

Ventura River Watershed Council

Meeting Summary Tuesday November 22, 2011

(Acronyms defined below)

Watershed Council Business

2. Upcoming meeting schedule and topics

The 2012 meeting schedule was distributed and ideas were gathered for meeting topics next year. *See list below.*

3. Mission statement

The following mission statement was approved for the Council: *To facilitate and support efforts by individuals, agencies and organizations to maintain and improve the health and sustainability of the Ventura River Watershed.* Objectives to accompany the mission statement will be developed next; these objectives will provide the opportunity to stress other aspects of our focus, such as the importance of an integrated approach to watershed planning.

4. Summary of accomplishments

A draft summary of the Council's major accomplishments since formation, as well as a list of participants, was reviewed and commented on. This information will be used on a Watershed Council website and in outreach materials. The updated information will be provided at the next meeting.

In addition, Lynn Rodriguez, WVCV Project Manager, suggested that a more detailed list of watershed-related accomplishments and projects of the various partners should also be developed, as this information will be needed for the update of the IRWMP. *Look for a request for this information soon.*

5. May Water Awareness Month

May is both water and watershed awareness month. Ideas for coordination of watershed-wide water/watershed awareness month activities were discussed. Karen Waln, with the city of Ventura, announced that the city will host a film festival focused on water either in March or May. Dale Zurawski, with VCAILG, offered the idea of holding one central kick-off event for the watershed, accompanied by a list of activities, sponsored by different entities, that people could participate in, such as tours or open houses. Rene Roth, of the Ojai Valley Green Coalition, listed many different Water Awareness Month activities coordinated by the Coalition last year. Lynn Rodriguez reported that the Santa Clara Watershed is holding a large "State of the Watershed" event in May, and we could look at the strategies that are planned for that event for ideas.

Lorraine Walter, watershed coordinator, will coordinate a meeting after the first of the year to bring these ideas together into a watershed-wide strategy.

6. Groundwater Subcommittee

Gerhardt Hubner of the Watershed Protection District committed to have the district convene a

subcommittee after the first of the year to begin planning for a Local Groundwater Assistance Program grant application for the watershed. The focus of the proposal would be on the Upper Ventura River groundwater basin.

Presentations

7. Ventura County Irrigated Lands Group

Dale Zurawski, of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County, provided an update on the Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group (VCAILG) Program. Participating growers of irrigated crops in Ventura County pay for the monitoring as part of a “conditional waiver” program to demonstrate compliance with state water quality standards. There are two sampling locations in the watershed: Thacher Creek at Ojai Avenue and San Antonio Creek at Grand Avenue. Both are tributaries to the Ventura River, drain only irrigated farmland, and are on the east end of the city of Ojai.

Monitoring was conducted at each site 11 times between 2007-2010. There were no exceedances of any constituents tested, except for a single detection of legacy pesticide DDT in 2008 at Thacher Creek. Nitrate levels found in storm runoff from the first five years of monitoring ranged from .48 mg/l to 2.72 mg/l. A total of six samples were collected. Monitoring in the next five years of the conditional waiver program will increase to twice a year during the irrigation season and twice a year during storm events.

VCAILG recently completed a series of educational classes in June/July to bring its members up to speed on the water quality results and program requirements. Surveys were returned by over half of the attendees and 75 percent indicated they planned to implement new management practices to improve water quality in the next five years.

Some interesting information from the discussion:

- Use of soil moisture sensors, an important “best management practice,” can reveal that growers are sometimes under-irrigating as well as over-irrigating.
- Some growers have installed their own on-site weather stations for accurate local data. Sergio Vargas, from the Watershed Protection District, was interested to know if the data from these stations are recorded and available, as the more data points the district has for calibrating its hydrology models, the more accurate the models.
- Casitas Water District operates a weather station in the Ojai Valley that provides evapotranspiration data to local growers. Data from the station is updated on the district’s website daily.

8. Review of Applicable Watershed Management Plans

As part of the Watershed Protection District’s V1-funded project, Mark Horne, with Cardno-Entrix, provided an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of three watershed management plans. The three plans—Tujunga-Pacoima, Ballona Creek, and Calleguas Creek—were selected based upon their size, characteristics, and the presence or absence of a watershed group.

A draft of Mark’s report will be produced in December, but here are some of the lessons learned that were covered in the meeting:

- The Tujunga-Pacoima plan presented an ambitious vision for the watershed, including significant changes to the local government’s policies, which has not seen much traction. The lesson: be as

specific as possible, including model language, about what changes are desired in local code. The plan didn't have an ongoing council to advocate for implementation, which may also account for lack of implementation.

- The Ballona plan recommended ten demonstration projects (such as converting soccer fields to depressions for temporary runoff retention), but had not involved the landowners in the process, and those projects have not been implemented; however, smaller-scale infiltration projects are gaining implementation traction.
- The Calleguas plan involves stakeholders that have been at the table for 15 years. Requirements to address TMDLs are a significant motivator that keeps the group together. A specific focus like this may be an important strategy for long-term cohesion and endurance.
- In general, plans seem to be weak at gauging the feasibility of implementation.
- Shirley Birosik, of the RWQCB, gave the example of the successful Topanga Canyon watershed effort. That effort was initiated by the citizens within the watershed around a specific issue; the group was polarized around that issue, they got together and accomplished their mission, and then disbanded. Shirley emphasized the importance of having a plan that addresses what people in the watershed care about; when regulations dictate what watershed plans focus on, and this is not what the people care about, the process is less likely to succeed.
- Gerhardt Hubner, of the Watershed Protection District, emphasized the need for an “actionable” plan, with realistic short-, medium-, and long-term objectives.
- Paul Jenkin, of Surfrider, emphasized the need to address the root causes of problems, using the example of Matilija Dam.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County, IRWMP

9. Prop 84 Planning Grant: proposed project presentations

Lynn Rodriguez went over the local and state process for submitting Prop 84 planning grant proposals, and emphasized the increased competitiveness of the process this time. Lynn will have a conference call with Department of Water Resources (DWR) staff ahead of the WVCV Steering Committee meeting to get feedback on the projects proposed by the three watersheds. The Ventura River Watershed Council meets the day before the Steering Committee meets, so there will be one more opportunity to adjust our project selection after feedback from DWR.

Two projects were proposed for funding in our watershed: a land protection plan for \$90,000, by the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC), and a nutrient fate and transport study for \$160,000 by the city of Ojai. After hearing overviews of these projects by their proponents, the group ranked the city's project first and the OVLC's second. Both projects will go forward, as ranked, for the Steering Committee ranking.

10. Upcoming IRWM meetings

The WVCV Steering Committee meeting will be held on December 14. The WVCV General Membership meeting will follow on the same day.

11. IRWMP Plan

The IRWMP update is a bit behind schedule in part because the process for submitting grant invoices has been very time consuming. A series of workshops to address required components of the updated plan, such as climate change, are being scheduled for next year.

12. Prop 84 Implementation Grant

The State Water Resources Control Board has begun accepting applications for the Prop 84 Storm Water Grant Program, and applications will be accepted through January 31, 2012.

13. Santa Clara River and Calleguas Creek Watershed committees

No report; ran out of time.

Other Updates

14. Horse/livestock owner outreach

Lorraine reported that Jenny Newman, the staff from the RWQCB working on our algae TMDL, will provide the Ojai City Council with a brief presentation at their meeting on December 13. Jenny is interested in involving horse and livestock owners in the algae TMDL process, and towards that end the Ojai Valley Green Coalition, in partnership with the Ventura County Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the Waste to Energy citizens group, has arranged for Jenny to speak at a public meeting prior to the council meeting. The meeting will be held at the Chaparral Auditorium in Ojai from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. Horse and livestock owners will be specifically invited to the meeting. The RCD will discuss the importance of best management practices (BMP) and announce BMP workshops that they intend to hold in the spring. There will be an opportunity for feedback and discussion. Bill O'Brien is the contact for more information.

15. SEP Program challenge

Item not discussed as we time ran out, but if you have projects on the SEP list, please make sure Lorraine has a description of those projects.

16. Other project updates

Bert Rapp, Ventura River County Water District General Manager, reported that the city of Ventura has indicated an interest in being the project applicant for the Prop 84 Implementation Grant project he has been spearheading. This project would offer rebates to homeowners and businesses to retrofit landscapes and indoor equipment for water conservation and stormwater infiltration. The next meeting to discuss this project will be held on December 15 at 3:30 at the city of Ventura maintenance yard. *See info below.*

Acronyms

CIMIS – California Irrigation Management Information System

IRWMP – Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan

RWQCB – Regional Water Quality Control Board

VCAILG – Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group

WCVC – Watershed Coalition of Ventura County

Contact

Lorraine Walter, Ventura River Watershed Coordinator, 805/649-6852 x4, lorraine@ovlc.org

Upcoming Council Meeting Topics

2010/2011

December

- Mark Horne presentation on V-1 Watershed Protection Plan Report
- Darrell Siegrist, Septic System Program, Ventura County Environmental Health Division

January (pm)

- Nonprofit roundtable

February

- Climate Change

Other Topics

- Growers perspective
- Resource Conservation District: Strategies for outreach to horse & cattle owners
- The nexus of local land use regulations and watershed planning
- The Ventura River parkway project
- Julie Tumamait: Native American concerns regarding watershed planning Homeless issue
- Biodigester for horse manure
- Matilija Dam update
- Council for Watershed Health presentation
- Flood protection issues: watershed characterization and watershed mapping
- ArkStorm scenarios

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Dec. 13 **Ventura River Watershed Council.** 9-11:00 a.m. Community Room, Ventura City Hall, 501 Poli Street. Info: Lorraine Walter – lorraine@ovlc.org

Dec. 13 **Tri-County Fish Team Public Forum.** 1:30 p.m. Community Room, Ventura City Hall, 501 Poli Street. Info: Stephanie Wald – 805/473-8221

Dec. 14 **Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County Steering Committee and General Membership Meeting.** 8:30 – 11:00 a.m. Pacific Conference Room, Ventura Govt. Center, Hall of Justice. The Steering Committee will select (from among all the projects from the county's three watersheds) the projects that Ventura County will apply for in round two of Planning Grant funding (for focused studies). The General Membership will then vote to approve this selection. Info: Lynn Rodriguez – lynn.rodriguez@ventura.org

Dec. 15 **Holistic Water Conservation Grant Planning.** 3:30 p.m. City of Ventura Maintenance Yard, 336 San Jon Road. Info: Bert Rapp – bert@vrcwd.com