



2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update

Tribal Workgroup #1

SUMMARY

February 20, 2020 at 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Spotlight 29 Casino, Medjool Room

46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, CA 92236

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Levi Anderson, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the room. Mr. Edwin Lin, Todd Groundwater Inc., presented the meeting objectives and agenda, and introduced the project team working on the Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update. The Indio Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) are Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), Coachella Water Authority (CWA), Desert Water Agency (DWA), and Indio Water Authority (IWA). The Consultant team includes Todd Groundwater Inc. and Woodard & Curran Inc.

Overview of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

Mr. Lin presented an overview of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). SGMA provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater basins, promotes local management, and sets regulatory deadlines for submitting plans and reporting progress towards sustainable management. SGMA also offers State assistance in the form of funding, data, and technical support. Local GSAs are required to prepare a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) or submit an Alternative Plan. “Sustainable” management is defined as the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained without causing undesirable results.

Mr. Lin explained that the Indio Subbasin is designated as a medium-priority basin and is subject to SGMA legislation. The State has recognized the existing water management plan, the *2010 Coachella Valley Water Management Plan (CVWMP)*, as a functionally equivalent Alternative Plan. The State recommended that the Indio Subbasin GSAs quantify sustainability criteria and incorporate additional elements into the *2022 Alternative Plan Update*. SGMA also requires that the Indio Subbasin be sustainably managed within 20 years.

Each Indio Subbasin GSA is responsible and has the authority for water management within its respective boundaries. The Indio GSAs have a history of cooperation, which is ongoing. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been executed and establishes an intent to foster cooperation, coordination, and communication regarding management of the Indio Subbasin. The GSAs have also agreed on collaboration and joint submission of the Alternative Plan, Annual Reports, and 5-Year Plan Updates.

Mr. Lin presented the current SGMA timeline for the Indio Subbasin. The Indio GSAs formed in June 2017 and the Alternative Plan, submitted in December 2016, was approved by DWR in July 2019. The

2022 Alternative Plan Update must be submitted by January 1, 2022. From then, the GSAs are required to prepare four 5-Year Plan Updates, with the expectation that the Indio Subbasin will achieve groundwater sustainability by 2042.

Discussion by the tribal members on the overview of SGMA included:

- Tribes have land use authority and we hope to participate in the planning process.
- SGMA requires 5-year updates, so water management issues will be revisited regularly. Plus, Annual Reports will be submitted annually to DWR to track progress.
- The Indio Subbasin website (www.IndioSubbasinSGMA.org) includes a link to DWR's SGMA portal, which has the 2010 CVWMP, Indio Subbasin Bridge Document, and submitted Annual Reports.

Water Management Planning in the Indio Subbasin

Mr. Lin presented the history of water management in the Indio Subbasin. Multiple sources of water have been developed to ensure a reliable supply for the region. Stormflows from the Whitewater River were captured and used for groundwater recharge beginning in 1918. The Coachella Canal, which imports Colorado River water, was completed in 1949. CVWD and DWA contracts for State Water Project (SWP) water began in 1963. SWP water is exchanged for Colorado River water via the Colorado River Aqueduct as there are no physical SWP facilities to deliver the SWP allocations. Since 1973, this SWP exchange water has been used to recharge the Indio Subbasin at the Whitewater River Groundwater Replenishment Facility. Finally, water recycling within the Indio Subbasin began in 1965.

Mr. Lin then presented the history of the CVWMP and other water management plans. The 2010 CVWMP serves as the Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan. The Plan assessed future growth and land use changes, estimated future water demands and supplies, and established data collection and monitoring programs to track groundwater conditions and Plan performance. The 2010 CVWMP also identified management actions needed to meet current and future water demands in a cost effective and reliable manner. Mr. Lin then explained that the Alternative Plan shared the same goals and met the requirements of a GSP. Agencies in the Indio Subbasin use a combination of management actions to meet local water demands, including local stormwater water and imported water for direct replenishment of groundwater, non-potable water and recycled water for source substitution, and agricultural, golf, and urban conservation. The Alternative Plan has resulted in a significant increase in groundwater storage across the Indio Subbasin and groundwater levels have increased regionally. More work is needed to ensure continued success of the Alternative Plan.

Discussion by the tribal members on water management planning in the Indio Subbasin included:

- Will the Alternative Plan Update build from the 2010 CVWMP?
 - Yes, plus it will incorporate SGMA requirements and DWR recommendations.
- The 2010 CVWMP is larger than SGMA – will there be a separate process to update that?
 - No, the 2010 CVWMP focused on water management planning, groundwater and economic growth, and this Plan Update will encompass all. The Plan update will have all elements of the CVWMP and SGMA, including supply and demand assumptions, projects and management actions, and environmental factors (beyond interconnected surface waters).

Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update

Mr. Lin described the purpose of the Alternative Plan and outlined the tasks involved in preparing the plan. Tasks include assessing the existing plan, estimating future water demands and supplies, establishing quantifiable sustainability goals, and implementing a stakeholder and public outreach plan. The Alternative Plan Update will include an update of the Coachella Valley groundwater flow model to support the development of current and future water budgets. The process will have four biennial Tribal Workgroup meetings, in which the project team will report on progress, share results and findings, and solicit input and feedback. The 2022 Alternative Plan Update Report Draft is expected to be ready for public review and comment in early Fall 2021. The Final Report will be prepared in Winter 2021. Mr. Lin encouraged meeting participants to visit the Indio Subbasin website (www.IndioSubbasinSGMA.org) for more information on the planning process and to learn how to get involved. He emphasized that tribal participation and input are important components to this planning process. The goals of the tribal outreach task are to keep the tribal members informed about and engaged in the planning process, so the project team can incorporate their concerns and feedback.

Discussion by the tribal members on the Alternative Plan Update included:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is concerned that the workshop announcements aren't clear – wasn't clear to him that CVWMP and Alternative Plan are the same and will be updated in this planning process. The CVWMP needs to be thoroughly vetted.
 - The intent of the workshop announcements was to articulate that the CVWMP and Alternative Plan are the same and are being updated. The project team will review the announcements moving forward to make sure this is clear.
- The Coachella Valley Salt & Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP) also needs to be accepted and adopted. GSA representatives shared next steps in this process.
- Does the Alternative Plan include agricultural use of groundwater?
 - Yes, the Plan includes Coachella Canal and groundwater pumping data gathered by DWA (>10 AF) and CVWD (>25 AF) Replenishment Assessment Charges (RACs). However, it does not include tribal groundwater pumping unless the tribes provide this data.
- Will the 2022 Alternative Plan Update have groundwater level data from 2010-2020?
 - Yes, this is part of DWR requirements.
- How is water delivered to the Thomas E. Levy recharge area and Palm Desert recharge area?
 - The Thomas E. Levy Groundwater Replenishment Facility is replenished with Canal water sent to Lake Cahuilla and then to the recharge area. The Palm Desert Groundwater Replenishment Facility is replenished with Canal water from the Mid Valley Pipeline.
- Why is the natural recharge value different from the surface water direct use value?
 - The natural recharge value is metered by USGS in stream, while the surface water direct use is metered by DWA for potable use.
- Water balance could be accomplished by converting more agriculture use to Canal water
- SGMA requirement for 5-year update means that the Alternative Plan will be a living document with regular updates. The region can change direction if needed and make the 'right' investments.

- Any conclusions so far regarding how climate change will affect groundwater basin?
 - None yet; likely effects will be availability/reliability of imported supply.
- What is the groundwater modeling software being used?
 - MODFLOW, standard USGS code

Next Steps

Mr. Lin announced to workshop participants that the next Tribal Workgroup meeting will be held on August 27, 2020 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM at a location to be determined. He reminded participants to make sure they're on the tribal workgroup email list to receive updates. For additional information, please contact Rosalyn Prickett at: IndioSubbsinSGMA@woodardcurran.com or (858) 875-7420.

Discussion by the tribal members on the Next Steps included:

- How will the public workshops and Tribal Workgroup meetings differ?
 - We will be giving the same presentation today, may be different in the future based on timing of meetings. Tribal Workgroup members are on the outreach list and will also be invited to the Public Workshops.
- California Rural Water Association (CRWA) contacted 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians to offer facilitation services for SGMA, if needed. This would be funded by the State. But we believe the Workgroup process is going well so far.
- What will the public review process be for the Alternative Plan?
 - Public Review will be 45 days, one time. But we will discuss elements of the Alternative Plan Update here (at the Tribal Workgroup) prior to Plan release; there will be no surprises.
- The project team is asking for tribal land use and demand data, for use in the planning process. The project team has also sent letters to the cities and County because land and water planning is interconnected.
- Suggestion to add to website a place to update progress monthly (graphic or news box? Send information to tribes in advance?).
- The State Water Project (SWP)/Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) exchange is unique. Suggestion to publish an annual accountability of that water banking, so we know how much MWD water has been stored in the Indio Subbasin. The region could have deficit if that water is called in.
 - CVWD already does this in their SGMA Annual Reports. MWD is advanced delivery, not banking. Allocation belongs to CVWD or DWA and is simply delivered early. No water is later removed by MWD.
- BIA's hydrogeologist is responsible for 107 Federal tribes in State, and this basin has 5-7 tribes. BIA is concerned that the water data for this basin is in difficult places to track down (e.g., CVWMP, Bridge Document, Engineer's Reports, etc.).
- Suggestion that a cross-walk is developed for the Alternative Plan vs GSP.
- Suggestion that hyperlinks be included with sources (+ page numbers) that will take reader directly to background document. Context of the presented numbers is important (e.g. natural recharge number versus direct use number).