



Ventura River Watershed Council

Ag/Econ Subcommittee

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, September 20, 2012

The underlined text below indicates the suggested “framework” language changes recommended by the Agriculture/Economy Subcommittee of the Ventura River Watershed Council, at their meeting on Sept. 20, 2012. In attendance at the meeting were:

- Dale Zurawski, Farm Bureau of Ventura County
- Ben Pitterle, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper
- Bill O’Brien, Ojai Valley Green Coalition
- Jerry Conrow, Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency
- Jim Finch, Finch Farms
- Katie Haldeman, Resource Conservation District
- Jeff Palmer, Ojai Valley Sanitary District
- Rich Atmore, R.A. Atmore & Sons
- Diane Underhill, Friends of the Ventura River
- Philip Clinton, Ventura College
- Ann Rosecrance, Ventura River Watershed Council
- Lorraine Walter, Ventura River Watershed Council

Ventura River Watershed Management Plan

Goals & Objectives

This input was based on the current, draft goals and the draft objectives as proposed by the Technical Advisory Committees.

Goal 1. Enough local water: Surface water and groundwater of a sufficient quantity and rate of flow to maintain independence from imported water and reliably support ecosystem, agricultural and human needs in the watershed.

Objectives

- a) Improve water supply reliability for human needs
- b) Improve the aquatic ecosystem through the restoration of natural processes.
- c) Balance competing demands through the coordinated management of surface water and groundwater basins
- d) Maintain affordable and economically viable cost of water delivery for all users.

Goal 2. Clean water: Surface water and groundwater of sufficient quality to meet regulatory requirements and support ecosystem and human needs in the watershed.

Objectives

- a) Collect and analyze water quality samples as specified by Regional Board through NPDES Permits, waivers and TMDLs.

- b) Improve public awareness of the state of water quality in the watershed
- c) Improve the usefulness of data collected through data availability and statistical analysis.
- d) Improve monitoring programs' ability to collect useful data
- e) Measurable improvement in water quality towards supporting beneficial uses.

Goal 3. Smart flood protection: Effective flood management that integrates with natural watershed hydrology and water supply goals.

Objectives

- a) Minimize risks to human life and property due to flooding adjacent to Ventura River, tributaries and the ocean, and on alluvial fans.
- b) Maximize low cost, non-structural flood protection through natural floodplain restoration.
- c) Integrate ecologic value into channel treatment designs that accommodate natural geomorphic processes.
- d) Address the lack of funding for flood management in the watershed.

Goal 4. Healthy ecosystems: Healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem structures, functions, and processes that support a diversity of native habitats and a more natural watershed hydrology.

Objectives

- a) Protect and enhance riparian forest and associated habitats on Ventura River main stem, San Antonio Creek and other significant tributaries
- b) Increase southern California steelhead population on the Ventura River
- c) Protect upland wildlife migration corridors
- d) Protect and restore wetlands
- e) Protect and restore habitat for species with special status at the state or federal level.
- f) Restore the estuary and beach sediments

Goal 5. Nature-based refuge and recreation: Ample opportunities for the public to enjoy the watershed's natural areas and open spaces associated with the watershed's aquatic habitats, to provide educational opportunities, and to gain appreciation of the need to protect the watershed and its ecosystems.

Objectives

- a) Increase the amount of permanently protected, accessible, high quality, safe public open natural areas near the river, creeks and wetlands available for enjoyment by all community members.
- b) Provide a multimodal trail network between & within open natural areas that is connected to population centers, and that is proportional in size and scope to the open natural areas available while not harming sensitive natural areas.
- c) Increase the number of permanently protected, vehicle accessible, natural or semi-natural

parks and picnic areas.

- d) Provide interpretive opportunities including signs, docent led tours, visitor centers, and/or other educational opportunities to enhance visitor understanding of the watershed and its resources.

Goal 6. Smart use of land and resources: Use of land and resources in a manner that supports human needs and social goals, and is compatible with healthy ecosystem goals.

Objectives

- a) Support a viable agricultural industry that is compatible with watershed goals and preserves the character of the watershed.
- b) Support improvements to land use sustainability, resource stewardship and local self-reliance.
- c) Maximize the feasible water conservation and water use efficiency of current and future urban and agricultural land uses.

Guiding Values

1. **Our watershed management plan will be pragmatic and “actionable.”** While striving toward the larger watershed goals, our watershed management plan shall nonetheless have a highly pragmatic and financially realistic orientation. Our work will build upon and leverage work already done. Our recommendations shall be feasible so that we can celebrate success. We will use common sense, creatively leverage existing resources and data, look for low-hanging fruit, and consider how to get the most “bang for the buck.”
2. **Our watershed management plan will be accessible to the general public.** We will strive to produce a watershed management plan, and other associated written materials, in a manner that conveys technical information in an interesting and easy to understand format so that it is readily accessible to members of the general public.
3. **Our watershed management plan will be unique.** Our watershed management strategies shall acknowledge the unique circumstances of our particular watershed. We will not mimic language or strategies that do not make sense here. We will encourage innovative ideas and solutions.
4. **Our watershed management plan will acknowledge the triple bottom line.** A healthy and sustainable watershed requires not only vibrant and well-functioning ecological systems, but also vibrant and well-functioning social and economic systems. Our watershed plan will include humans and their social and economic needs as part of an integrated and balanced approach to watershed management.
5. **Our watershed management plan will address prevention.** Damaged habitats need restoration, but equally important is prevention of further damage. This applies not only to habitats, but also to water supply, water quality, and flood management. We will give due attention to long-term, proactive strategies, such as land use planning policies, that may be more difficult to implement in the short-term, but have the potential for significantly greater and longer-lasting benefit.
6. **Our watershed management plan will address policy.** While the watershed management plan in itself is not a regulatory document, it our intention to nonetheless outline, for the benefit of regulators, the specific manner in which regulations are hindering or could benefit the watershed.

7. **Our watershed management plan will be technically strong.** We hold high expectations for the technical understanding that underlies our watershed management plan. Whether in the area of science, policy, civic engagement, economics, infrastructure management, or education, we expect to rely upon analyses that are sophisticated, thorough, and endure scrutiny.
8. **Our watershed management plan will be a living document.** It is our intention to regularly update our watershed management plan as new information becomes available and priorities change so that it continues to be relevant and useful.

Vision

Although the Council has not yet developed a vision statement, the Ag/Econ Subcommittee recommended the following language for consideration when the Council does develop a vision statement.

The Ventura River Watershed Council envisions a watershed where:

- The specialness of our watershed—including its undeveloped natural areas, its agricultural character, its relatively healthy and intact river system, and its water supply self-sufficiency—is protected for future generations.
- The local economy is strong with businesses and agriculture serving as models of natural resource stewardship.

Project Prioritizing Criteria

The Ag/Econ Subcommittee did not discuss project prioritizing criteria in much detail, but generally supported including social and economic considerations such as those outlined below. This is another topic the Council has not yet tackled.

1. Cost / Benefit Analysis: projects that are the least costly way to provide benefits are preferred under this criterion.
2. Types of Benefits: projects that provide these benefits are preferred under this criterion.
 - Direct water quality benefit: (directly reduces the amount of a pollutant entering waterways)
 - Community economic benefit: (protects property values, protects livelihood within the watershed,
 - Social capital benefit: (Builds trust, Develops partnerships, Improves communication/coordination, Engages and educates watershed users)
 - Environmental / Watershed function benefit: (erosion control, fire prevention/management, flood control, water quality protection / improvement)
3. Long-lasting Benefits: projects with the ability to protect and ensure benefits over a long term are preferred under this criterion.
4. Likelihood of Success: projects that have less risk or uncertainty (i.e.: political, technical) are preferred under this criterion.

This criterion considers factors affecting the likely success of a project. Among the criteria to consider is the ability to monitor and evaluate any proposed project's success as well as the ability to correct problems that arise during implementation and the qualifications of companies or individuals expected to implement the project. Also under this criterion could be readiness timing, landowner willingness, access and engineering.

5. Technical or Scientific basis: projects based on solid, scientific evidence are preferred under this criterion. This criterion assesses the type of information upon which the project proposal is based. (NOTE: scientific evidence can include 1) studies conducted in other places which provide lessons learned, mistakes, successes, and 2) measures or “indicators” other than water quality data.)
6. Addressing Watershed Issues: projects that address an identified watershed issue are preferred under this criterion.

As the critical issues have not been ranked in terms of priority in the plan, this criterion must consider the extent to which an implementation measure or project resolves or addresses the issue.
7. Strengthens existing efforts: projects linked to existing efforts in a positive way, giving them strength and potentially a higher likelihood of success is preferred under this criterion.
8. Knowledge gap: projects that will fill an identified gap in knowledge for these watersheds are preferred under this criterion.
9. Opportunities for cost sharing: projects for which there are good opportunities for partnerships across entities that could leverage the resources needed and/or to solicit funds (grant writing etc.) to conduct the project.