

Indio Subbasin Tribal Community Workshop #3 Meeting Notes

Meeting Date		September 17, 2026
Meeting Time	10:00 A.M.-11:00 A.M.	
Meeting Location / Platform	Teams	
Workshop Name	Indio Subbasin Tribal Community Workshop #3	
Facilitator(s)	Tony Quiroz, Kat Fikan, Emily McCord, Maureen Reilly	
Note Taker	Kara Bedwell	
Participating Tribal Representatives / Organizations	Anne Easterbrook	Stetson Engineers, consultants to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
	Anthony Mendoza	Morongo Band of Mission Indians
	Daniel Lopez	Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
	Joseph Brombacher	Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians
	Justino David Lopez	Indio Water Authority Engineer
	Mara Vasquez	Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians
	William (Jedi) Torres	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Other Attendees	Tony Quiroz	CVWD
	Guadalupe Lara	CVWD
	Jennifer Salazar	DWA
	Joanne Le	CVWD
	Pakiza Chatha	DWR
	Sarah Rapolla	DWA
	Emmanuel Lopez	CVWD
	Roman Gonzalez	City of Indio
	Sebastien Poore	Todd Groundwater

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 Update (Maureen Riley)

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

The updated future model simulates basin conditions from 2026 through 2085 and evaluates projected water demands, future water supply reliability, and planned recharge and water management projects. The modeling effort includes multiple future scenarios that combine different project implementation assumptions with climate change projections.

Two climate conditions and six scenarios were modeled to understand potential groundwater basin conditions, described below. To evaluate potential climate impacts, the modeling team is using two Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) scenarios:

- RCP 4.5, representing a relatively warmer and wetter future climate condition.
- RCP 8.5, representing a hotter and drier future condition.

Projected precipitation from these climate scenarios is being translated into estimates of watershed recharge and runoff using the U.S. Geological Survey Basin Characterization Model (BCM). Maureen explained that the approach is intended to evaluate a range of potential future hydrologic conditions and water supply reliability outcomes.

Future Project Assumptions

Six total scenarios are run: 3 project sets (Baseline, Near-Term Projects, Future Projects) × 2 climate models. Future scenario modeling includes:

- Baseline conditions using existing infrastructure and supplies.

- Near-Term Projects that are already included in agency capital improvement programs.
- Longer-term Future Projects, including additional recharge, water supply, and conveyance projects.

Question and Response

Question from Anne Easterbrook:

Could you say a little bit more about how the RCP 4.5 and 8.5 get translated into sort of the distribution of wet and dry years? Do those scenarios give you a precipitation value for each future year? Or do they give you a range and then you're applying that to like a distribution?

Response from Maureen Reilly:

Maureen Reilly explained that the RCP projections provide precipitation estimates for specific future years. She noted that the project team uses the BCM to estimate how much of that projected precipitation would become streamflow and groundwater recharge within the watershed. She further explained that the scenarios represent one possible future sequence of hydrologic conditions and are being used to test how the basin responds under different climate assumptions. The same climate scenarios are also being applied consistently with neighboring basin planning efforts to support regional coordination.

Follow-up from Anne Easterbrook:

Yeah, like a reasonable distribution of wet and dry.

Response from Maureen Reilly:

Maureen confirmed that the scenarios are intended to provide a reasonable range of wet and dry future conditions for planning purposes and added that additional modeling steps are used to estimate how recharge and runoff may occur within the basin under those projected conditions.

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 project 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.

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. She 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.

Question from Anne Easterbrook:

Could you go back to the water supply development slide and maybe talk a little bit more about what's included in supplemental water acquisitions, what that might look like?

Response from Emily McCord

Emily McCord explained that supplemental water acquisitions are intended to provide flexibility for future opportunities that may become available to the GSAs. She noted that the category serves as a placeholder for potential future water supplies that agencies could pursue through grant funding or other opportunities. She also stated that the primary water supply development focus currently remains participation in larger regional projects such as Delta Conveyance and Sites Reservoir.

Follow-up Discussion from Rosalyn Prickett

Rosalyn Prickett expanded on the explanation and provided additional context regarding how supplemental water acquisitions could occur in practice. She explained that:

- Additional water can sometimes become available during wetter hydrologic conditions.
- Such supplies may be obtained through State Water Project allocations or other transfer opportunities.
- The supplemental water acquisition category is intended to capture these types of opportunistic supply opportunities when they arise.

Follow-up from Anne Easterbrook

Following the responses, Anne Easterbrook summarized her understanding by asking whether the category essentially functions as a catch-all mechanism for future water supply opportunities that may become available. The presenters agreed with that characterization.

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 subbasin. These priorities include:

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 Plans 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.

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

3. Tribal Input, Questions, and Concerns

Question

Tony Quiroz: When we polled the group, we talked about how to best receive updates, and the top choice was e-mail or newsletter. Is that something that we can use to share ongoing progress for plan implementation?

Response

Rosalyn Prickett: Plan implementation updates have traditionally been communicated through Annual Reports, which include PMA status updates. The agencies have generally not used stakeholder mailing lists to provide regular updates on individual projects between annual reporting cycles.

Maureen Reilly follow up: Interested parties currently receive Annual Report notifications, which are intended to serve as the primary comprehensive source of information regarding implementation activities and basin management progress.

Pakiza Chatha provided DWR Updates:

- Prop 4 grant funding –
 - SGM will offer \$300M for GW projects - workshop scheduled for Sept 22
 - WRP will offer \$153M for climate resilience - 2 solicitations (conservation and planning +) - draft guidelines and PSP out for conservation - tribal only workshop scheduled for Oct 12
 - Next guidelines and PSP for WRP to be released later this year
- SGMA engagement and assistance toolbox on DWR website - onboarding resources for new GSA Board members

- GSA Forum to be held on November 18th
- Confirm Indio Subbasin approach - Alternative Plan Update to be submitted with Periodic Evaluation as an Appendix (by due date on December 29) – it will go through full Board adoption by all GSAs prior to submittal to DWR
- SGMA Portal - Pakiza offers her assistance with uploads