# Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group
# Salt and Nutrient Workshop #2

**Wednesday September 26, 2012**
**1:00 – 3:00 pm**

**Coachella Valley Water District**
**CVWD Training Room**
**75-515 Hovley Lane East**
**Palm Desert, CA 92260**

**MEETING NOTES**
*Italics denote action items.*

**Attendance**

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| Maritza Martinez, CWA | Olivia Bennett, CVWD |
| Berlinda Blackburn, CWA | Patti Reyes, CVWD |
| Katie Ruark, DWA | Will Gonzalez, CVWD |
| Mark Krause, DWA | Margaret Park, Agua Caliente Tribe |
| Brent Gray, MSWD | Peter Nelson, Agricultural |
| Mike Thornton, MSWD | Joseph Glowitz, VSD |
| Sara Toyoda, IWA | Daniel Cozad, IPM |
| Jon Rokke, RWQCB | Scott Lynch, RMC |
| Les Ramirez, Augustine Tribe (call-in) | Bobby Young, RMC |

## Meeting Objectives

- Introduction to Salt and Nutrient Management
- Understanding of Water Planning History in Region
- Approach for Developing Salt and Nutrient Management Strategy

## Agenda

1. **IRWMP Background**

   Scott Lynch provided a description of the various technical tasks associated with the IRWM Plan Update.

2. **Why Salt/Nutrient Management Plans?**

   Daniel Cozad and Scott Lynch identified the reasoning behind this process, including the recommended timeline.

3. **Progress to Date**

   Daniel Cozad and Scott Lynch informed the group of all progress to date and pointed out the current planning phase of the contracted work.

4. **Salt and Nutrient Management Plan Work Plan Elements**

   Scott Lynch led a discussion and presentation on the different elements of the SNMP Work Plan.  Specific elements and discussions included:

   a) Establish Stakeholder Process
   - Group discussed that it may be worth trying to contact the Golf Courses again to try to get input at this stage. The City of Palm Springs is another stakeholder that should be included in these discussions.

   b) Conduct Basin Characterization
   - The group discussed whether any Constituents of Emerging Concern (CEC) should be included in the SNMP. No one in the group had any concerns with CEC's, and therefore, it was agreed not to include any CECs in the SNMP at this time.

   c) Identify Salt/Nutrient Loading and Trends
   - The proposed approach is very 'land-use' based. When defining the Scope of Work, it should be very clear where the land use data sources are coming from for each area (General Plan, County Assessor's map, etc.) and should be verified that the latest information is being used once the SNMP is started.

   d) Supplemental Groundwater Monitoring Needs
   - Daniel Cozad pointed out that a good practice is to avoid any data gaps. A possible method to achieve this goal is to provide, at a minimum, narrative summaries of any place where GW is being used. GW monitoring costs are going up and minimizing the amount of monitoring is economically important in keeping the cost of the overall SNMP down.

   e) Identify Water Management Goals and Objectives
   - Local Agencies should try to identify any / all goals and objectives that are currently established in terms of groundwater (GW) management (for example, CVWD may have some stated in the latest Coachella Valley Water Management Plan Update). These may be used as part of the work for the SNMP. However, as one stakeholder noted, it is important not to raise concerns where they don't already exist (e.g. existing septic areas where they are hundreds of feet above the aquifer and have had no historical problems). Also of note, the local tribes may have different Water Quality objectives.
   - Currently, the Basin Plan has very vague statements that are not defensible since they are lacking data. The SNMP effort can be used to help provide the RWQCB with updated data, goals, objectives, and beneficial uses that are more defensible.

f) Conduct Anti-Degradation Analysis

- For this process, it is important to include both existing practices and proposed projects. Future projects can be identified from existing planning documents.

- Based on stakeholder discussions, the group is leaning away from the more detailed fate-transport modeling (MODFLOW, etc.) since it is very data-intensive and would require a great deal of effort to build and calibrate such a model. It was also determined that the end results would not likely be much more precise than those of a mass-balance model due to the large basin size and the lack of existing and more detailed data that would be required for such a model.

- The proposed approach is to use a mass-balance model (spreadsheet or GIS). This type of model should suffice for assessing salt, since the assumption is that all salt coming into the basin (or sub-basin) is eventually completely mixed and is therefore distributed evenly throughout the basin/sub-basin. This same approach may not work for some nutrients, such as nitrogen, since there would be more complex reactions in the life of the nutrient (changing over time with differential concentrations). If such cases are found and a more detailed fate-transport model is warranted, then such an approach may be needed and could be conducted in a later phase of the SNMP development process as more detailed data collection/monitoring may be required.

g) Develop Implementation Strategies and Monitoring Plan

- Implementation strategies may come from existing CIPs, but may also be 'out-of-the-box' ideas that have not yet been identified in official documentation (such as a brineline discharge to the Salton Sea). Any salinity management practices on the Colorado River that are currently being implemented or are under consideration should also be included in this section of the SNMP.

- Feedback from the agricultural representatives revealed that current agricultural practices can handle varying levels of TDS in the water. Specific crops are able to be watered with TDS levels as high as 1,000 (pistachios, dates, etc.). The range for TDS in the shallow surface water is from 200 – 1,000 and farmers have adapted to be able to use such water.

- Under the current Basin Plan, for the entire Basin, all GW Beneficial Uses are considered Municipal until proven otherwise.

- Two known areas of interest were discussed for changing the Beneficial Uses to something other than a Municipal designation:

  1) In the East-End: An aquatard is believed to exist that keeps the poor quality agricultural runoff/seepage water in the upper aquifer from reaching the better quality groundwater aquifer located below the aquatard. Jon Rokke suggested providing as much monitoring data as possible to prove to the RWQCB that this is the case.

2) In the Desert Hot Springs Aquifer: There has been a documented 'hot spot' of potential concern; however, this water is not used for potable purposes, but is utilized by the spa industry of the Desert Hot Springs community. Jon Rokke suggested documenting the case and having data to demonstrate the current conditions before trying to change the designated Beneficial Use in that area/sub-basin.

- It is believed that the RWQCB will require a Basin Plan Amendment to incorporate the results of the SNMP. Jon Rokke was able to confirm that any time the Beneficial Use designations change on a sub-basin, it needs to be recorded using the appropriate means and that the Basin Plan would need to be amended. The stakeholders will be responsible for preparing (and costs associated with) any and all Environmental Documentation related to the Basin Plan Amendment. The level of effort required for a Basin Plan Amendment is dependent on the changes proposed, but the RWQCB recognizes the efforts being put forth and will use a truncated review process for any Environmental Documentation review appropriate for such regulatory changes.

5. **Next Steps**
   a) Feedback on Work Plan Outline
      - The group generally agrees with the proposed process outlined for the SNMP.
      - One questions posed to the agencies was: Are there any areas (besides the two listed above) that should be considered at this time for re-defining their Beneficial Uses?
   b) Next Workshop: October 24th, 1-3 p.m.
   c) Identify Additional Contacts (Stakeholders)
      - *Contact Golf Courses and try to get their input.*
      - *Contact the City of Palm Springs and encourage them to attend.*