



Ventura River Watershed Council

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, July 17, 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.

The following is a summary of the Watershed Council meeting held on July 17 at the E.P. Foster Library in Ventura. There were 25 people in attendance. Acronyms are defined at the bottom of the summary.

1. Introductions

2. Announcements

Dale Zurawski, of Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group, announced that they are releasing a series of fall workshops to help farmers implement new management measures to improve water quality and runoff. One class will focus on managing nitrogen in row crops; one will include a vendor fair to display equipment like moisture sensors and salinity testers for irrigation precision; there will be a tour of Limoneira, a ranch that is doing great things with grassed waterways for runoff, including use of a native grass sod; and another class will be offered to explain the water quality monitoring regulations. More info:

www.farmbureauvc.com/water_quality.html#vcailg_education

Kathy Bremer, of Friends of the Ventura River, announced that on July 18 at 4:00 pm the Trust for Public Lands, California Coastal Conservancy, and Cal Poly Pomona will be providing a formal presentation on the Ventura River Parkway. They will also have a panel of local presenters to discuss what they are doing in the river to advance the vision. The event is at the Ventura County Government Center in the Board of Supervisors hearing room.

Paul Jenkin, of Surfrider Foundation, reported on the Ventura River Parkway picnic event held in June on the river. He said about 200 people came to the event. Sack lunches were available. The Channelkeeper Stream Team offered a demonstration of their water quality monitoring. Paul also reported on the event held last week on the river to tour the Hillside Conservancy's new property and the Surfer's Point managed retreat project.

Ron Merckling, Casitas Municipal Water District, announced that Casitas will host a Soils, Mulches and Amendments Workshop on July 28, at 9:00 am at the district's offices.

Jeff Palmer, Ojai Valley Sanitary District, announced that the draft algae/nutrient TMDL will be released on July 20.

3. Development of measurable objectives for the IRWMP

Lorraine Walter, Ventura River Watershed Coordinator, explained the spreadsheet of draft watershed objectives and measures that was distributed with the agenda. The spreadsheet was developed as a basis for developing measurable objectives for the updated IRWMP and as a starting point for development of our watershed management plan objectives and projects. It includes the eight watershed management plan goals recently agreed upon by the Council, plus one new one (watershed management). Each goal has a series of objectives associated with it. Each objective has a suggested method of measuring that objective, as well as a list of potential projects to achieve that objective. The list of projects was compiled by Lorraine from existing reports, from conversations with stakeholders over the last few months, and from her knowledge about local policies. The list is in no way final, rather it is a starting point.

Lorraine said it was her hope that for development of our watershed management plan, the group would develop and use a systematic methodology for analyzing threats in the watershed and the relative cost/benefit of potential projects to address those threats. And that this methodology could be used not only for the first plan, but also for future updates to the plan. She mentioned as an example the Nature Conservancy's Conservation Action Planning methodology.

For now, however, in order to provide required content for the IRWMP update on time, that analysis has not been done, and we are skipping right to development of measurable objectives.

Lynn Rodriguez, of the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County, said that the IRWMP update needs to be completed by October of 2013. The new standards require that we have a basis for measuring our progress at such time that we do another plan update. The state hasn't said how often we need to report our progress, just that we need a method for doing so.

Lynn asked for the Council's support for using the same set of five goals (water supply, water quality, flood management, habitat, and access/recreation) for all three watersheds in the IRWMP update. The other two watershed groups in the county have supported this. The Council also supported the idea.

The group then discussed the challenges of coming up with quantitative measures in our watershed, both in terms of developing metrics that accurately reflect the dynamic nature of our system, and in terms of staff time and effort to compile data. Some preferred setting actual numeric targets whether we have baseline data or the means to gather the data or not, suggesting that we should figure out how to achieve the measurement; some preferred keeping it as simple as possible given our limited resources and data, preferring measures that show general programmatic progress. Using data from monitoring programs that already exist was generally encouraged.

It was decided that subcommittees, one for each of the five goals, would meet to continue working on the development the measurable objectives, and leaders for those subcommittees were selected. Lorraine will send out an announcement and call for participants.

4. Groundwater issues: Recent grant proposal and the pumping/diversion impairment

Grant: Bert Rapp, Ventura River County Water District, reported that an LGAP (Local Groundwater Assistance Program) grant application was submitted by Meiners Oaks Waters District, the city of Ventura, and Ventura River County Water District, with support from Casitas MWD, Ventura County Watershed Protection District, the RWQCB and local consultants. The grant will fund an Upper Ventura River Basin groundwater-surface water interaction study to document the effects of groundwater pumping on surface flows. Data gathered from this study could be useful in the development of a groundwater management plan in the future.

Impairment: There is a stretch of the Ventura River (Reach 4) that is impaired for diversions and pumping. That impairment has to be addressed with some type of regulatory solution by March of 2013. Either the EPA will write a TMDL that somehow links diversions/pumping with a water quality parameter(s) (which they've never done before) or the pumpers and diverters must get together and offer the regulators some type of guarantee that they are collectively working towards a management solution. The RWQCB is scheduling a meeting in Ventura with the EPA and pumpers/diverters to discuss this issue. (That meeting has been set for August 15 at Ventura City Hall, Santa Cruz Conference Room, from 1:00 to 3:30 pm.)

5. Groundwater surface water interaction pilot study in Upper Ventura River groundwater basin

Jordan Kear, of Kear Groundwater, was commissioned by Meiners Oaks Water District (MOWD) to conduct a brief study of groundwater and surface water interaction in the Upper Ventura River groundwater basin between February and April 2012.

Kear Groundwater monitored two well fields and the Ventura River in the vicinity of MOWD Wells Nos. 1 and 2 to the north (near Kennedy Narrows/Canyon), and MOWD Wells Nos. 4 and 7 to the south (in the widest part of the basin).

This was a five-week “snapshot” study involving 12,000 minutes of observations at six wells and six river locations using automated water level and temperature logging equipment, as well as numerous manual and GPS-collected data. Two significant rain events occurred during the study, which allowed for monitoring of the effect of precipitation on river flow groundwater levels also. No other known pumping was occurring in the respective areas during the study.

Transducers were placed in the wells and in the river near the wells and changes in level and temperature were recorded in response to pumping. The response of the river was different in the two study areas.

Kear Groundwater measured the response of the river flow to pumping as possible, and modeled the data collected to get an estimate of the drawdown of river water under tested conditions at the end of a full day of pumping at each well:

Well 1 – 0.43 cubic feet per second (cfs) depletion

Well 2 – 0.33 cfs depletion

Well 4 – 1.56 cfs depletion

Well 7 – 0.78 cfs depletion

The study’s conclusions: pumping of the wells has a relatively minor acute effect on river flow; diurnal temperature changes have significant effect on river flow; river flow and saturated groundwater body shape appears to be more influenced by aquifer morphology than any other single factor; and the river will go “dry” in the Robles Reach each year regardless of pumping practices.

This snapshot study is a precursor to the study that will hopefully be completed if we are successful in receiving the LGAP grant. Water purveyors have indicated supported continued studies of this type in the area during winter 2012-2013 regardless of the LGAP funding status.

Kear Groundwater can be reached at 805/845-2700.

6. Prop 84 – the next round of funding

Another round of Proposition 84 funding is coming up. The funding could be available in March of 2013. Lynn is reviewing the draft Proposal Solicitation Package that just came out. We have about two months before the Watershed Council needs to decide if it wants to submit a project proposal as part of this grant process through the WVCV. Applicants need to be prepared to pay up to \$20,000 per project per application. Applicants also need to be able to not be reimbursed for a long time (up to a year). A 25 percent match is required. A larger amount of Prop 84 funding will also come available in 2014. That will be the final round of Prop 84 implementation grants. A subcommittee will be formed to continue discussing this issue.

Next Watershed Council meeting:

Aug 8, 2012

Ventura County Government Center, 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura

Acronyms

IRWMP.... Integrated Regional Watershed Management Program

MOWD.... Meiners Oaks Water District

OVSD..... Ojai Valley Sanitary District

RCD..... Resource Conservation District
RWQCB... Regional Water Quality Control Board
SWAMP... Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program
SWRCB.... State Water Resources Control Board
TMDL Total Maximum Daily Load
VCAILG Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group
VRCWD ... Ventura River County Water District
VRWC..... Ventura River Watershed Council
WPD..... Watershed Protection District
WCVC..... Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County