

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

**Thursday June 20th, 2013
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**DHS Family Resource Center
14201 Palm Drive, Suite 108
Desert Hot Springs, CA**

DRAFT Notes

Italics denote action items

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

Larry Singh, Director of the DHS Family Resource Center, welcomed the meeting attendees to the Center. He thanked Susie del Toro of El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center (El Sol) for putting the meeting together. John Soulliere of Mission Springs Water District (MSWD) also thanked meeting attendees and organizers for coming and for dedicating their evening to discuss important water-related issues in the West Valley.

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.cvrwmg.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 (CVRWVG), 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. Corkill Park, Mobile Home Park

- Map shows that septic tanks (overflowing) are the biggest issue in this community.
- This is a large park, with approximately 150 units
- Septic tanks in the middle of the park overflow into the streets and into houses.
- There are basic issues associated with water and electricity: at times water pressure is very low, and there is no electricity.

Draft Notes

Western Workshop – June 20, 2013

- The entire park has issues with pine trees – the roots push into the pipes and break them. The pine needles get caught in ditches and cause flood problems.
 - This mobile home park has lack of basic infrastructure, and residents do not feel that it is safe. There are particular safety issues associated with the lack of electricity – it is not safe for children to play at night.
2. Palm Drive Mobile Estates, Mobile Home Park
- This is a large park, with approximately 100 units
 - The park has many infrastructure issues, and is not well-kept.
 - There are issues with trees that push up the concrete and break pipes. Residents were told (by mobile home park owner) that they would need to pay to remove them.
 - The power lines in the park are loose, and can break. It is also not safe for children to play here at night.
 - There are other issues associated with animals – dogs and cats. There are cats everywhere, and they are dirty. There are dogs that people do not pick up after, and it is not pleasant to residents.
 - Many people have issues associated with septic system overflows into the yards, or backing up into the homes.
 - When it rains, water gathers and pools on the property and there are mosquitoes.
 - The residents have expensive water bills, and wonder if the water is safe to drink. The community experienced un-notified water shut-offs, sometimes for days.
 - Residents believe that this park is located within the City of Desert Hot Springs.
3. El Sol
- The El Sol organization provided a presentation on West Valley issues and potential solutions.
 - They noted that one major concern is education regarding what can go down the drain – especially cooking oil. Many residents are not aware that this will destroy their septic systems.
 - They also noted that there are many resources available, and El Sol is here to work with residents to resolve issues!

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 issues brought up during the meeting.

- For the issue of septic systems:
 - Residents would like regular maintenance and inspections to determine the issues. They do not know why there are regular overflows. Is it roots? Behavior? Unmaintained systems? Under capacity?

Draft Notes

Western Workshop – June 20, 2013

- For the issue of flooding:
 - Residents note that detention infrastructure is necessary. Some noted that there are detention basins on-site, but in bad locations (such as at the park entrance).
 - There is an issue with mosquitoes in the detention basins, so residents do not always like this option.
- For the issue of drinking water:
 - Residents do not believe that their water is safe to drink, and do not know if they are served water from a municipal provider. Residents want their water tested by the government.
 - MSWD noted that there are some concerns with testing. MSWD assures that water going into the park (at the master meter) is clean. The mobile home parks have internal infrastructure (piping) that may be compromised and could be contaminated.
 - It was also noted that mobile home park owners must agree to the testing before the agencies can do this work.

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*).

- In general it seems like government agencies should be able to help. These are permitted mobile home parks – if there is wastewater leaking in the streets and the water is not clean, then there are code violations that should be addressed.
 - *The projects could include educational materials about who to contact and how to contact the proper government officials.*
- Who can residents go to? Who would be enforcing these codes?
 - *Likely the City of Desert Hot Springs and the County of Riverside, depending upon where you live.*
- There is some concern about this code violation reporting. Must recognize that some of the municipalities simply come in and shut down parks once violations are reported – then residents lose their homes! Also, there is concern that the mobile home park owners will illegally try to push off costs for operations and maintenance to the residents.
 - *We can include all of this in the educational materials – thank you.*
- Why doesn't someone check up on this? Why do we have to go to them to report?
 - *We cannot answer the specifics of code enforcement for the municipalities, but in general they are experiencing staffing issues.*

Next Steps

Kathy Caldwell thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She noted that 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.