

**TULARE LAKE BASIN Portion of KERN COUNTY
INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Public Hearing and Stakeholder Meeting #4
February 17, 2009
Kern County Administrative Center, Bakersfield**

MEETING OVERVIEW

This was the fourth meeting of the Tulare Lake Basin Portion of Kern County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (Kern Region IRWMP). The stakeholder meeting was preceded by a public hearing, which had been scheduled in advance to formally announce the intent to prepare the Tulare Lake Basin IRWMP.

The purpose of the stakeholder meeting was to finalize the IRWMP objectives developed during the 3rd stakeholder meeting and to then begin the process of identifying strategies to address these objectives.

PUBLIC HEARING

Prior to this hearing, a notice was placed in the Bakersfield Californian on February 8 and again on February 15 which provided notice of the upcoming public hearing to be held on February 17. The announcement described the purpose of the hearing as providing formal Notice of the Intent to prepare the Tulare Lake Basin IRWMP. As required these notices were published within 15 days of the hearing.

The requirement that a Regional Water Management Group of at least three or more local agencies, at least two of which with statutory authority over water, be in attendance at the hearing was satisfied as representatives from all eight member agencies of the Executive Committee, all of which have statutory authority over water, were present for the hearing:

Representative	Organization	Interest Group Represented
Dan Allen	City of Wasco	North County
Eric Averett	Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District	Kern Fan
Jim Beck	Kern County Water Agency	
Mark Lambert	City of Bakersfield	Greater Bakersfield
Bill Miller	North of the River Municipal Water District	Mountains and Foothills
David Price III	County of Kern	
Harry Starkey	Berrenda Mesa Water District	Westside
Bill Taube	Wheeler-Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District	South County

Bill Miller, the Executive Committee Co-Chair opened the hearing. Mr. Miller announced the intent to prepare the Tulare Lake Basin IRWMP and then asked for public comments. No comments were offered and so the public hearing was concluded.

FINALIZE IRWMP OBJECTIVES

Immediately following the public hearing, Joan Chaplick from Moore, Iacofano, Goltsman, Inc. (MIG) began the stakeholder meeting with a review of the agenda and asked for self-introductions from all those present. 29 individuals representing approximately 20 public and private organizations were in attendance. Ms. Chaplick facilitated the group's discussions throughout the rest of the meeting.

Mary Lou Cotton from Kennedy/Jenks Consultants began these discussions with a review of the draft objectives prepared during the previous stakeholder meeting. Throughout this discussion, Ms. Cotton referred everyone to both a PowerPoint and handouts listing the draft objectives. She noted that some comments had been moved to a section covering issues, strategies, and project ideas, so these suggestions, though not suitable as objectives, would be captured. Mutual agreement on all the objectives was needed before the stakeholders could move forward with the process of developing strategies to achieve these objectives. With this purpose in mind, the stakeholders reviewed and refined each group of objectives, as summarized below.

New wordings and/or objectives are highlighted in grey.

Increase Water Supply Objectives

This category initially included seven objectives, as well as five related issues, strategies and project ideas. The stakeholder review resulted in the addition of a new objective, plus revisions to two of the original seven objectives, which also led to a new strategy.

Draft Objectives from Stakeholder Meeting #3, January 28, 2009

- Restore water supply to levels that will mitigate for water lost from the region for environmental purposes, both within the region and in partnership with other regions (qty: 400,000 – 1MAF)
- Pursue and implement water use efficiency programs (qty: conserve X AFY by 20XX)
- Increase absorptive capacity in the region by increasing recharge acreage and expanding groundwater storage programs (qty: X recharge acres, X AFY stored)
- Integrate management of water banking facilities to maximize conjunctive use and limit the amount of "native" water exported from the region (qty: X AFY stored)
- Increase the re-use of water in agricultural and urban systems (qty: X AFY)
- Optimize local management of groundwater resources to improve water supply reliability and eliminate groundwater overdraft (qty: X AFY)

The 1st objective was broadened to encompass a range of factors that may have contributed to water lost from the region. Many expressed the view that it was not appropriate to focus only on environmental purposes, as water loss has also occurred due to other additional structural factors:

- Restore water supply to levels that will mitigate for water lost from the region for ~~environmental purposes, both within the region and in partnership~~ **through cooperation and collaboration** with other regions (qty: 400,000 – 1MAF)

Concerning the same objective, some wondered why efforts to restore water supply should be limited only to achieving historic water levels. They believed it was more important, if need be, to increase water levels to serve future economic and growth needs, using as a target date the year 2050. Such efforts to increase or augment water supplies should focus on a wide range of purposes (not just environmental) and be consistent with other County long term plans. This resulted in the creation the following new objective:

- Increase/augment water supplies to meet region demands (e.g. potable, agricultural, environmental) by 2050.

The second objective was modified following the observation that water use efficiency programs should be “cost effective” programs:

- Pursue and implement cost effective water use efficiency programs.

The fourth objective was simplified following the observation that to “limit the amount of native water exported from the region” was really describing a strategy rather than an objective. This phrase was deleted from the objective but was then re-written as a strategy.

- Integrate management of water banking facilities to maximize conjunctive use and limit the amount of “native” water exported from the region.
- Strategy - Maximize the use of local or “native” water in the region.

Improve Operational Efficiency Objectives

This category initially included six objectives. The first four objectives remain unchanged but the last two were modified per suggestions from the stakeholder group.

Draft Objectives from Stakeholder Meeting #3, January 28, 2009

- Increase transfers and exchange flexibility
- Create tools to re-regulate water supplies within the region, including storage, stormflows, and operational flows
- Increase distribution efficiencies and reduce energy usage
- Increase the use of alternate energy sources (e.g. solar)
(qty: X % of energy provided by alternative sources to the region by 20XX)
- Replace aging infrastructure to reduce system water losses
(qty: less than 10% in urban systems)
- Consider future needs for human resources in water and wastewater systems
(qty: X jobs by 20XX)

It was suggested that the fifth objective, “replace aging infrastructure” was needed not only to “reduce system water losses” but also for other important reasons, including improving operational efficiencies and reducing service interruptions.

- Replace aging infrastructure to reduce system water losses, improve operational efficiencies, and reduce service interruptions.

Some were uncertain about the meaning of the sixth objective, “consider future needs for human resources in water and wastewater systems.” In response it was explained that in the previous meeting, concern was expressed that the long term sustainability of the overall water system was dependent not only on the quality of the water infrastructure but also on retaining the management and technical capacity in the people who in the future would maintain and operate that system. This objective was re-written to clarify this purpose.

- ~~Consider future needs~~ Develop educational and job training for human resources to manage and operate water and wastewater systems

Performance measures for this revised objective were proposed.

Improve Water Quality Objectives

This category initially included five objectives from the January meeting. Three of the original five were modified, two remain unchanged and sixth objective was added.

Draft Objectives from Stakeholder Meeting #3, January 28, 2009

- Protect headwaters/areas of origin, natural streams and recharge areas from contamination (qty: X acres by 20XX)
- Identify and preserve prime recharge areas in the Kern fan area (qty: X acres by 20XX)
- Improve water quality for disadvantaged communities and the watershed
- Supply drinking water that attains water quality standards
- Facilitate the use of poorer quality water for appropriate uses

Concern was expressed that as written the 1st objective was ill defined and could be misinterpreted to encompass goals and efforts beyond its original intent. The question was asked about what was really meant by the phrase “to protect headwaters” and could this be seen as potentially imposing restrictions on cattle grazing, tree harvesting and other important economic activities. It was suggested that the scope of this objective be made more precise by revising it as follows:

- ~~Protect~~ Manage headwaters/areas of origin, natural streams and recharge areas from to prevent or mitigate contamination.

As written, some thought the 4th objective implied that drinking water did not currently meet water quality standards. The objective should instead be rewritten to focus on assuring that drinking water continues to attain or even to exceed those standards.

- ~~Supply~~ Ensure drinking water that attains meets or exceeds water quality standards.

The fifth objective referred to “the use of poorer quality water for appropriate uses” which seemed to some unnecessarily negative. It also did not adequately convey how this objective contributes to efforts to expand the overall water supply, through strategies such as trading water that may contain contaminants between agricultural and urban water systems. For instance, it was pointed out that arsenic as a water contaminant can be safely used by agricultural water systems but not urban ones. The objective was rewritten as follows:

- ~~Facilitate~~ **Maximize** the use of ~~poorer~~ **lesser** quality water for appropriate uses.

Later in the meeting there was a discussion concerning what was meant by “non-native species” and that eradication efforts should focus only on those species that have negative impacts on the water quality and supply (see *land use planning and resource stewardship objectives*). This led to a new objective, which was placed in this category.

- **Coordinate and enhance aquatic pest control efforts**

Promote Land Use Planning and Resource Stewardship Objectives

This category initially included a set of seven objectives. During this review one of these original objectives was deleted but re-categorized as a strategy; two objectives were modified slightly, while four other objectives remain unchanged. In addition, two new objectives were identified, bringing the new total to eight.

Draft Objectives from Stakeholder Meeting #3, January 28, 2009

- Restore the Kern River by applying appropriate measures in various reaches of the river, such as the removal of non-native species and promotion of native riparian habitat (qty: X acres of restored riparian habitat)
- Coordination of agricultural and urban water suppliers to address land use planning issues
- Recognize and improve the linkage between land use planning and water supply in the region
- Increase educational opportunities to improve public awareness of water supply, conservation, and water quality issues
- Improve and coordinate integrated land use planning to support stewardship of environmental resources, and integrate with habitat conservation plans and other ongoing planning efforts
- Preserve and improve ecosystem/watershed health (qty: X acres of mitigation lands by 20XX)
- Increase protection for cultural resources (as specified in SB 18)

Criticism was expressed that the first objective was too far reaching, especially as implied by the phrase “restore the Kern River.” In addition, what was really meant by the term “non-native species?” Efforts to eradicate non-native species could mistakenly target beneficial “settler plants” which had been brought into the region 150 years ago. Instead, removal efforts should be limited to those species that are known to have negative water impacts. Finally, the phrase, “promotion of native riparian habitat” could unintentionally open up issues far beyond those related to the water supply and should therefore not be included as part of this objective. The value of natural resources was recognized, but it was seen as less problematic as a separate objective in and of itself, rather than being somehow tied to the concept of restoring the Kern River, which was not clearly understood. As a result of this discussion, the 1st objective was simplified and two new objectives identified.

- ~~Restore~~ **Promote stewardship of** the Kern River by applying appropriate measures in various reaches of the river; ~~such as the removal of non-native species and promotion~~

~~of native riparian habitat~~

- Encourage the removal of non-native invasive plants that affect water quality, reliability and operations.
- Promote the regeneration and restoration of native riparian habitat.

The 3rd objective regarding the linkage between land use planning and water supply was already well-recognized, so it was believed to be redundant to repeat that fact in the objective. However, improving that linkage was still a challenge which needed to be addressed.

- ~~Recognize and~~ Improve the linkage between land use planning and water supply in the region.

The sixth objective refers to the “stewardship of environmental resources” but again its scope as it applies to water supply management could be better focused by specifying the two major environmental resources that underlie the water supply system – the Kern River and the Kern Fan.

- Improve and coordinate integrated land use planning to support stewardship of environmental resources, such as the Kern River and Kern Fan, and integrate with habitat conservation plans and other ongoing planning efforts

Some questioned the connection between protecting cultural resources and other more closely related water supply/quality objectives. It was explained that this objective had been identified in the previous meeting. It was agreed that this definitely fit the resource stewardship category, but was more likely one of many strategies that would be needed to fulfill the broader category. It was also asserted that the objective should be to support rather than increase protections for cultural resources.

- Strategy: ~~Increase protection~~ Support protections for cultural resources (as specified in SB 18)

Improve Regional Flood Management Objectives

This category included four objectives. No new objectives were added, but two objectives were modified.

Draft Objectives from Stakeholder Meeting #3, January 28, 2009

- Improve regional flood management by addressing preparedness, response, and post flood actions
- Reduce the effects of poor quality runoff
- Identify and promote new flood management initiatives to protect vulnerable areas (qty: protect X acres by 20XX; X new initiatives by 20XX)
- Ensure new developments are protected from flood impacts

The 3rd objective was modified to emphasize the need to promote innovate approaches to flood management, especially multi-benefit projects that are designed to also enhance the

water supply, rather than just new flood management initiatives that traditionally have been single-purpose in nature. .

- Identify and promote ~~new~~ innovative flood management ~~initiatives~~ projects to protect vulnerable areas

The scope of the 4th objective was viewed as being overly broad and was modified to convey a more achievable, realistic level of achievement.

- ~~Ensure~~ Plan new developments ~~are protected from~~ to minimize flood impacts.

A subcommittee of John Alderson, Mark Lambert, Dee Jaspar, and Bill Miller were tasked with refining and reviewing the final wording of objectives on behalf of the Stakeholder group.

Other Observations/Questions

Proceeding through each category of objectives, there was some concern about how long these objectives would remain in force. The question was asked as to whether the Plan is adaptable. Will the IRWMP and its objectives change as conditions and needs change? In response, it was explained that the IRWMP is meant to be a living document that will be periodically updated. The Executive Committee will also be able to amend objectives.

This led to a brief discussion concerning the governance structure for the IRWMP. Different possible governance models for consideration include a joint powers authority, memorandums of understanding, watershed councils and other possible institutional frameworks. A desire for a responsive structure that will facilitate amendments to the IRWMP was expressed.

It was suggested that all objectives begin with an action verb.

WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

During the latter portion of the meeting, geographic subgroups were to get together in breakout discussion groups to begin the process of identifying water management strategies that would be of the greatest use in their respective sub-regions to achieve the draft IRWMP objectives. As most of the scheduled meeting time had been devoted to the continued review and refinement of the objectives, there was insufficient time to meet in sub-groups. As originally planned, however, these subgroups will be meeting on their own to identify relevant strategies and projects in advance of the next full stakeholder meeting.

To help explain the purpose of these subgroups, Ms. Chaplick led a brief discussion with the leaders of one of the geographic subgroups to model for all the others how the process should work. In addition, all of the subgroups will receive written instructions, plus MIG staff are available to help facilitate these discussions if requested.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the meeting, during the public comment period, it was pointed out that representatives from several organizations who had been present at previous meetings were not in attendance today. Even though email notices had gone out well in advance of the

meeting, it was stated that some who did not come today had not received the notice. Steps will be taken to test future email messages/announcements to make certain they are being received by all those they have been addressed to.

Concern was also expressed that representatives from various non-profit organizations, the environmental community and others with an interest in the IRWMP were not attending these meetings on a regular basis, despite having been invited. While it was convenient to meet during the work day for those whose jobs and professional responsibilities are in this area, this may not fit the schedules of those in the broader community. In addition, the technical nature of some of the issues and those discussions might discourage some who had attended in the past. It was recommended that an evening meeting be scheduled specifically to meet the needs of these other groups, and that the meeting focus specifically on their issues of concern. Stakeholders were also asked to provide Lauren Bauer with their suggestions for new people to invite to upcoming IRWMP stakeholder meetings.

The next Kern IRWMP meeting is scheduled for Monday, **March 30 from 1 to 3:30 pm**. The meeting location will be announced later.