2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update

Public Workshop #2

SUMMARY

May 21, 2020 at 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

GoToMeeting for Presentation and Microsoft Teams for Spanish Translation Services

Members of the Public

- Aaron Rojas, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians
- Brian Macy, Mission Springs Water District
- Cathy Sanford, Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Craig Kessler, Southern California Golf Association and CVWD Golf and Water Task Force
- Crystal Sandoval, Cathedral City
- George Cappello, Grimmway
- Jim Schmid, HiLo Desert Golf Course
- Justin Conley, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Kevin Fitzgerald – Southern California Golf Association
- Kimberly Romich, California Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Margaret Park, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Melanie Rivera, Kennedy Jenks
- Michael Magnani, HiLo Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Nataly Escobedo Garcia, Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability
- Nina Waszak, Coachella Valley Water Keeper
- Parker Cohn, Greener Golf
- Patrick Taber, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Rolland M. Vaugn, Troon Golf / Shadow Hills Golf Club
- Ron Buchwald, Valley Sanitary District
- Ryan Zeferino Llamas, Audubon California
- Steven Ledbetter, Mission Springs Water District
- Tom Calabrese, Envirologic Resources

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs)

- Adekunle Ojo, Indio Water Authority (IWA)
- Angela Johnson, Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
- Ashley Metzger, Desert Water Agency (DWA)
- Castulo Estrada, Coachella Water Authority (CWA)
- David Wilson, CVWD
- Elizabeth Campos, CVWD
- Ivory Reyburn, CVWD
- Jamie Pricer, CVWD
- Jennifer Shimmin, CVWD
- Katie Evans, CVWD
- Melanie Garcia, CVWD
- Mike Nusser, CVWD
- Nancy Munoz, CVWD
- Olivia Bennett, CVWD
- Reymundo Trejo, IWA
- Ruben Rivera, CVWD
- Ryan Molhoek, DWA
- Steve Bigley, CVWD
- Trish Rhay, IWA
- Zoe Rodriguez del Rey, CVWD

Consultant Team

- Arden Wells, Todd Groundwater
- Edwin Lin, Todd Groundwater
- Erica Wolski, Woodard & Curran
- Iris Priestaf, Todd Groundwater
- John Ayres, Woodard & Curran
- Nicole Poletto, Woodard & Curran
- Rosalyn Prickett, Woodard & Curran

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Rosalyn Prickett, Woodard & Curran, welcomed everyone to the public workshop and briefed everyone on how to use the virtual GoToMeeting platform. Ms. Prickett then presented the meeting objectives and agenda, and introduced the project team working on the 2022 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. Ms. Prickett held a roll call for all attendees of the virtual meeting. There were approximately 46 attendees; some callers were unidentified.

Alternative Plan Status

Mr. Edwin Lin, Todd Groundwater, 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 to a GSP (Alternative Plan). The GSAs are currently in the process of updating the approved Alternative Plan. "Sustainable" management is defined as the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained without causing undesirable results. Five undesirable results have been identified; chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater storage, land subsidence, groundwater quality degradation, and depletion of interconnected surface water.

Mr. Lin explained that the Indio Subbasin is designated as a medium-priority basin by the State and is subject to SGMA legislation. The State has recognized the existing water management plan, the *2010 Coachella Valley Water Management Plan (CVWMP) Update*, as a functionally equivalent Alternative to a GSP (Alternative Plan). The State recommends that the Indio Subbasin GSAs quantify sustainability criteria and incorporate additional elements into the *2022 Indio Subbasin 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 Alternative Plan Updates. The 2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update must be submitted by January 1, 2022. From then, the GSAs are required to prepare 5-Year Alternative Plan Updates, with the expectation that the Indio Subbasin will achieve groundwater sustainability by 2042.

The 2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update is currently underway. The team has assessed the existing plan and is currently updating and processing datasets and documenting current groundwater conditions. Future tasks will project future supplies and demands, establish quantifiable sustainability goals and criteria, and assess data collection and monitoring programs. These tasks will be presented at a future meeting, and therefore public participation is important to ensure the best available information is incorporated into the Alternative Plan Update and it responds to the publics concerns.

Plan Area

Ms. Prickett presented an overview of the plan area that will be considered in the Alternative Plan Update. The Indio Subbasin planning boundary is slightly larger than the subbasin and extends to the east to include the potential sphere of influence for IWA and CWA in Desert Hot Springs Subbasin, and extends to the South to include portions of CVWD's service area. This ensures the Alternative Plan Update will more accurately reflect supply and demand. Ms. Prickett then displayed the General Plan Buildout map from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) from the *2020 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy*. The land uses in map are being used to forecast future water demands.

Hydrogeologic Conceptual Model

Mr. Lin explained that a Hydrogeologic Conceptual Model (HCM) is a collection of maps, cross-sections, figures, and tables that provide a framework for understanding the movement of surface water and groundwater in the Indio Subbasin. The HCM provides context to identify major water budget components and the basis for the development of a numerical groundwater model. The numerical groundwater model has been developed but needs to be updated to include recent data. This process will help identify data gaps.

There are seven major features of the HCM. All components are currently being processed by the team, and Mr. Lin presented preliminary results for each component. Mr. Lin provided more detail on each component of an HCM:

1. *Hydrogeologic Cross Sections*: Five cross sections will be used to illustrate basin geometry and subsurface conditions, including major aquifers and aquitard units, the effect of faults, groundwater levels, and production well screen intervals. Three groundwater replenishment facilities in the plan area are active and the cross sections will show them.
2. *Surface Water and Natural Recharge*: There are 24 recharge points for the plan area where tributary watersheds generate runoff that recharges the Indio Subbasin through stream flow recharge or mountain-front recharge. The team is currently updating runoff/recharge estimates from 18 weather stations and streamflow data from 20 USGS gauge stations.
3. *Groundwater Production*: Annual groundwater production maps demonstrate production by well and general production volume per square foot.
4. *Groundwater Levels*: Groundwater level maps compare observed and projected groundwater levels.
5. *Groundwater Quality*: The Alternative Plan Update will review the same constituents of concern that were evaluated as part of the *2010 Coachella Valley Water Management Plan Update*.
6. *Land Subsidence*: The cooperative agreement between USGS and CVWD has provided good data to evaluate subsidence from 1995 to 2017. In some portions, ground surface elevation levels dropped, but have stabilized since 2010, and even recovered in some places.
7. *Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs)*: GDEs are wetland and riparian habitats that are dependent on the regional aquifer. This component involves a desktop evaluation and biological field assessment.

Plan Assessment

Ms. Prickett explained that the plan assessment will compare projections from the *2010 CVWMP Update* to historical demand and supply data through 2019. Part of the work moving forward will be

to understand the previous assumptions used, and then to revise them to match current conditions and agreements. Ms. Prickett used the difference in population projections as an example of the updated projections. The population projection for the Alternative Plan Update uses 2020 SCAG data, which is very close to the 1998 SCAG data projections used in the *2002 CVWMP,* estimating population in the Coachella Valley to be approximately 615,000 people, instead of over 1.1 million, by 2045. In addition to a lower population projection from the *2010 CVWMP Update,* the Alternative Plan Update will also show a lower water demand than projected previously. The *2010 CVWMP Update* projected a great deal of urbanization, and that growth was not realized, therefore demand is below the projection. Additionally, several statewide droughts have decreased water use.

Ms. Prickett reviewed the six water supply sources for the plan area, including groundwater, State Water Project (SWP) water, Colorado River water, surface water, and recycled water. Water conservation is considered the sixth water supply source because conservation offsets the need to develop additional supplies. Groundwater replenishment consists of SWP water, Colorado River water, and surface water in the Indio Subbasin. Ms. Prickett discussed each source and its associated *2010 CVWMP Update* assumptions.

Groundwater Model Assessment & Approach

Mr. Lin explained the original groundwater model was developed in the late 1990s for the 2002 CVWP, and included a historical calibration period from 1936-1996. Actual data from 1997-2008 was incorporated into the model for the *2010 CVWMP Update,* as well as a future predictive period from 2009-2075 to project groundwater pumping, demand, and supplies. Mr. Lin then explained that the team is currently reviewing the model and plans to input additional actual data from 2009 – 2019 to better estimate current and future water budgets, evaluate benefits of proposed management actions, and support identification of appropriate sustainability criteria. The model calibrates well in the eastern Coachella Valley. There is a slight departure in the western Coachella Valley between predictive and observed groundwater levels due to advanced deliveries at the Whitewater River Groundwater Replenishment Facility (GRF).

Public Comment

Ms. Prickett invited workshop participants to ask questions and provide comments:

- *Craig Kessler*: At the February meeting, the Coachella Valley golf community accepted your offer to provide the market data necessary to address Task 4 (estimated future water demand and supplies). Of course, COVID-19 intervened, putting us behind in getting that information to you. What is the new deadline for submittal of that information?
    - Mid-July 2020. This information is needed to develop an assumption for the demand forecast. The team is calculating water use factors for residential and commercial users and applying them to land use maps over time from SCAG. At the next workshop, we will talk about the methodology and change in demand use factors and present a draft demand forecast.
- *Crystal Sandoval*: What does AFY mean?
    - AFY = Acre-feet per year
- *Parker Cohn*: Referring to Slide 38, is golf categorized as agricultural or urban water use?
    - Urban water use. This is from the 2019 Annual Report.
- *Parker Cohn*: What percentage of urban water users (homeowners) receive their irrigation water from golf irrigation systems? For instance, the pumps that provide pressure to the golf course also provides the pressure to irrigate lawns of HOAs.

- We will return to the August meeting with data on this topic when we discuss the demand projections.
- *Parker Cohn*: Thank you. It would be helpful to distinguish water conservation efforts between urban and golf. There is grey area.
- *Craig Kessler*: Parker's question goes to the circumstance in which the same water that is used to irrigate the golf course is used to irrigate the common areas and surrounds of an adjoining HOA.
- *Parker Cohn*: Thanks for clarifying Craig. I have witnessed excessive homeowner/HOA water use in this scenario and that information would help us understand the relationship between golf courses and homeowners/HOAs categorized as "urban water use".
- *Zoe Rodriguez Del Rey*: Most golf courses are on their own private wells and for the most part, irrigation supply and domestic supply is separate. Irrigation is from a mixture of private wells and golf courses that are receiving Canal water directly or recycled water from WRP-4 and WRP-10.
- *Parker Cohn*: What percentage of homeowners receive their irrigation water by means of a golf course? Adjoining HOAs, homeowners, etc. How many acres, or square feet? This information could help develop a hypothesis that homeowners and HOAs in these areas are much less water conscious than both golf courses and the urban population.

- *Margaret Park*: How will salt and nutrient planning be addressed in the Alternative Plan Update? The existing Alternative Plan assumed the districts would already have a Salt and Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP) in place, but that has not been finalized. How will this Alternative Plan Update incorporate the SNMP?
  - *Zoe Rodriguez del Rey*: The SNMP is separate from the Alternative Plan Update. Due to the tight schedule for the Alternative Plan Update, the Alternative Plan Update and SNMP will be implemented in parallel. The Alternative Plan Update will include information on SNMP progress.
  - *Zoe Rodriguez del Rey*: At our first Public Workshop in February, we discussed that the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) had sent a letter to the three agencies that had submitted the 2015 SNMP (CVWD, DWA, and IWA). In the letter, the RWQCB provided an evaluation of the SNMP and provided recommendations to update the plan prior to approval. The three agencies have met with the RWQCB to determine next steps. The agencies recommended that the next step would be to move to develop a workplan to develop the SNMP, which the RWQCB found reasonable and asked the agencies to submit a formal request in writing. All agencies within the Coachella Valley that are water or wastewater providers that have a stake in the approved SNMP (about 8 agencies) have agreed to participate in the process. A scope of work was released on Tuesday May 19th to develop the SNMP work plan and schedule. Proposals are due June 9th.
- *Nataly Escobedo Garcia*: How will you look at degradation of groundwater quality in regard to the Salton Sea?
  - Groundwater quality and quantity will be characterized as part of the Alternative Plan Update. We would have to look at what the *2010 CVWMP Update* impact assumptions were and update them as needed.
- *Nataly Escobedo Garcia*: How is the Alternative Plan Update incorporating the needs of communities near the Salton Sea (specifically eastern Coachella Valley)? Community impacts

include groundwater quality, quantity, and land subsidence. How are these communities taken under consideration to ensure the impacts do not happen in the future?

  - The purpose of SGMA is to avoid undesirable results, and negative community impacts are undesirable. These communities will be considered when establishing sustainability criteria in the Alternative Plan Update.

- *Nataly Escobedo Garcia*: Many communities in the eastern Coachella Valley do not have access to broadband/WiFi. How are we planning to host the other public workshops?
  - Our goal is to host all workshops in person. With the pandemic, we are using technology available to share updates on the work we have been doing. The virtual GoToMeeting platform allows us to use desktop or web video, or phone audio, so all stakeholders can participate. We have also provided Spanish translation on announcements, the website, and for meetings to increase meeting accessibility.
- *Nataly Escobedo Garcia*: How will the GSAs handle adopting the Alternative Plan Update? Once decisions are made and taken to individual Boards, will the adoption be included in regular board meetings or will separate special GSA meetings be planned?
  - *Zoe Rodriguez del Rey*: For CVWD, our decision-making body is our Board. We will provide quarterly updates on the process and agendize when decisions will be made. At the end of the process, the Alternative Plan Update will be considered in its entirety and adopted at a regular or special Board meeting.
  - *Ashley Metzger*: Same process. DWA will approve the plan at a regular or special Board meeting depending on the circumstances on what is on the agenda at that time.
  - *Adekunle Ojo:* The process is the same for IWA.
- *Nataly Escobedo Garcia*: I cannot find any information online on how stakeholders can engage in the GSA Management Meetings.
  - The GSAs present all their work through the Public Workshops.
- *Aaron Rojas*: On Slide 45, can you clarify the departure between the groundwater model projection for 2009-2019 and what was actually recharged?
  - The difference was the Advanced Delivery water that was received and recharged at the Whitewater River GRF, which was much higher than projected in the *2010 CVWMP Update*.

Next Steps

Ms. Prickett directed participants to our homepage (www.IndioSubbasinSGMA.org) and encouraged people to sign up for email updates. She announced to workshop participants that the next Public Workshop will be held on August 27, 2020 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM at a location to be determined, if safe to meet in person. If not, the GSAs will host another meeting virtually. She reminded participants to make sure they are on the stakeholder email list to receive workshop updates. For additional information, please contact Rosalyn Prickett at: IndioSubbsinSGMA@woodardcurran.com or (858) 875-7420.