

Colorado River Citizens Forum
June 13, 2012
Imperial Irrigation District Board Room
El Centro, California
*Meeting Notes

Board Members in attendance:

Elston Grubaugh, Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation District
Jim Cherry, Cherry Water Management
Chuck Cullom, Central Arizona Project
Roberta McDermott, US Natural Resources Conservation Service, Retired
Mark McBroom, Imperial County Farm Bureau
Tom Davis, Yuma County Water Users' Association

USIBWC Staff in attendance:

Diane Hinkle

Members of the public in attendance:

Mike Goodsell, Holtville City Council
Kevin Kelley, Imperial Irrigation District
Francisco Zamora, Sonoran Institute
Patrick Johnson, Sonoran Institute
Tymull Brett Daniels, Coachella Valley Water District
Vikki Dee Bradshaw, Imperial Irrigation District
Elizabeth Varin, Imperial Valley Press
Darren Simon, San Diego County Water Authority- Imperial County Outreach
Richard Johnson, Bard Water District
Ron Derma, Bard Water District
Darren Fillmore, Imperial Irrigation District
Charles Cowan, Yuma County Water Users' Association
Shaunna Cowan
Brian McNeece, Imperial Valley College
Tom Sephton, Sephton Water Technology
Maria Gonzalez, Yuma County Environmental Program
Juan Leal-Rubio, Yuma County Planning
Mike Campbell
William Du Bois, California Farm Bureau Federation
Bruce Wilcox, Imperial Irrigation District
Gloria Rivera, Imperial Irrigation District

Update on Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA)

Kevin Kelley, General Manager, Imperial Irrigation District, gave a presentation on the Settlement among California Agencies, limiting agricultural water use. It establishes agency water budgets and forms a baseline for water conservation moving forward. It sets aside California water agencies' allocation disputes, and includes water conservation and transfer programs, water exchange agreements, etc. The United States Bureau of Reclamation has adopted inadvertent overrun accounting policy (IOPP) to provide water agency management tools and flexibility.

The IID Water Conservation and Transfer Programs are as follows: 105,000 acre-feet per year (AF/yr) – Imperial Irrigation District (IID)/Metropolitan Water District (MWD) Water Conservation and Transfer agreement(extension of the 1988 agreement; project construction completed in 1998), 67,700 AF/yr – IID All American Canal project (conserved seepage water transferred to San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) and San Luis Rey parties; project construction completed in 2010), 200,000 AF/yr – IID/SDCWA Water Conservation and Transfer Agreement (full implementation

scheduled for 2021) and 103,000 AF/yr – IID/Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) Water Conservation and Transfer Agreement (full implementation scheduled for 2026).

The QSA Water Conservation and Transfers to Date (2003-2011) are as follows: 410,000 acre-feet of conserved water transferred to SDCWA, 211,000+ acre-feet of mitigation water delivered to the Salton Sea, 40,000 acre-feet of conserved water transferred to CVWD, 700,000+ acre-feet of water conserved from fallowing for QSA purposes (transfer, mitigation, payback, etc.) and 63,000+ acre-feet of water conserved from efficiency projects for QSA purposes.

The reasoning behind the joint petition of IID and SDCWA to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) was that the Salton Sea habitat value continues to decline despite IID's ongoing mitigation, the likelihood of Salton Sea restoration continues to diminish significantly due to both legislative inaction and current/projected economic conditions and, absent restoration, mitigation funding could be used to create lasting and durable habitat that also serves to address local air quality concerns.

The proposed changes are as follows: it eliminates four years of Salton Sea mitigation water (2014-2017), makes no changes to other Salton Sea inflows, provides for habitat construction and enhancement, accelerates implementation of air quality mitigation measures, revises pelican mitigation strategy, and provides for limited recreational access

The benefits of the SWRCB Joint Petition are that it's similar to the current mitigation plan in that the proposal will cover exposed playa, the Salton Sea habitat will be enhanced and preserved, it facilitates renewable energy and agricultural development, it promotes Salton Sea restoration activities; moves beyond the studying and planning phases, and it's compatible with restoration plans

In summary, the SWRCB Joint Petition will do the following: will not dry up the Salton Sea, does not absolve the State of California of its Salton Sea, QSA, financial or other obligations, is compatible with proposed restoration alternatives, and species conservation and habitat projects will be built on the exposed playa of the sea.

IID's plan provides for real, durable and timely habitat projects.

Public- Can you talk about the Fallowing Program?

Kevin Kelley- IID entered into it in order to insulate it from challenges in the future and protect its water rights. The best way to do on-farm conservation is to build things.

Public- In the next year you plan to do more work in the on-farm efficiency area. Is that what you are looking at doing, to visibly stop tail water from drying up the drains and putting it into the Salton Sea as fresh water as opposed to drainage water?

Kevin Kelley- We struggle with on-farm water transfer. 130,000 acre-feet of the transfer agreement has to come from on farm. 70,000 acre feet was generated through the system. We need willing participants in farming communities. We have reached out to the Water Conservation Advisory Board and other farming groups and have asked them for input to putting this together. We have robust agricultural markets out there and every scrap of ground that can be farmed is farmed. There was an overrun of 80,000 acre feet which was accounted for. Our plan, if the state board concurs, is to stop mitigation to the Salton Sea in the last 4 years for 2014-2017. This doesn't mean that we will stop fallowing to achieve it. We have several things in the works right now. Modest fallowing will provide flexibility to districts.

Public- In the Joint Petition is there a significant area that could be an agricultural use. Where would the water come from?

Kevin Kelley- It would come from the same agricultural entitlement of 3.15 million acre-feet.

Public- In the Joint Petition, is your theory of 4 years unnecessary unless the state makes a firm commitment?

Kevin Kelley- That is 120,000 acre-feet per year for 4 years. The Salton Sea is just a problem and does not have water rights. People see the water and can see a lot of other uses for it.

Public- Do the lands have irrigable status or would they have to be converted?

Kevin Kelley- Reclaiming would be difficult to do, but it is possible and yes they do have an irrigable status.

Colorado River Delta Restoration Project

Francisco Zamora, Project Manager, Sonoran Institute, gave a presentation on this topic.

In regards to the conservation priority areas in the Delta, the ecological goals and water needs are different for each area. For the Laguna Grande restoration site, the objective is to increase the area of cottonwood and willow forest to

improve the structural diversity and create areas for the community. Laguna Grande has over 7,000 native trees that have been planted on 100 acres.

The monitoring objectives are to determine the rates of establishment, growth and coverage of vegetation, with monitoring to include assessment of vegetation height and habitat quality. Aerial and ground photography will be used as part of the monitoring effort. For hydrology, the objectives are to determine the surface and groundwater conditions, including the depth to groundwater, surface water/flows and water quality. For birds, the monitoring will determine the impact on target species, taking into consideration such things as species diversity and abundance, whether extirpated species are nesting again, and the habitat characteristics for the bird community.

The overall water transaction goals for riparian restoration are to secure a base flow of at least 50,000 Acre-feet per year and pulse flow of 250,000 Acre-feet every 4-5 years

The project's specific goals are to establish native riparian vegetation, increase land cover to at least 10-15%, diversify vertical structure, and create connectivity among patches.

For the Hardy River area, the objectives are to make it navigable, enhance riparian habitat (mesquite bosque and cottonwood-willow forest), increase marsh wetland habitat and enhance fish habitat.

Public- Can you give us an estimate of acreage of how far you are on this project?

Francisco Zamora- Right now we have approximately 2,000 acres in different areas. For example, Las Arenitas has 200-250 acres now and we are planning on doubling that to approximately 400 acres.

Public- How is the area irrigated?

Francisco Zamora- We chose flood irrigation because it was the only way to get into the high density areas and the trees grow faster.

Public- Do you have a lot of animals, rodents causing you any problems in the area?

Francisco Zamora- No, we have very minimal rodent damage.

Public- What is the goal for the water base flow in the Riparian corridor?

Francisco Zamora- Our goal is a water average of 50,000 acre feet.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

1. Laguna Dam Conservation update
2. Bi National Cooperative Process update.
3. Multi-Species Conservation Program update
4. Mitty Lake Flushing
5. Central Arizona Project in Phoenix (tour of the recharge facility)
6. Tour of the Restoration Areas in Mexico

If there are other issues/projects you would like to hear, please email the Yuma IBWC office at anna.morales@ibwc.gov or sally.spener@ibwc.gov

Next meeting scheduled for September 12, 2012 from 4-6pm in Yuma.

*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizens Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizens Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.