Indian Wells Valley Water
Availability and Conservation Plan
August 28, 2013 Workshop

Notes taken by:
Ross Fehrman, Planner I

Number of Attendants: 125
Agenda:

Introduction by Supervisor Mick Gleason and Planning Director Lorelei H. Oviatt (LHO)

Mick Gleason:
- Sets out ground rules
- In February we started with a community plan to see where we want to see in the future Water, Trails, and Supporting Navy Mission
- County is fully involved

LHO:
- Introduces team
- Water was our first priority
- Indian Wells Valley Ground Water Committee is separate from us
- This is a County project
- County is interested in the comprehensive full range of solutions, not just looking at one group
- We want your technical input and solutions

Presentation of Study Approach and Findings on Groundwater Issues by Gus Yates, Todd Engineers

Introduces Todd Engineers, past projects and their credibility
Gives description of study area
Groundwater is the only source of water
Basin without development
- Mountain recharge
- Ground water evaporations
Basin with development
- Wells take water
- Closed basin- water from surface watershed (Sierras)
Basin is in overdraft
- There is a very large water imbalance
Open basin hypothesis is not convincing
- No leveling out in this basin

- 86% of hydrographs are declining

LHO:
- These are just discussing points
- These are only preliminary findings
- This is his first cut of what he is seeing
- We want community and technical experts to give us their input
- We still have a lot of data to go through

Public Comments

Is there a reason why you didn’t discuss total dissolve solids balance?

Are you trying to figure out if this is an open or closed aquifer?

What does this mean for individuals that have their own wells?

Define who decides this?

We own the water that is on our land!

Can anyone attend the technical meeting?
  - LHO: We will consider it

This sounds like what I have already heard. It is a closed basin. Please consider the impacts from the City of Ridgecrest

I have been measuring our well and have been matching the foot a year average. It now has changed because of the pistachio farmers who moved in. (Gave copy of data)

How would Ag get worked in on this issue? How would conservation apply to Ag?

Involved in China Lake well owners. Fought to make it better. Barstow came over to talk to us. If we decided to adjudicate, who pays for it? That is why we stopped in the past. It’s because the community didn’t come together! How long will the process take to decide on? You always wait until it is too late. Get a timeframe and money together. Do you have the power to deal with this yourself?
  - LHO: We will put together a comprehensive list of what people and agencies can do. In December we will have that list. Yes you are correct, this is not just one group’s problem and responsibility.

Who has jurisdiction of groundwater?
• LHO: You do! California and Texas are the only states that don’t have jurisdiction

With data showing that water is going down due to Ag, can we put a moratorium on this issue until decisions are made?

Do we have publication of how much water is going to be used in the next year with all the future farms coming in? Come to us, we have data
  • LHO: Our report will cover who uses water and how much. There will be a chart that will include everyone

So one person pumping can steal my water?
  • LHO: Everyone has the right to the water. You need to come together and share

There is only so much land zoned Ag, are you considering that? There are other users

The County determines zoning, why not change it?
  • LHO: We can’t just do that without permission
  • LHO: We will consider that as an option though

Adjudication puts it in the hands of the people. It might cost money but it could be worth it.

An Alfalfa farm opened up and the water consumption is large! Where does the farmer have the right to use that much water?

Our well has been measured twice a year for 10 years. I want to make sure you have current data.
  • LHO: If you reported it to the Kern County Water Agency then we have it.

Are you using data that shows how much water the houses on Ag land use? Maybe houses use the water, not the plants.

How long did it take for adjudication of Rosamond?
  • LHO: 10 years

Along with the lowering of the water level, there are total dissolved solids. We need to look at water quality.

So doesn’t it mean that the people with the most money can just dig deeper wells then everyone else and take all the water? So all this time waiting for the report, people are just stealing our water.

LHO: Adjudication= Judge decides how much everyone gets. Not a great way. Lawyers get all the money
Comment on Gus Yates…. We should be pleased with their endeavor and professionalism. The problem is that we will just fight over the information.

If water is in jeopardy, will the study show we just don’t have the resources? Are you saying people need to leave?
  • LHO: No, that is not what we are saying. We are coming up with solutions to support future sustainable growth.

This all makes moving here not attractive

Please look into brackish water

If we don’t come together as a community, then we will not be sustainable

We need to stop pumping.

Overdraft is a serious situation. Where are you getting the water from?
  • LHO: We are finding solutions. ALL will cost money. We will consider all parties

Most of the reports have to do with water quality and quantity, is Todd Engineers taking into consideration the apparent increase that has happened in such a short time?

There is a well in the pistachio fields that the Kern County Water Agency is currently taking readings of to see how much water is being used.

Is this a new study?
  • LHO: No, it is an estimate based on data.

Why not a new study?
  • LHO: We didn’t pay them for a new study and we don’t have the time. We will include what studies are on going

Is there a possibility of a land trust? Buying AG?
  • LHO: We will explain in the report

If there was a moratorium on new Ag and development, what will it look like? Mick, do you have thoughts on future Ag in the valley?
  • Gleason: my opinion will be based on the study, and your recommendation. I am 1 of 5 votes... I don’t like to make statements on hypotheses
LHO- We will look at how much water Ridgecrest uses compared to other cities such as Palmdale and etc.

LHO- This is a big conversation. We are serious about not just doing a report but making things happen!

Will the report be released early?

- LHO: No, the report will be released in October and then we will talk about it at Board of Supervisors meeting in December

What is the County going to do about funding?

- LHO: We need to figure out WHAT we are doing first, then we will figure out how

Western United States has had water problems. Can we look at other places with this issue and see what they are doing?

- LHO: Yes, for example San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles will be looked at

Thanks County and asks to make sure the report is marked at urgent so it doesn’t get placed on the back burner.

What is your mechanism to obtain public input on report?

- LHO: We will take comments. We are not taking a poll. Email us.

What can citizens do to get the attention of other Supervisors?

- Gleason- Work through me. Give me all your comments! This has been one of my first priorities since I became Supervisor.
- LHO- Because of the Brown Act, Mick can’t talk to other Supervisors. That is my job. I will brief them. We are not looking for a one size fits all. We are focused on what will work for HERE

Will you post notes of what happens during technical meeting?

- LHO: We will consider it

From my experience, Adjudication costs a lot of money. Will they decide water usage?

- LHO: There are many options

Is their priority of human consumption over Ag?
Closing and Next Steps

LHO:

- Invites technical people to a September meeting
- Solutions will be ones that will allow status quo to stay
- Goes over schedule and process