

Coachella Valley Disadvantaged Community (DAC) Outreach Program Community Water Workshop – Eastern Coachella Valley

**Tuesday June 18th, 2013
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**San Jose Community and Learning Center
69455 Pierce Street
Thermal, CA 92274**

DRAFT Notes

Italics denote action items

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

Matthew Doyle, President of the San Jose Community and Learning Center (Center), welcomed the meeting attendees to the Center. He stated that this workshop was the first to be held in the Center, a new facility for the eastern Coachella Valley, which will provide important resources to the community. Sister Gabriella Williams, Director of Programs for the Center, also welcomed the group and thanked Sergio Carranza, Executive Director of Pueblo Unido Community Development Corporation (PUCDC) for organizing the meeting.

Kathy Caldwell, RMC Water and Environment (RMC), provided an overview of the agenda and meeting objectives.

Background and Purpose of DAC Outreach Project

Kathy Caldwell, RMC, provided an overview of the Disadvantaged Community (DAC) Outreach Program. The purpose of this program is to expand upon previous DAC outreach to target individuals and groups representing DAC issues, and to also engage members of DAC community in order to frame and articulate water management issues facing DACs. Ms. Caldwell explained that the DAC Outreach Program is a companion program to the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program that has been active in the Coachella Valley since 2009.

Kathy Caldwell provided an overview of IRWM planning and DAC outreach efforts, noting that there are two distinct yet interwoven planning efforts being conducted. She explained that the first effort, the DAC Outreach Program has five main components:

- Completing directed outreach to DACs to create a database of stakeholders that are interested or involved in DAC-related issues.
- Identify where DAC populations are located within the Coachella Valley.
- Work with identified stakeholders and DAC populations to characterize issues faced by DACs.
- Work to identify DAC issues through the creation of projects that could potentially be funded with Proposition 84 (IRWM) funding.

- Coordinate DAC Outreach efforts with the larger IRWM planning effort.

Kathy Caldwell then briefed the group on the overall IRWM program. She provided an overview of the history of IRWM planning in the State of California and in Coachella Valley, noting that the three goals of the State's IRWM Program are: develop long-term water supply reliability, improve water quality, and protect natural resources. The first Coachella Valley IRWM Plan was adopted in 2010 (available on www.cvrwmq.org), which made the region eligible for Proposition 84 funding. In Round 1 of Proposition 84 funding, in 2011, the Coachella Valley was awarded \$4 million in grants. The Coachella Valley IRWM Region generally follows the Whitewater River watershed, but also extends to encompass Salton City. The Coachella Valley IRWM planning efforts are led by the Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group (CVRWMG), which includes the Coachella Water Authority, Coachella Valley Water District, Desert Water Agency, Indio Water Authority, and Mission Springs Water District.

DAC Mapping and Surveying Approach

Dr. Ryan Sinclair, Loma Linda University (LLU) provided an overview on the DAC mapping and surveying, which was conducted as part of the DAC Outreach Program. Dr. Sinclair explained that the purpose of this exercise was to more clearly define where the DACs are located throughout the Coachella Valley, and to conduct a survey of residents to understand their issues pertaining to water management. This portion of the program was conducted by LLU and two local non-profit organizations: El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center (El Sol) and PUCDC.

As of the East Valley Workshop, the survey team had completed 196 surveys in the West Valley and over 150 surveys in the East Valley. Dr. Sinclair explained that surveys were conducted by groups containing LLU students and promoters from El Sol and PUCDC. To-date, the group has gathered a lot of very useful information pertaining to the location of DACs and to water-related issues that are faced by DACs. The team will continue to finish surveys in the East Valley, and will have the data ready to present to stakeholders in September of 2013.

Community Mapping Exercise

Dr. Ryan Sinclair then asked meeting attendees to participate in a brief mapping exercise. Meeting attendees had already been grouped into tables according to where they live, and would be completing the exercise with their designated group. During this exercise, attendees would be given a large piece of paper and asked to draw a localized community (apartment or mobile home park) where they live. In the drawing, they were asked to color-code information as follows:

- Black Ink would indicate functioning infrastructure such as roads and buildings.
- Blue ink would indicate resources such as groundwater wells and lagoons.
- Red ink would indicate challenges and issues.

The groups were given the appropriate materials and asked to draw their communities. Once drawings were completed, a representative from each group gave a presentation of their drawing. Below is a summary of each drawing as presented by meeting attendees:

1. Oasis: Oasis Mobile Home Park

- Map shows the Oasis Mobile Home Park (infrastructure) and septic systems (black).
- Map shows a wastewater lagoon that was shut down by the government (red).
- Red ink in the street shows where wastewater (black water) from the septic systems leaks into the streets.

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- The map also shows that the red area (leaking wastewater) is in very close proximity to the mobile home parks and to the groundwater well. There is concern that the black water contaminates the park's drinking water well.
 - Red ink in the corner of the mobile home park shows an area where trash is illegally dumped. There is concern about the proximity of the trash pile to the groundwater well, and potential contamination.
 - Red ink in the streets also indicates flooding, which happens when it rains. Flooding also causes issues with access – when it rains the ground erodes (the roads and ground are not paved), and cars cannot access the park.
 - The group indicated that the conditions described for this park also apply to two other neighboring mobile home parks: La Cienega and Rancho los Ferros
2. Mecca: Lake St. Anthony Mobile Home Park
- Map shows the Lake St. Anthony Mobile Home Park (black ink), which has about 92 units.
 - Map shows wastewater lagoons, which are very close to the mobile home park units.
 - Map shows (red ink) flooding that covers almost the entire park. The flooding also causes access issues as the entire park is un-paved. Access issues here are severe as the school bus has access issues when picking up children for school. This forces children to wait for the bus along Highway 111, which is very dangerous.
 - Map shows red ink throughout the park as an indicator of electricity issues.
 - The mobile home park has blue ink (resources) associated with a water well that is being connected by PUCDC.
3. Pierce: Avenue 69 Mobile Home Park
- Map shows the Avenue 69 Mobile Home Park (black ink).
 - Map shows septic system issues, as black water comes up from the systems.
 - Map shows severe flooding issues, which cause access issues. When there is a severe rain and flooding, no cars (even emergency vehicles) can access the park.
 - Map shows a pile of rocks that spontaneously ignites – some residents believe due to satanic activity. Others believe that this is a dump site that has burning trash beneath the rocks.
4. Indio: Sunbird Mobile Home Park
- Map shows the Sunbird Mobile Home Park (black ink) along Highway 86.
 - Map shows (red ink) overflowing septic tanks in the area.
 - Map shows (red ink) wastewater lagoons from Valley Sanitary District, which present odor issues to residents.
 - Map also shows that residents in the area, especially children, suffer from asthma and other health issues.
5. West Thermal: Harrison/Avenue 66 Mobile Home Park
- Map shows that there is a need for drinking water and sewer infrastructure.

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- Map shows that there are no recreational facilities (playground, etc.) for the children.
- Map shows that there is no paving or electricity. Both of these things cause safety issues as children play outside in the dark at night and may be hit by cars. Additionally, the paving issue presents access issues as others have mentioned.

Kathy Caldwell thanked each group for their input, and explained that the next step of the exercise would be to discuss potential solutions to each of the issues that were raised by the groups. Ms. Caldwell explained that part of the DAC Outreach Program includes limited funding to complete design and engineering for a few projects. The design and engineering work will develop projects to the necessary level to be competitive for IRWM funding or other funding sources. On this topic, Ms. Caldwell noted that the meeting packet included a form for stakeholders to fill out to further articulate potential projects to be considered for funding.

Below is a summary of the potential solutions that were discussed for each of the five mobile home parks described above:

1. Oasis: Oasis Mobile Home Park

- Residents believe that there is an organizational issue – help is needed to organize the community. The current issues are extreme, and need a lot of help.
- Another issue is that this park is on tribal land – residents are concerned that this will impact what can be done.
- Residents think that the government should come fix conditions in the community. There is not enough money for basic infrastructure in this community, although it seems like the government has money available for other things.
- A mobile home park owner in the area was present at the meeting, and stated that they would be open to making infrastructure improvements.

2. Mecca: Lake St. Anthony Mobile Home Park

- Residents believe that full-scale infrastructure: connection to the water and sewer system, electrical upgrades, and pavement are necessary.
- In the short-term, the park has point-of-use reverse osmosis systems installed by PUCDC to resolve drinking water issues.

3. Pierce: Avenue 69 Mobile Home Park

- Residents see paving as the primary issue and the most pressing issue. Flooding and erosion are the biggest issues.
- Residents see the overflowing septic systems as the second-largest issue, but do not know how to resolve this issue.

4. Indio: Sunbird Mobile Home Park

- Residents believe that the best solution would be to connect to the local sewer system, and to put in internal piping systems in place of the wastewater lagoons.
- Residents see the need to purchase bottled water as the biggest issue: the water is not safe to drink.
- Residents believe that detention basins on the property could be used to hold flood flows.

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- Issues are considered severe, and believe that relocation (such as what happened with the Duroville residents) would be a last resort, but is an option.
5. West Thermal: Harrison/Avenue 66 Mobile Home Park
- Potable water is seen as the largest issue in this mobile home park. Overflowing septic systems is the second issue.
 - Residents are unaware of potential solutions, but believe that governmental intervention is required.

Questions and Comments

Kathy Caldwell thanked each group for their input, and invited all meeting attendees to ask any questions or make any comments. Below is an overview of the questions and comments received and answers (*in italics*).

- If we were interested in getting money for preliminary design and engineering, who would we meet with?
 - *The first step will be to synthesize the information received at the meeting. Please fill out a project concept form for consideration, and contact Kathy Caldwell with any additional questions.*
- What system will be used to determine who is helped (what projects are selected)?
 - *The project team will develop a set of criteria, which will be applied to all projects equally.*
- What will happen with mobile home parks on tribal lands? Can they get help too?
 - *Tribal lands to present unique jurisdictional challenges, but this does not mean that no help is available. Federal funding may be the most appropriate for projects on tribal lands. The biggest issue would be to find a sponsor, and make sure that tribal land owners will agree to the project on their land.*
- Can we have our water tested to make sure it is safe?
 - *If you are located within the Coachella Valley Water District, you can call and have your water tested. There are pamphlets (in English and Spanish) on the back table with the necessary information.*

Next Steps

Kathy Caldwell thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She noted that there will be another workshop in the West Valley on June 20th. Information for that meeting is:

- **DATE:** June 20th, 2013
- **TIME:** 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- **LOCATION:**
DHS Family Resource Center (in the Kmart shopping center)
14201 Palm Drive Suite 108
Desert Hot Springs, CA

There will be another meeting on September 12th (location TBD) – please give us your contact information, and we will send you the details. Any questions, please contact Kathy Caldwell: kcaldwell@rmcwater.com or (310) 566-6460.