



Ventura River Watershed Council Meeting Summary

Tuesday April 3, 2012

Our mission is to facilitate and support efforts by individuals, agencies, and organizations to maintain and improve the health and sustainability of the Ventura River watershed.

What a great meeting! This was our first evening meeting. We had invited the 77 participants from the 2010 Watershed University program (put on by the UC Cooperative Extension's office), and *23 people new to the Council showed up at this meeting*. And though they were new to the Council, these people are not new to the watershed or its issues; many are doing, or have done, work on behalf of the watershed. It was an impressive group, and we are very fortunate to now have these folks participating in the Watershed Council.

A big THANK YOU to Rob Orth, Deborah Pendrey, and Maureen Hannah for bringing treats, plates and the reusable cups and water dispenser!

This summary comes from my memory and some quickly scribbled notes. There are, no doubt, omissions and errors. My apologies in advance. - Lorraine

Watershed Council

2. Council history & organization

3. Watersheds Coalitions of Ventura County

Lorraine Walter, Ventura River watershed coordinator, and Lynn Rodriguez, Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County program manager, provided a historical overview of the Watershed Council and its milestones, as well as the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County and its relationship with the Council. The powerpoint used in the presentation is included at the end of this summary.

Updates/Discussion

4. Agriculture in the Ojai Valley

Emily Ayala, of Friend's Ranch, provided a very interesting perspective on farming in the Ojai Valley. Emily's family, the Friends, have been farming in the Valley for five generations. Currently, she and her family grow Pixie tangerines and other citrus. Emily said early crops in the Valley were wheat, barley and other dry farmed crops. In the drought years of the 1940s, farmers had to dig wells by hand. Emily mentioned a picture of her grandfather digging a 90-foot-deep well by hand (see photo and a great article by Emily here: www.ediblecommunities.com/ojai/fall-2004/fall-2004.htm). In the 1970s growers in the valley were irrigating with furrow irrigation. It was in the 1980s, when Casitas Municipal Water District asked growers to cut back—and raised their rates, that growers moved to micro-sprinkler irrigation.

Emily described some of the constraints faced by growers in the Valley, some of which help explain why other crops are not grown there. She said the soils are very young and mostly rock. You just cannot plow the soils of east Ojai. The rocky, well-drained soil is not good at retention of water. Many things are tried to build up the organic matter in the soil—Emily likes using horse manure mulch. Composted yard waste is also used. But these mulch materials often get washed away in big floods, like the flood of 2005. Besides being limited by soil, growers in the Valley are also limited by access to labor; farm laborers live largely in Santa Paula and Oxnard.

Growers are also limited by transportation; most citrus needs to be hauled to Fillmore packinghouses. And if they had a major packinghouse in Ojai, residents would not be happy about the truck traffic.

Emily said citrus trees need five acre feet of water per acre per year, and that growers hope to get about half of that from rain. Other local crops, like strawberries, lettuce, and greenhouse crops, use more than this. Young trees need to be watered more often, but use less water overall. In recent years, much of the Ojai Valley has been replanted from Valencias and Navels to higher value citrus like tangerines. As these young trees age, they will use more water. Emily reminded us to keep this in mind in our water demand models.

Emily reported that in the last year, she has seen more homeless people living in the river by their farm. This brings feces and trash into the river, and some are also growing marijuana. Upstream, the Forest Service is having lots of issues with marijuana growers. Apparently rodenticides and other heavy-duty pesticides are being used, and she thinks this is a significant concern for water quality.

Emily recalled that in the 1960s and 70s, there was always water flowing in Reeves Creek, and that now, even in good rain years, Reeves Creeks dries up. She said one factor is that as water rates have gone up, farmers have drilled more wells.

Emily told the group about a very serious threat to growers in the Valley, the Asian citrus psyllid. This pest can transmit a fatal disease. It is now entrenched in Los Angeles. Once a tree is infected, there is no cure. Emily urged us not to bring potted citrus plants into the area, and to learn more about the pest. She said the majority of growers in the Valley do not now spray insecticides. They are lucky that they are fairly isolated and not exposed to pest threats. See www.californiacitrusthreat.org

In response to a question about increasing irrigation efficiency, Emily said that most growers are already irrigating very efficiently, though there are a few who could stand to improve. She did mention that a number of properties in the Valley have a few acres, and even up to 40 acres, of tree crops that essentially serve as decorative landscaping. There may be water saving potential on those properties.

5. Taylor Ranch, giant reed removal

Anna Huber, project manager with R.A. Atmore & Sons, reported on the arundo (giant reed) removal project on the Woods-Claeysens' property on the lower Ventura River. Forty-nine acres of arundo in the river bottom have been treated thus far. The arundo provides ideal shelter for trespassing campers in the river bottom. Addressing the liability associated with these illegal trespassers, and the resulting trash and human waste, is the primary motivation for the arundo removal effort. Anna's powerpoint, included as an attachment, outlines the main points she covered in her presentation.

The method of treatment is to masticate the arundo with a brush grinder, going over the material several times and leaving the mulch in place. A question was asked about whether the pieces resprout. Anna explained that the grinder pulverizes the arundo into very small pieces, which generally do not resprout. Resprouting from the rhizomes does occur, and these are treated with a foliar herbicide, approved for use in aquatic areas, from backpack sprayers. This method results in less chemical use and little drift, as the spray is directed downward. Anna explained the regulatory obstacles that would be involved in trying to remove arundo without chemicals, which would involve digging huge, habitat disrupting holes in the river bed in vain attempts to remove the large root masses arundo typically has.

Another question was asked about the possibility of ever completely eradicating arundo. Anna said that as invasive plants go, arundo is actually one that could be controlled better than others. She said pollinators of arundo do not seem to be very prevalent in our area, so even though arundo flowers, the majority of seed that is produced is not viable. Invasive riparian plants with abundant viable seeds, like tamarisk and yellow star thistle,

present a much bigger problem when it comes to the ability of a species to spread and invade areas of native habitat.

6. The homeless

Rob Orth, executive director with Project Understanding, described his work with chronically homeless individuals living in and around the river bottom. Having just seen Anna's slides of the river bottom camps, he said that what we weren't getting from the pictures was the smell; with at least 100 people living in the river bottom without any sanitary facilities, the smell is horrendous.

Project Understanding has been invited to be part of the team working on the homeless issue overall, and on specific clean outs of sections of the river in advance of arundo removal efforts by the city and county. The team also includes the Salvation Army, the Turning Point Foundation, the County of Ventura, and the city of Ventura. The team has been looking at ways in which their efforts to help may be harming; for example all the food and clothes donated by charities often end up as trash in the river. Changes to these handout programs are in process, with more to come.

The river bottom clean out efforts are essentially removing people from their "home." Many people have lived in the river for years; there are multi-generation families; there are 80 year olds; there are children. It is estimated that about 60 percent of the people living there have mental health issues. Alcohol and drugs are a major problem. Many people have dogs. There is a high Veteran population. Sometimes these people are taken by ambulance to the hospital multiple times in one day.

Rob explained that the strategy his organization takes is that of relationship development. They are not waiting for the homeless individuals to come to them; they go to the river. They work to encourage people to make a change, to go home, to seek treatment. He and his staff help inform the campers about upcoming arundo removal, offer them information about services available, and since many of people do better with medication for their mental health issues, they also help get people to their doctor's appointments.

Rob's organization is looking into a program modeled after one in San Jose (called Clean Creeks, Healthy Communities: Cleaning up Coyote Creek), where they had a similar trash and homeless problem. One of their solutions, funded with a major grant, is to recruit homeless individuals from the creek to do creek cleanup in exchange for incentives, such as food or housing vouchers.

Rob discussed the challenge of providing the needed housing. He said the cheapest housing costs about \$500 for an 8 x 10' room with a shared bathroom. Often they are not able to offer anything that would motivate people to leave the river. In the last year, he estimates they housed 15 homeless individuals.

A question was asked about how the Watershed Council could help. Rob said the work that they do is done by case workers, and what he needs most to be more effective is funding for more case workers. Project Understanding is holding a fundraising breakfast on May 10, (7:30 – 9:00 am, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ventura) to raise funds for case management.

7. Water Awareness Month

Lorraine showed a draft of a Water Awareness Month calendar that is being developed to collectively promote various water-related events in May as part of Water Awareness Month. She encouraged members to let her know about any relevant events in May that should be included on the calendar. (See draft following summary.)

8. Watershed management planning (This item was tabled until next meeting due to lack of time.)

9. Discussion/Roundtable

Bill O'Brien, of the Ojai Valley Green Coalition and the city of Ojai, mentioned that the Ojai Valley Green Coalition's Watershed Council meets on the second Thursday of the month; the next meeting is on May 10 at

5:30 pm. The meetings are at the Ojai Valley Green Coalition headquarters, at 327 E. Ojai Avenue. They are working on a number of watershed-related projects, including the restoration of Ojai Creek in downtown Ojai. He also announced a meeting the next morning of the Waste-2-Energy group, the group that helped launch the feasibility study for a biodigester to possibly help address manure management in the watershed.

Wally McCall, executive director of CREW, reported on his group's work on the restoration of Ojai Creek behind Libbey Bowl. They have received \$100,000 in grants for the work, and have removed 22 tons of invasive Himalayan blackberry and vinca. The restoration work has been done with the help of many volunteers, including children, plus the CREW. The CREW's annual fundraiser will be held on April 14th. Wally is trying to raise funds for a program to provide full-time, summer employment for homeless children.

Dale Zurawski, water quality program manager with the Farm Bureau, commented that she had not expected the evening meetings to be so successful; she was very glad to see so many people at the meeting, and emphasized the value of dialogue in addressing controversial issues in the watershed.

Deborah Pendrey, of the Ojai Valley Green Coalition, reported that the next Ojai Creek restoration project workday is on May 12. They are emphasizing getting youth involved in the project, which can serve as a means to get community service hours. She also reported that she feels confident that the city of Ojai is soon going to ban single-use plastic bags, an issue the OVGC has been working on.

Paul Jenkin, of Surfrider Foundation, reported that he is producing an e-newsletter for Friends of Ventura River. The newsletter provides updates on a wide variety of issues in the watershed, and Paul invited interested people to subscribe to the newsletter at friendsofventurariver.org.

Barbara McCarthy reported that she is trying to get the County to comply with their own integrated pest management policies with regard to the use of gopher poison along the levees. She is concerned about the poison killing raptors, coyotes, and other animals.

Diane Underhill, of Friends of Ventura River, invited people to attend the Friends' monthly meeting, which will be on the fourth Tuesday in April, April 24, at 4:30 pm.

Jordan Kear, of Kear Groundwater, mentioned that the Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency also holds important evening meetings.

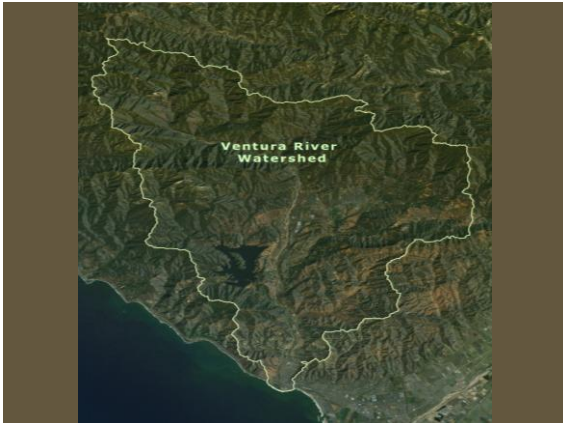
Karen Waln, of the city of Ventura, announced that the city of Ventura, with sponsorship from Limoneira and Patagonia, is holding a short film contest focused on water. The due date for film submittals is September 4. The showing will be in November at Brooks Institute. More info at www.watertake1.com.

Bill Hicks, of Casitas Municipal Water District, mentioned that the Coastal Commission will be meeting in Ventura on April 11.

Sonya Webb, of the Resource Conservation District, reported that the RCD will host an Irrigation and Nutrient Management workshop on April 5 for the Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group.

Gerard Kapuscik, of the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, reported that he is managing the biodigester feasibility study contract, that the consultants have recently started with that project, and that he will keep updates coming via the Watershed Council and other venues. The study is looking at whether a biodigester, which converts waste materials to energy, might be feasible in the watershed, especially as a means to manage horse manure.

Next Watershed Council meeting: May 9, 2012, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., in the Ventura County Government Center, Multipurpose Room, 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura.



Ventura River Watershed Council regular participants

<p>Water and Sanitary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casitas Municipal Water District City of Ventura Meiners Oaks County Water District Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency Ojai Valley Sanitary District Ventura River County Water District <p>Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Coastal Conservancy California Dept. of Fish and Game Calif. Regional Water Quality Control Board City of Ojai, Public Works City of Ventura, Water Department Ventura County Public Works Department Ventura Co. Watershed Protection District Ventura Co. Supervisor Steve Bennett's Office Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County 	<p>Land Management/Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ojai Valley Land Conservancy California Dept. of Parks and Recreation Ventura Hillside Conservancy Ventura Co. Resource Conservation District <p>Nonprofits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends of the Ventura River Matilija Coalition Ojai Valley Green Coalition Santa Barbara Channelkeeper/Stream Team Surfrider Foundation Ventura Citizens for Hillside Preservation Project Understanding <p>Business/Landowner/Citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm Bureau of Ventura County, VCAILG Taylor Ranch Consultants Citizens
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Ventura River Watershed Council purpose

- A forum for networking and collaboration
- A subcommittee of the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County
- The multi-stakeholder group that will develop and implement a watershed management plan

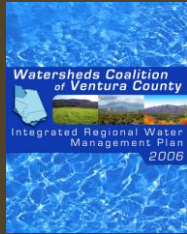
Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

- 2002-04** Ventura Countywide Integrated Regional Water Management Group (27 water-related agencies) established to address the regional planning requirements for Proposition 50 grant funding
- May, 2006** Ventura River Watershed Council formed

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Nov, 2006 Ventura County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan completed

- Addresses water management in the county's three major watersheds
- Includes watershed descriptions, histories, priorities, and project wish lists
- Fulfills requirements for state bond funding



Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Jan, 2008 \$3,349,000 in Proposition 50 funding received

1. Ventura River Watershed Protection Project (V-1) (\$1,545,538 - VC Watershed Protection District)
2. San Antonio Creek Spreading Grounds (V-2) (\$1,315,000 - VC Watershed Protection District)
3. Senior Canyon Water Co. Equipment Upgrades (V-3) (\$488,462 - Casitas Municipal Water District)

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Ventura River Watershed Protection Project (V-1)
(\$1,545,538 - VC Watershed Protection District)

- Watershed runoff model
- Surface water quality monitoring
- Groundwater monitoring
- Removal of invasive plants
- Ventura River Watershed Protection Plan Report

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Watershed Hydrology Model

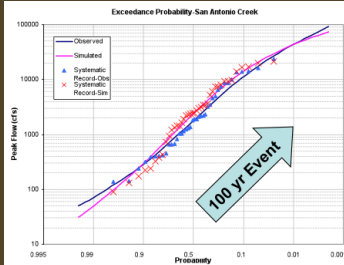
A "continuous" simulation model that provides the ability to:

- Produce real-time estimates of flow during storms and thus identify locations at risk of flooding;
- Evaluate the effects of development or changes in land use practices on water supply or runoff volumes; and
- Evaluate the effects of changes in land use or management practices on surface water quality.

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Watershed Hydrology Model - example

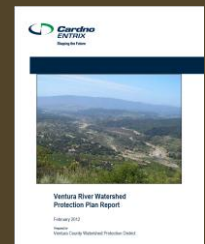
Strive for match between predictions of 100-year flood for observed and simulated flood peaks



Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Ventura River Watershed Protection Plan Report

- Watershed Characteristics
- Summary of V-1 Projects
- Water Demand and Water Budget
- Review of Applicable Watershed Plans
- Data Gaps
- Applicable Best Management Practices
- Future Actions to Improve Water Sustainability and Ecosystem Functions
- Flood Management Issues in the Watershed



Foundation for our watershed management plan

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

San Antonio Creek Spreading Grounds (V-2)
 (\$1,315,000 - VC Watershed Protection District)

Facilities to capture seasonal high-flows from San Antonio Creek to increase groundwater recharge in the Ojai Valley Groundwater Basin

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Senior Canyon Water Co. Equipment Upgrades (V-3)
 (\$488,462 - Casitas Municipal Water District)

New pipes and automation equipment to "fine-tune" our use of groundwater vs. surface water, to increase overall water supply reliability.



Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Mar, 2009 Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County adopts charter and selects Steering Committee.

Includes two representatives from:

- Ventura River Watershed
- Santa Clara River Watershed
- Calleguas Creek Watershed

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Apr, 2010 "Watershed U - Ventura River."



An educational series for the community. Coordinated by the UC Cooperative Extension and supported by the Watershed Council. Six sessions/18 hours of educational presentations by experts on a variety of topics.

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Jan, 2011 \$500,000 in Proposition 84 funding received
Ojai Meadows Restoration (Ojai Valley Land Conservancy)



Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

Feb, 2011 \$100,000 in Proposition 84 funding received
Biodigester Feasibility Study
 (VC Watershed Protection District)

A manure management strategy to address nitrogen and algae water quality problem.



Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

- Sep, 2011** Watershed coordinator hired by Ojai Valley Land Conservancy on behalf of the Council
3-year Dept. of Conservation grant (9/11 – 9-14)
- Jan, 2012** Developed organizational identity (mission statement, logo, website)

Ventura River Watershed Council mission

To facilitate and support efforts by individuals, agencies, and organizations to maintain and improve the health and sustainability of the Ventura River watershed.



Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

- Mar, 2012** Adopted draft governance charter, with Leadership Committee.

The minimum number of members in each of the five categories shall be as follows:

Government	5
Water and Sanitary	3
Land Management/Recreation	3
Nonprofit	3
Business/Landowner	3

Ventura River Watershed Council proposed leadership committee

The Ventura River Watershed Council is open to anyone interested in the watershed.

The Leadership Committee is a subset of the general membership, and comprises the voting members.

The Leadership Committee's purpose is to ensure that a balance of perspectives and interests are represented in the Council's decisions, and, along with the charter, provide a structure of governance to ensure progress and efficiency.

Ventura River Watershed Council milestones

- Apr, 2012** Expanded stakeholder participation.
- May, 2012** Adopt charter; begin focused watershed management plan discussions.

2012 meeting schedule

Feb 28, Tuesday E.P. Foster Library Topping Room, Ventura 9:00 – 11:30 am
Apr 3, Wednesday Oak View Community Center, Kunkle Room, 6:00 – 8:30 pm
May 9, Wednesday Ventura County Govt. Center, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Jun 13, Wednesday Ventura County Govt. Center, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Aug 8, Wednesday Ventura County Govt. Center, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Oct 3, Wednesday Oak View Community Center, Kunkle Room, 6:00 – 8:30 pm
Nov 7, Tuesday E.P. Foster Library Topping Room, Ventura, 9:00 – 11:30 am
Dec 11, Tuesday Ventura County Govt. Center, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

watershed coordinator

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