Objectives:

- A. Create a common understanding/expectations of the Coachella Valley IRWM program, including schedule, key milestones, and stakeholder involvement.
- B. Obtain feedback on regional water resource issues to make sure issues are covered and articulated appropriately.
- C. Confirm involvement in and commitment to future meetings and to providing input to IRWM Plan development. Confirm key points of contact. Identify other potentially important participants.
- D. Share/capture other relevant thoughts and ideas for future discussion.

Meeting Notes:

Patti Reyes, Coachella Valley Water District, welcomed the group and thanked them for attending. Daniel Cozad, Integrated Planning and Management, introduced the meeting agenda and facilitated the discussion.

Introduction to IRWM Program

Tom West, RMC Water and Environment, provided an overview of the State's IRWM program and its goals/objectives, upcoming Prop 84 funding opportunities, and the activities considered relevant to IRWM planning. He provided an overview of the CVRWMG and the Coachella Valley IRWM region. Finally, he reviewed the proposed work plan and schedule for development of the Coachella Valley IRWM Plan.

- Clarification that region may not be eligible for Round 1 Implementation Grant funding because we don't have an adopted IRWM Plan yet.

Issues Identification

Daniel Cozad provided an overview of the water-related issues identified to date through a review of local water management plans and studies. He invited additional feedback and clarification on the issues important to DACs.

Water Supply

- Affordability of water and wastewater is key issue for DACs. How can DAC needs be addressed without increasing rates?
 - Water rate increases are a disproportionate burden on DACs. Ongoing operational costs for water management at issue.
 - Issue is complicated by other income and affordability issues, such as housing.
- Water supply is critical to DAC communities – both adequate affordable supply, as well as water quality that meets current potable water standards.
- Supplies vary from trucked water to shallow agricultural or drinking water wells. However, all of these may have maintenance issues.
 - Because many communities are remote (sited due to proximity to agricultural employment and/or land affordability), cost to extend municipal service is generally prohibitive.
 - Local technical solutions need to be developed, although some special treatment costs can also be high.
 - Need for a “master plan”-type evaluation was identified for developing a potential program of solutions. However, some small systems maintain desire to be independent.
- Concern that groundwater pumping is not being adequately monitoring re: overdraft. Questioned how supply projections are developed.
- In Desert Edge, mineral water wells (hot) corrode pumps/pipelines.
- Drinking water supply needs to be available to communities' w/contaminated wells.
 - Access to hauled water in mobile home parks. Grocery store water machines run out in summer.
- Some wells in East Valley are above perched aquifer and are not suitable for drinking.

Water Quality

- Water quality in drinking water is most important to DACs. Groundwater quality issues include fluoride, arsenic, and TDS/minerals.
- Arsenic issues in East Valley groundwater supply. Levels exceeding MCL – residents displaying acute symptoms.

- RCAC has completed a groundwater monitoring study in East Valley mobile home parks – Anna to provide copy.
- Enforcement of water quality regulation is complicated by the overlapping jurisdictions, state, tribal, and county and the unpermitted status of some water systems.
- Pueblo Unido is working w/CVWD to address water supply and sewage at municipal scale. However, many DACs not within urban areas – farm workers in rural areas need clean water.
- Rural water treatment systems (new technologies) and training are needed in these rural/remote areas.
- Many illegal mobile home parks in East Valley – Riverside County Dept of Environmental Health (DEH) and Economic Development Agency (EDA) need to be involved in solutions.
 - Root is regional housing affordability issues. But County is reluctant to address housing issues; mobile home parks often formed by extended families who purchase 1 plot land.
 - County DEH does enforce monitoring for permitted water systems.
- Suggestion to establish regional water quality lab for testing of well drinking supplies and distribution of information to residents.
- Concern about pharmaceuticals/ Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in septic systems at Desert Edge (retirement communities) – how is septic leaching affecting groundwater quality?

Wastewater

- Sewer management is a critical issue with several aspects:
 - Inadequate or undersized facilities in some areas.
 - Septic systems located in low percolation areas (e.g., high groundwater and clay soil in East Valley).
 - Septic in areas that may contaminate high quality groundwater or hot water sources.
- Septic to sewer conversion efforts are underway, but costs/difficulty may be high.
- Municipal services hookup is complicated due to the rural and agricultural nature of some areas. Affordability further complicates regular municipal services.
- Septic issues in mobile home parks (both legal and illegal) in Desert Edge – Few parks are reliably disposing of their septic tanks. Operations and maintenance are inconsistent between different parks.
 - Illegal mobile homes parked on the desert are dumping their septic on the ground. No policing of septic disposal.
- High density mobile home parks (24 parks with ~5-10,000 elderly residents) in Desert Edge contain seasonal populations and reduce wastewater disposal affordability.
- Hot water basin is not suitable for drinking. CVWD does monitor basin to establish water levels/pumping.
 - Suggestion that the IRWM Plan define monitoring conducted throughout Valley.
 - MSWD has done some nitrate testing to understand movement of sewer contaminants from hot basin toward cold basin.

- Project concept → Septic-to-sewer conversion for mobile home parks.
 - Need to determine how mobile home parks can finance sewer hook-up given affordability issues.

Flooding

- Flooding issues in Oasis and Thousand Palms. FEMA has mapped the 100-Yr floodplain.
 - Ave 76 + Pierce is key area of concern.
 - Thousand Palms had solutions in development with Army Corps, but funding has been an issue.

Monitoring Needs

- Need to coordinate with County DEH, water agencies, and systems:
 - Understanding of current groundwater monitoring and results
 - Understanding of current stormwater monitoring and results
 - Groundwater monitoring in rural areas
 - Groundwater monitoring in hot water areas
 - Water supply (level) monitoring for managing overdraft

Stakeholder Outreach

Tom West provided a summary of the proposed stakeholder and public outreach strategy, including several more meetings of this Planning Group to guide development of the IRWM Plan. He also described the DAC Outreach Demonstration Project proposal that the CVRWGMG has submitted to DWR for additional funding.

- Suggestion to focus outreach on East Valley to understand issues.
 - But meeting like today wouldn't attract residents. Need to have simple agenda, focus on project needs.
 - Schedule outreach meetings in the evenings for community feedback.
 - Need Spanish translator (possibly Native translation too) for DAC projects.
- Other participants for IRWM program → La Quinta MHP, North Palm Springs, Mountain View MHP, West Garnet MHP, County EDA + EPH, community town councils.
- Suggestion to host Town Hall meetings for Community Councils north of I-10. However, seasonal population is already gone for this summer.
 - Linda Kearny from Supervisor Benoit's office has contact for Community Councils.
- DAC Outreach Demonstration Project – Scope of work will be distributed once final review and approval by DWR is complete.