

Indio Subbasin Community Workshop #3

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date September 17, 2026	
Meeting Time	1:00 P.M.- 2:00P.M.
Meeting Location / Platform	Teams
Workshop Name	Indio Subbasin Community Workshop #3
Facilitator(s)	Kat Fikan, Rosalyn Prickett, Emily McCord, Maureen Reilly
Note Taker	Kara Bedwell
Attendees	Abraham Vega (CWA)
	Alena Callimanis
	Alexis Harkins (WSP)
	Amanda Antonelli (Rincon)
	Anthony Mendoza
	April Scott (MSWD)
	David Bean (WSP)
	David Tate (DWA)
	Joanne Le (CVWD)
	Tony Quiroz (CVWD)
	Guadalupe Lara (CVWD)

1. Agenda / Discussion Topics

- Welcome and Introductions
- Groundwater Model Updates (Maureen Riley)
- Projects and Management Actions (Emily McCord)
- Plan Implementation (Kat Fikan)
- Public Comment

2. Meeting Notes

Groundwater Model Updates (Maureen Reilly)

Maureen Reilly provided an overview of updates to the Indio Subbasin groundwater model, which has been revised from the model used in the 2022 Alternative Plan. The updated historical model simulates conditions from 2010 through 2025 and incorporates observed data on managed recharge, natural inflows, and groundwater pumping. Model calibration was completed by comparing simulated groundwater levels to observed groundwater level data. According to the modeling team, the updated model is performing well and reproduces observed basin conditions.

Key improvements to the model include:

- Coordination with neighboring subbasins to improve consistency along basin boundaries.
- Updating model stress periods from annual to quarterly intervals, allowing for more detailed representation of seasonal variability.
- Recalibration using updated groundwater level observations.
- Enhanced representation of groundwater pumping through updated well-pumping methods.
- Technical improvements to model computation and groundwater flow simulation.

Historical Basin Conditions

Maureen presented preliminary results from the updated historical model. Water budget analyses indicate that recharge sources include managed recharge facilities, return flows, and subsurface inflows from neighboring basins, while groundwater pumping remains the primary outflow from the basin. The presentation highlighted that basin storage has generally increased since 2010, reflecting long-term groundwater management efforts and managed recharge projects despite periodic drought conditions. The model also captures recent hydrologic variability, including drought conditions in 2021-2022 and wetter conditions in 2023.

Future Modeling and Climate Change Scenarios

Two climate conditions and six scenarios were modeled to understand potential groundwater basin conditions, described below. The future model forecasts through 2085, holding 2050 demand estimates steady beyond that point due to increasing uncertainty.

- **Climate scenarios** use two Representative Concentration Pathways (RCP):
 - **RCP 4.5** – Moderate/warm-wet; GHGs peak in 2040 then decline.
 - **RCP 8.5** – Severe/hot-dry; GHGs continue rising through 2100.
- **Six total scenarios** are run: 3 project sets (Baseline, Near-Term Projects, Future Projects) × 2 climate models. Future projects modeled include Sites Reservoir (2035), Delta Conveyance Project (2047), EVRA Phase 1, and WRP-10 build-out.
- **Preliminary results:** RCP 4.5 is similar to current conditions; RCP 8.5 shows significantly less recharge but remains sustainable for the Indio Subbasin.

Even under challenging climate conditions, early model results point to a resilient water supply future for the Indio Subbasin, thanks to proactive planning, managed recharge, and coordinated regional projects.

Questions

Michael Placencia (Colorado River Basin Water Board): “As the importation water for recharge to WWR is currently from Colorado River, not SWP, how was CR reliability factored into modelling?”

Response

Rosalyn: The modeling accounts for Colorado River reliability by assuming that the voluntary contributions made in 2025 and 2026 to help preserve water in the Lower Colorado River system and its reservoirs will continue in the future, helping address anticipated drier conditions. Although the water physically delivered to the basin is Colorado River water, the agencies use an exchange arrangement involving their State Water Project entitlements. The model therefore uses climate projections for the Sierra Nevada to estimate future State Water Project allocations, which inform the availability of imported water through that exchange.

Question

David Bean: *“Is the water balance for the groundwater model calculated in calendar year or water year?”*

Response

Maureen: Throughout the Alternative Plan, we are using water year because that is what DWR prefers.

Future Scenarios (Emily McCord)

Emily McCord provided an overview of how water supplies and demands are represented within the future modeling scenarios for the Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update. Using a series of conceptual diagrams, she explained how various water supply sources contribute either directly to meeting water demands or to groundwater recharge within the basin. Information was presented using a conceptual basin water budget framework and focused on illustrating differences between Baseline, Near-Term Projects, and Future Projects scenarios.

Baseline Scenario

For the Baseline scenario, Emily described the primary water supply sources currently represented in the model and how they interact with basin demands and groundwater storage. Key concepts discussed included:

- Colorado River water is used primarily to meet agricultural water demands.
- Recycled wastewater provides a direct water supply for golf and other landscapes through CVWD and DWA reuse programs.
- Groundwater continues to be used to meet potable water demands throughout the basin.
- State Water Project exchange water is used for groundwater recharge.
- Surface water supplies from the Whitewater River contribute to groundwater recharge through both managed recharge and natural infiltration processes.
- Subsurface groundwater flows occur both into and out of the basin.
- Overall, groundwater storage conditions are influenced by the balance between inflows and outflows across the basin.

Near-Term Projects Scenario

The Near-Term Projects scenario builds upon Baseline conditions by incorporating projects that are anticipated to be implemented in the near future and are already included within agency planning efforts. Projects highlighted during the presentation included:

- Expansion of the Palm Desert Groundwater Replenishment Facility.
- Additional Coachella Canal delivery projects associated with the Oasis agricultural area.
- Recycled water system expansion and delivery improvements associated with WRP-7 and WRP-10.
- Additional recycled water supplies associated with CVWD's WRP-4 Phase 1 project.

The presentation indicated that these projects increase available supplies and groundwater recharge opportunities relative to Baseline conditions.

Future Projects Scenario

The Future Projects scenario incorporates longer-term projects that may be implemented beyond the near-term planning horizon. Projects discussed included:

- Delta Conveyance Project.
- Sites Reservoir.
- East Valley Reclamation Authority (EVRA) project.
- Additional WRP-10 buildout and expansion efforts.

The conceptual diagram presented by Emily McCord illustrated how these future projects would add to water supply and recharge opportunities available within the basin under future planning conditions.

Question:

Alena Callimanis: Do we have the data as to amount that each of these represent?

Response:

Emily McCord: Yes, these diagrams are going to be in the Alternative Update Plan with numbers from the final model run.

Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) (Emily McCord)

Emily McCord provided an overview of PMAs which are the programs, policies, infrastructure projects, and management strategies the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) use to maintain groundwater sustainability in the Indio Subbasin. The following four categories were described:

Water Conservation

These programs focus on reducing demand through rebates, water budgets, leak detection, turf reduction, agricultural and golf-course programs, and education. Emily noted that identified programs currently represent at least 20.6 million gallons of estimated annual savings.

Water supply development

These programs focus on increasing and diversifying supplies through local surface-water diversions, Sites Reservoir participation, the Delta Conveyance Project, supplemental water acquisitions, and potable or non-potable reuse.

Source substitution and replenishment

These programs focus on replacing groundwater pumping with Canal or recycled water and expanding groundwater recharge.

Water quality protection

These programs focus on protecting and improving groundwater quality through reduced wastewater percolation, wellhead treatment, small water system consolidation, septic-to-sewer conversions, salt and nutrient management, and protection of source water and abandoned wells.

She also emphasized that the GSAs will use adaptive management, monitoring conditions, evaluating results, and adjusting PMAs as water demand, climate, supply reliability, project feasibility, and funding change.

Plan Implementation (Kat Fikan)

Kat Fikan transitioned the workshop from individual PMAs to the broader question of how the 2027 Alternative Plan Update will be implemented and maintained over time. Kat explained that the central purpose of the Alternative Plan Update is to evaluate whether the GSAs will be able to meet projected future water demands while continuing to maintain groundwater sustainability within the Indio Subbasin. She emphasized that future climate conditions remain uncertain and that water demands, water supplies, and hydrologic conditions may change over time. As a result, the groundwater modeling effort evaluates a range of future conditions rather than relying on a single forecast.

GSA Implementation Priorities

Kat Fikan summarized several implementation priorities that are guiding groundwater management efforts within the basin. These priorities include the following.

Maximizing Surface Water Supplies

GSAs intend to continue maximizing available surface water supplies where feasible. Increased use of surface water reduces dependence on groundwater pumping and supports overall basin water balance objectives.

Long-Term Reliability of State Water Project Supplies

Maintaining and improving long-term reliability of State Water Project supplies remains a key basin priority. This objective supports broader water supply reliability and future groundwater sustainability efforts.

Expansion of Recycled and Non-Potable Water Use

The GSAs plan to continue expanding recycled water and other non-potable water uses to offset groundwater demands and diversify water supplies.

Continued Source Substitution and Groundwater Replenishment

The presentation emphasized that source substitution and groundwater replenishment activities will remain important components of basin management moving forward. These efforts are intended to reduce groundwater extraction while increasing groundwater storage.

Improved Water Use Efficiency

Increasing water-use efficiency across sectors remains an ongoing priority. This objective aligns with the conservation programs discussed earlier in the PMA presentation.

Salt and Nutrient Management

The GSAs also intend to continue implementing activities identified through regional Salt and Nutrient Management Plan to help protect groundwater quality over the long term.

Next Steps

Kat then shifted to the administrative and compliance-related activities that support implementation of the Alternative Plan Update. Kat emphasized that these activities are distinct from the individual PMAs discussed previously. Instead, they represent the ongoing management activities necessary to implement the Alternative Plan and comply with SGMA requirements.

Key activities discussed included:

- Monitoring groundwater conditions and groundwater levels.
- Evaluating basin trends over time.
- Preparing Annual Reports documenting basin conditions and implementation progress.
- Collecting and reporting monitoring data.
- Continuing stakeholder and Tribal engagement efforts.
- Conducting future workshops and outreach activities as needed.

Kat highlighted the existing Tribal Workgroup as one example of ongoing stakeholder engagement that will continue throughout implementation of the Alternative Plan Update.

Questions and Public Discussion

Alena Callimanis: When are you going to be incorporating the latest rules and regulations that are being done for the whole Colorado river basin?

Rosalyn: The 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines that were just released are consistent with our model assumptions. We assumed continuation of the approximately 10% voluntary reduction that CVWD has been contributing through 2025 and 2026 in support of the Lower Colorado River Basin reservoirs.

Alena Callimanis: Disney Cotino has said they were putting an additive on the lake to decrease evaporation, but I heard that no one was allowed to put any additives in the water. Did you ever find out if that was being added? And if so, was it stopped?

Rosalyn: We will follow back up with you after the workshop.