

Ventura River Watershed Council

Meeting Summary Tuesday December 13, 2011

(Acronyms defined below)

2. Jan and Feb council meetings

Lorraine Walter announced that the plan for the January meeting is to invite the Watershed U audience to the meeting and to have a fairly unstructured agenda with plenty of time for participants to share their ideas, concerns, and information on their projects. The plan for the February meeting is to begin focusing the discussion on the goals, objectives and strategies for our watershed management plan. [Note: it since became necessary to cancel the January meeting.]

Presentations

3. County regulation of septic systems

Darrell Siegriest provided an overview of the Ventura County Environmental Health Division's (EHD) responsibilities with regard to regulation of septic systems. EHD's septic system program has two components: one relates to permitting the construction of septic systems, the other implements the State Water Board's regulations relating to waste discharge. The later goes unnoticed by the permittee. EHD review's proposal's for new systems for appropriateness given the geology, environmental setting, compliance with state standards, etc. They issue construction permits and inspect the installations. EHD also reviews repairs to septic systems, and changes to dwellings which could trigger septic system regulations. An online database of permits is maintained by EHD.

Septic systems generally include a septic tank, some type of dispersal system, and sometimes a treatment system in between. We do have seepage pits in this county, which are not quite the inferior system that they were once thought to be. We have a few advanced treatment systems in the county, though not many.

AB885. Darrell reported on significant new regulations under development by State Water Board for the operation of septic systems (onsite wastewater treatment systems). The regulations improve the protection of surface and groundwater, fix the patchwork nature of the existing regulations, and they are structured in a risk-based, tiered-approach. The new regulations may require owners of existing septic systems located near an identified surface water body that exceeds water quality standards for bacteria or nitrogen compounds such as nitrates to retrofit their septic system. The regulations would also apply to those building a new home, or someone replacing an existing system that has failed.

4. Ventura River Watershed Protection Plan Report (Draft)

Mark Horne, of Cardno ENTRIX, presented the Draft Ventura River Watershed Protection Plan Report, which is the last element of the V-1 project funded by a Prop 84 IRWMP grant. The draft report includes: 1) Introduction; 2) Watershed Characteristics; 3) Summary of V-1 Projects; 4) Water Demand and Water

Budget; 5) Review of Applicable Watershed Plans; 6) Data Gaps; 7) Applicable Best Management Practices; and 8) Recommendations.

Comments and questions on the draft report and presentation focused on several key topics: the report scope and purpose; the need for more introductory material to provide context; and an overview of the contents, how water demand was calculated, data gaps, additional material that could be incorporated, and how comments will be dealt with.

With respect to water demand, concern was expressed over whether the demand calculations represent a single or average year, given the significant variation in both precipitation and water demand in dry and wet years. Other questions included whether demand for city of Ventura water included petroleum operations or double-counted water supplied by Casitas. It was also noted that groundwater extraction values for the Upper Ojai Basin were available from DWR Bulletin 118. It was suggested that the amount of water that evaporates from Lake Casitas should be included in the report.

For data gaps, it was noted that Fox Canyon GMA has produced estimates of water use for 22 crops and water year type, which could be applied to the Ventura River watershed. Although info on habitat types in the watershed may not be available, the CDFG Habitat Relationship Model could be used to predict habitat based on vegetation type.

It was suggested that the purpose of the report needs to be clearly stated, along with an acknowledgement that it is not intended as a comprehensive assessment of the watershed. It was also requested that more introductory material be provided, including an overview of the watershed, key themes and content of individual chapters, and make the summary of V-1 projects more accessible to the lay person. Several minor corrections or clarifications were provided, along with suggestions to expand some of the sections. It was noted that Matilija Dam was built by the County, not by the US Army Corps as the report states. The large influence of US Forest Service lands was not mentioned; there are a number of septic systems on these lands. It was also suggested that a matrix of comments received be created and that all comments be provided to the State Water Board.

Comments on the draft report were requested as soon as possible, but no later than January 13. The final report is due January 20, 2012.

(Thanks to Carndo ENTRIX for the bulk of this summary.)

5. Prop 84 Planning Grant: focused studies

Lynn Rodriguez updated the group on the process for selecting the projects that will go forward in a grant application from our region. She discussed the feedback from DWR on our proposed projects, and emphasized that the focused studies really need to help us be “standards compliant.” Bill O’Brien, speaking on behalf of the city of Ojai, reported that they modified their nutrient study proposal based on comments received at the last Watershed Council meeting; the focus of the project was narrowed and the groundwater monitoring portion was removed.

6. Upcoming IRWM Meetings

Lynn announced the joint WCVS Steering Committee and General Membership meeting on December 14.

7. IRWMP Plan

Lynn reminded the group that a climate change workshop is tentatively scheduled for February and will be the first step toward addressing the climate change component of our Integrated Regional Water Management Plan update.

8. Santa Clara River and Calleguas Creek Watershed Committees

Lynn has developed an outline of the activities planned for the Santa Clara River's State of the Watershed outreach event planned for May 2012, and she has shared this Lorraine Walter for planning of Ventura River Watershed May Water Awareness Month activities.

Other Updates

9. Horse/livestock owner outreach

Bill O'Brien reported that Jenny Newman, of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, will speak at a public meeting tonight (Dec 13) in Ojai to begin outreach on the algae TMDL. Marty Melvin, of the Resource Conservation District, will speak at the meeting about BMP workshops for livestock owners scheduled for next spring. And Bill will speak about the biodigester that is being studied to as a manure management option. After the public meeting Jenny will speak at the Ojai City Council meeting on the same topic.

10. Upcoming grants

Lorraine reminded participants that a summary of three upcoming grants was distributed electronically with the agenda. Ewelina Mutkowski, from Watershed Protection District, announced that they are planning to apply for a Prop 84 storm water grant to fund a retrofit of one of the Ventura County Government Center's parking lots with a water capturing system.

11. Other project updates

Melina Semphill Watts introduced herself as the new executive director for the Ventura Hillside Conservancy.

Steve Offerman, with Supervisor Steve Bennett's office, announced that the concrete stream crossing on the San Antonio Creek, which had been a fish barrier, has been removed. Work continues on construction of the new bridge.

Brian Stark, with Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, announced that since last month's meeting 5,000 plants have been installed by the California Conservation Corps on one of the OVLC's restoration projects; 2,000 plants remain to be planted.

Ron Merckling, with Casitas Water District, announced that the district will be sponsoring a greywater workshop in January. The district has an active water conservation program, offering rebates, landscape surveys, and other BMPs for conservation.

Bert Rapp, with Ventura River County Water District, announced that the Boy Scouts are installing an ocean-friendly garden in front of their district office, and he invited people to join in the work days. He announced that the next meeting for the Holistic Water Grant project will be on December 15th at 3:30 p.m. at the City of Ventura Maintenance Yard on San Jon Road.

Karen Waln, with the city of Ventura, announced that the city's film festival focused on water will take place in March of next year.

Ewelina Mutkowski announced that she will be holding a training on January 12, 2012 on the County's new *Technical Guidance Manual for Stormwater Control Measures*, as part of the county's One-Stop Permitting program.

Russ Baggerly, Casitas Water District board member, announced that, after a 50-year effort, the district just signed a long-term agreement with the Bureau of Land Management. Also, the district is about to make its last payment on Casitas Dam.

Jordan Kear, with Kear Groundwater, announced that the Ojai Basin groundwater model has been completed and paper copies of the report will be delivered at this Thursday's meeting of the Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency. Jordan is conducting time series sampling in a well in Sespe bedrock to determine trends in metals and nutrients. Another interesting project is an evaluation on a private property of how much water is stored in the terrace formation.

Greg Grant, with the city of Ojai, announced that Golden State's water rates will be going up; as rates go up they are finding that more people are drilling wells.

Steve Wickstrum, Casitas Water District general manager, announced that he will be attending an upcoming meeting with the Fish and Game Commission that will focus on major proposed changes to fish stocking rules (the proposed changes would require regular, costly bioassessments to determine if raising or stocking fish impacts other species, whether they are endangered or not).

Leslie Purcell, resident, announced that the city of Ventura's EIR for the Westside Community Planning Project, which includes much of the Avenue area, was just released. There is a 45-day public comment period.

Acronyms

CIMIS – California Irrigation Management Information System

DWR – Department of Water Resources

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

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