

Colorado River Citizens Forum
El Centro, CA
December 2, 2010
*Tentative Meeting Notes

Board Members in attendance:

Elston Grubaugh	Kevin Eatherly
Wade Noble	Marcos Moore
Bill Plummer	Miguel Figueroa
Stella Mendoza	

Board Members absent:

Sam Spiller
Nancy Wright

USIBWC Staff in attendance:

Anna Morales
Diane Hinkle

MXIBWC Staff in attendance:

Juan Riosmoreno

❖ 6 Members of the public in attendance.

➤ Release of Mitigation Water to the Salton Sea: Bruce Wilcox, Biologist, Imperial Irrigation District

The original Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) did not have a Salton Sea water delivery mitigation plan, but it was later supplemented to have Imperial Irrigation District (IID) deliver mitigation water to the Salton Sea until 2017 based on an annual delivery.

IID has no particular schedule for deliveries. In other words, IID could deliver it all on January 1st of each year or December 31st of same year and still be in compliance with that requirement.

The water delivered is Colorado River water, and it is delivered to offset the loss of inflow caused by the transfer of water to San Diego. The mitigation water helps to maintain the salinity of the Salton Sea water at the pre-QSA levels. It is important to remember that the Salton Sea is a terminal waterbody and that salinity levels had been increasing for many years prior to the QSA.

One of the reasons for the 2017 date was that the State of California would have a Salton Sea restoration plan in place by then.

IID generates the Salton Sea mitigation water by fallowing. Approximately one-third of the water that goes to agricultural fields ends up back in the Salton Sea through tail/tile water return. So when IID creates mitigation water by fallowing, IID has to deliver additional mitigation water over and above that necessary to maintain the salinity trend at the Salton Sea in order to make up the loss of the tail/tile water from the fallowed fields. For every three acre-feet (AF) delivered to the field, approximately one acre-foot of it ends up in the Salton Sea.

The last 5,000 AF has been delivered and stored in the Salton Sea for 2010; the 2011 storage of mitigation water (26,400 AF) is complete along with the first half of 2012 storage (14,850 AF). The reason IID stopped in 2012 is the need of fallowing contracts to generate water under normal conditions. The way the water is being generated right now is by utilizing part of IID's 2010 under-run. A portion of this water will be delivered to the Salton Sea and stored for future years' mitigation. This is not fallowing ground, so IID will not have to make up the tail/tile water losses from the fallowed ground. So that reduces the amount of water IID has to deliver to the Salton Sea.

Water transfers will be made by paper transfers each year. Water that is delivered to the Salton Sea will stay in the Salton Sea.

IID is storing the mitigation water at the sea for several reasons, including the uncertainty caused by litigation over the QSA. The QSA is under a court “stay” right now with the anticipation of a decision by mid 2011. Salton Sea mitigation water is normally generated by fallowing active agricultural fields for a specific period. With this uncertainty of the outcome of the litigation, it is difficult for IID to enter into any fallowing contracts with farmers right now, not knowing if the money will be there to honor the fallowing contracts.

Additionally, IID’s aim is to reduce JPA costs across the board. The storage of the Salton Sea mitigation water will significantly decrease the JPA costs.

Q Are salinity levels increasing because of evaporation or the drainage?

A. Primary reason is evaporation of Salton Sea water. Tail and tile water is more saline than Colorado River water.

Q. How about the discharge from Mexico in the Sea?

A. The discharge volume from Mexico has decreased and will continue to decrease; this impacts the salinity in the drains, which is higher than the Colorado River.

Q What is the danger of Metropolitan Water District’s (MWD) objection that this is not good official use of water?

A. Normally, IID under runs are delivered to MWD (as a junior water right holder) and no additional cost to MWD

Q. When did you start putting water in?

A. In late September. We don’t want to wait until Dec 31 to divert unused entitlements.

Q. In pre-storing water for 2011-2012, will you fallow the same amount of water to make up for that water?

A. No, we will not fallow for deliveries into the Salton Sea. IID considers that to be part of the entitlement of consumptive use.

➤ New River Project Update: Miguel Figueroa, Executive Director, Calexico New River Committee

Mr. Figueroa gave a recap of his 2009 presentation of the New River contamination problems; unknown health and environmental risks; water quality improvements; Calexico New River Committee priorities and activities; and a summary of appropriation funding opportunities.

New Strategic Plan includes a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is dedicated to achieving the goals of Assembly Bill (AB) 1079 and restoring the New River.

The Impairments and Remediation Work Group is to quantify current and projected New River impairments and their threat to public health and to meet environmental goals, such as improving quality of water flows into the Salton Sea.

The New River Visioning Work Group’s mission is to imagine and develop a plan for a river parkway that is consistent with water quality objectives and flood control features of the New River

The Funding and Background Work Group's mission is to identify potential funds for implementation of the project, to identify the lead agencies that would be responsible for environmental review of the activities related to the cleanup and restoration of the New River, and to provide background and legal information about the New River.

The deliverables of the TAC are: to have input into the process and findings, advise who to include in work groups, have in-kind staff contributions, advise on who should be kept informed, and draft and finalize a Strategic Plan by summer of 2011.

In August of 2010 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Calexico New River Committee (CNRC) and City of Calexico was approved by the Calexico City Council. The purpose of the agreement is to coordinate the cleanup, regulation, administration, improvement, restoration and management of the New River as it passes through Calexico. The City and the CNRC recognize this agreement is intended by both parties to define an administrative process and facilitate cooperation among them to the greatest extent possible.

The Calexico City Council designated a Councilmember to be the administrative representative that will work on all matters related to the MOU and the CNRC.

Q. What are your ultimate goals, reducing contaminants in the water? And if you do get funding, where are you going to apply these resources to make this a successful endeavor?

A. The priorities of the CNRC are the public health issues the New River poses to the residents of Calexico – part of a bigger effort with local and state agencies. Our overall goal is to address the public health, not only in Calexico but the rest of the valley as well. There are also issues and problems the New River poses to the Salton Sea. This is a county-wide problem. The impairments found in the New River have to be treated and dealt with. An example is the New River cannot just be covered; we would still have an issue underground. The water quality is unacceptable. That is one of the issues that is targeted in the plan we are putting together.

Q. How would you fix the problem, the health issue?

A. This is a complex issue. We need to ask experts and get answers on the how's and when's that are critical. We need to implement specific policies for these issues. We need to reduce the public health threat -- implement policy first and technical second.

Q. Are you working with any agencies or entities right now?

A. Yes we are working diligently with our colleagues in Mexico as well as representatives at state levels and valley wide.

Q. Is the flow down in the New River?

A. Yes, the trend is down by 25%.

Q. Is the New River wetlands still in place?

A. Yes, with the help of IID, it is working well.

Q. Are there any other projects you can identify that will start to bring this together?

A. We will have a strategic plan by June 2011 that will help us identify and prioritize the work.

- Mexicali Sanitation Update: Engineer Antonio Hernandez, CESP (State Public Utility Commission of Mexicali)

Engineer Antonio Hernandez made a PowerPoint presentation.

Pump Station No. 4 went online in March of 2007, which captures approximately 23,700,000 cubic meters (6261 million gallons) per year through the Mexicali II sewage network, which equals approximately 42% of all wastewater from the City of Mexicali. The wastewater is pretreated, removing any debris and sediment and pumped into the Las Arenitas Wastewater Treatment Plant. Maximum operational flow of the pumps is 1250 liters per second (28.5 million gallons per day [MGD]).

On several occasions the pumps have experienced failure due to loss or rupture of the retaining screw between the impeller and the shaft, causing the impeller to fall and put heat on the rings and pump casing, causing damage to the pumps and putting the pump out of operation. Corrective actions in 2009 were done and the system was modified. In 2010 repairs, the retaining screw was changed.

Purchase of 2 new impellers is currently in process to equip the fourth pump and replace the most damaged one. There is an approximate wait time of 11 weeks for delivery. We are in the process of getting proposals from different manufacturers to either partially or totally replace the pumps.

Problems have been communicated with Cornell pump manufacturer for redesign of the components. We are expecting to get a visit from them this week.

Currently 2 pumps are working and the third to be installed tomorrow and remain on standby.

Q. Who is the manufacturer of the pumps?

A. Cornell Pump.

Q. Does the water make-up have any impact on the pumps?

A. No, these are sewage pumps, not water pumps. The bolt is what cannot take the stress load. We concluded it was a generic problem with this particular model.

Q. What about warranty opportunities?

A. We are beyond the warranty. We got the pumps way before we started the work, since we were behind schedule, the extended warranty had expired.

Q. In your opinion what are the options?

A. If we get new pumps, it will be approximately 26 weeks and if we troubleshoot and repair, it will be 11 weeks.

Public Comment/Suggested Future Agenda Items

- Leon Lesicka of Desert Wildlife – Additional Wetlands sites along the New River
- Status update on the IID/QSA Managed Marsh Project – Bruce Wilcox of IID
- Quagga Mussel update – Bureau of Reclamation or Mike Remington from IID
- Cibola National Wildlife Refuge Management under the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCRMSCP), new BA just released – someone from the MSCP Project Office
- Report on current plans for the Laguna Basin Habitat Restoration Project (LCRMSCP – Reclamation Yuma Area Office)
- Update on the Hunter's Hole Project (revised Environmental Assessment was just released).

- Report on the Cienega de Santa Clara studies being conducted as part of the Yuma Desalting Plant Test Run (Reclamation)
- Update on Easter Sunday Earthquake Repairs in Mexico.
- Discussion of water use for renewable energy in both Arizona and California.

Next meeting to be held in Yuma County, tentatively for March 2, 2011. Location TBD

Thank you to all the presenters for their presentations.

*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.