

Minutes
WATER POLICY TASK FORCE
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

June 10, 2004
10:00 a.m.

SCAG Offices: Riverside B Meeting Room

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

Margaret Clark called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m. and asked attendees to introduce themselves. The Chair, Dennis Washburn, arrived during the meeting's first item of business (Item 4.1).

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no public comments.

3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 8, 2004 meeting were approved with one abstention.

4.0 PRESENTATION ITEMS FOR THE TASK FORCE

4.1 Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority's Integrated Watershed Plan and Water Reclamation and Water Reuse in the Santa Ana River Watershed

Daniel Cozad, Deputy General Manager of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA), briefed the Task Force on water quality and supply initiatives in the Santa Ana River Watershed, a part of the SCAG region slated for major population growth in the coming years. SAWPA's Integrated Watershed Plan paved the way for \$235 million in state bond funding when voters statewide approved Proposition 13. This success began the first efforts to implement measures that aim to drought-proof the watershed with a better use of local water resources, currently 70% of the supplies in the watershed. These measures rely on the installation of desalters that reclaim groundwater and allow further use the groundwater basin capacity in the watershed. A critical part of this desalting strategy depended on the construction of a 100 mile brine line that aids in the removal of nearly 600 million tons of salt each year, only half of the salt that enters the watershed annually. SAWPA has facilitated the funding and prioritizing of projects that are eventually developed and implemented by public agencies within the watershed. One of the other key issues in the area is the challenge of infiltrating stormwater and preventing its loss as growing areas become increasingly impervious. In the Chino Basin alone these runoff losses reach as high as 50,000 acre feet annually, calling out a need for the use of new Best Management Practices (BMPs) and water conservation policies by local governments. In response to a question about groundwater contamination, the Task Force was told that proactive efforts are needed,

even as pollution detection methods become more advanced. The efforts would involve treatment and removal before reuse.

4.2 Orange County's Ground Water Replenishment System

John Kennedy, Assistant General Manager of the Orange County Water District (OCWD), gave a status report on the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), the largest project of its kind in the country and jointly funded by OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation Districts (OCSD). Mr. Kennedy noted that GWRS will ultimately purify and reuse up to 140,000 acre feet of local wastewater, resulting in substantially reductions in demand for imported water. The GRS water will be recharged to prevent seawater intrusion into the groundwater basin and to replenish water supplies stored in the groundwater basin. With its participation in the project OCSD avoids the need to build a new ocean outfall and frees up funding for offsetting some of the GWRS costs. Project funding has also come from SAWPA (Proposition 13), Metropolitan Water District, state loans and other federal programs. Unit cost for the water after all funding supports/subsidies is estimated to be about \$470 per acre foot.

4.3 Water Recycling and Reuse Issues: Action Levels Legislation, Impediments in Water Regulation

Uzi Daniels, with West Central Municipal Water District, Martha Davis, with Inland Empire Utilities Agency and Bill Van Wagoner, with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power addressed the Task Force on current issues and challenges affecting water recycling efforts in southern California. Uzi Daniel discussed the current challenge to recycling resulting from a new regulatory approach advanced by the Los Angeles Regional Quality Control Board. The Board is using "action levels" as defined by the state's Department of Health Services (DHS) for drinking water as regulatory triggers (for discharge permits related to surface water) rather than as notification thresholds as originally intended. This altered use of action levels, as a result, hinders water recycling initiatives in the Los Angeles Basin and potentially elsewhere. These initiatives are currently concerned with Title 22 water, water used for irrigation, not drinking water. If these efforts are impeded with this kind of regulatory approach it will force greater reliance on imported water supplies for non-potable water needs.

Martha Davis described new legislation (AB 2528) that aims to clarify the meaning of "action levels" that historically was applied only to well water, not to surface waters subject to other levels of treatment. DHS in this original process would rely on the retailers of this well water to take necessary treatment actions if water contamination subject to DHS notification reached a level of concern calling for a response. With respect to recycled water, this legislation would remove the action level concept from recycled water, instead putting the emphasis on monitoring the sources of groundwater for any emerging contaminants that may compromise pumped well water in the future.

Bill Van Wagoner described the difficulties the City was having with its water recycling program to develop water for irrigation and industrial uses. The Regional Board has a

chloride standard for irrigation water (the Title 22 permit) that is 100 mg/liter where the background level in the City's recycled water averages only 22 mg/liter. (The drinking water standard for chloride is 250 mg/liter.) This presents a situation where the Board opposes any degradation of current water quality. Because of this the use of recycled water with higher chloride levels is not permitted, even though a level increasing towards 100 mg/liter would still be within permissible Title 22 limits and well within drinking water limits. Thus far the City has invested \$55 million to develop a recycling program and infrastructure in the San Fernando Valley without any prospect of going into production and distribution. As population growth continues and water conservation efforts increase the wastewater from the Valley has higher pollutant concentrations that will contribute inevitably to certain kinds of water degradation. This cycle is expected to continue independent of the way the Regional Board works with degradation and groundwater issues.

It was moved by Glen Becerra and seconded by Larry Forester that the Task Force urge the EEC and Regional Council support AB 2528 and other legislation that eliminates barriers to the safe reclamation and reuse of local water resources.

4.4 West Nile Virus Update

Stephanie Miladin, representing the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District, provided the Task Force with an update on activities of the District with various vectors and efforts being taken to reduce health risks spread by various vectors. A critical problem of late is the spread of the West Nile Virus (first found in the U.S. in 1999) by two species of mosquitos that lay their eggs in standing water. The District is working to eliminate the spread of mosquitoes by various methods: including spraying waterbodies where the developing larvae may exist, source controls and agents, and use of mosquito-eating fish. The emphasis is attacking the mosquito problem with larvicides. In the cycle spreading the virus a female mosquito will bite a bird who has the virus and then bite animal and human hosts. These hosts are known as "dead-end hosts" because a mosquito that bites a human who has the virus does not then further transmit the virus to other animals or humans. Rather the virus is spread through interactions between mosquitoes and birds in watery habitats. However, the virus can be spread with blood transfusions and organ donations and through breast milk. Most people who contract the virus do not show symptoms. Those who show symptoms, however, experience flu-like conditions, headaches, fever, nausea, rashes, swollen lymph nodes and eventually sometimes encephalitis. These symptoms can last for 22 days and can cause neurological symptoms. Incubation period is 3 to 15 days after a bite. The mortality rate for humans is 3-15%. A vaccine is currently being developed for humans. Ms. Miladin offered suggestions on clothing and other prevention measures that people can use. In response to questions, Ms. Miladin indicated that the District is reviewing the potential vector effects of water quality BMP plans being developed by cities in the District to comply with runoff and stormwater regulations.

4.5 Report Submitted to Caltrans Storm Water Program

Dan Griset described two reports that SCAG recently submitted to the Storm Water Program at Caltrans Headquarters in Sacramento. These reports featured information and analysis of the relationship between hydrologic areas (subwatershed boundaries) and local jurisdictions where major regional transportation projects are proposed and where current water impairments have been identified. It was moved and seconded that the Task Force receive and file these reports. The motion passed without opposition.

5.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair indicated that the next meeting would be September 9, 2004. He also noted that Dennis Dickerson has left as Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Regional Board. The Interim Executive Officer will be Jonathan Bishop.

6.0 STAFF REPORT

There was no other staff report.

7.0 TASK FORCE INFORMATION SHARING

Task Force member Forester asked if SCAG had taken a position on SB 1477 and requested a follow up on the status of the bill at the next meeting. Mr. Forester also requested a presentation on the Clean Water Coalition White Paper at a future meeting. Chair Washburn suggested a future presentation by the Algalita organization regarding plastic pollution in the oceans. Another request was made to incorporate legislative issues into the Task Force agenda on a standing basis. Task Force member Wattier suggested looking closely at the 303(d) listing process that is being accelerated and will include trash and plastic pollutants.

8.0 COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 12:30 p.m.

Attendance Summary:

Elected Members: Dennis Washburn (Chair), Glen Becerra, Lou Bone, Margaret Clark, Larry Forester, Keith McCarthy, Sheena Moqet, Lori Van Arsdale.

Liaison Members: Bo Cutter, Martha Davis, Gerald Green, Dan Lafferty, Larry McKenney, Heather Merenda, Kevin Wattier.

Minutes prepared and approved by Daniel E. Griset, Sr. Regional Planner and Staff to the Task Force