

Ratepayer Gathering Notes

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

The Library – Guest: Geoff Poole

In attendance: Rex Burrows, Dan Jellis, Heather Davidson, Ray Schindler, Gretchen Grawunder, Marsha Boring, Wayne Boring, Will Bonnell, Ralph Bates, Ginger Dunlap-Dietz, Gary Edwards, Jennie Edwards

These notes consist of reflections on the gathering and an incomplete recollection of the issues discussed, some matters that occurred to me after the gathering, but all with a focus on our ultimate goal: **Ratepayer statements to be submitted to the GSA during the public review process – how they could be implemented under Projects & Mgmt. Actions.**

Following are our four main concerns, beliefs, objectives:

- We believe that BWD/Ratepayers should be allocated an initial **minimum** of 1700 AFY; this allocation should be excluded from any reductions.
- We believe that the 20-year implementation period set out under SGMA should be shortened
- We believe that water quality is an essential concern, it should be addressed immediately, and if/when water quality issues are determined, the parties responsible are held to account for any remediation that might be necessary
- We believe that the GDEs (Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems) must be considered in the overall water allocation calculus

Future scheduled meetings:

Wednesday, April 10 5-6:00 pm The Library Guest: **Mark Jorgensen - GDEs**

Wednesday, April 17 5-6:00 pm The Library Guest: **Ray Schindler – The adjudication process**

Wednesday, April 24 5-6:00 pm The Library Guest: **Jack Laughlin – Historical perspective**

Will schedule two meetings in May. Remember, May is the month we must submit our questions/comments to the GSA.

First, a reminder that the Sponsor Group has its meeting this afternoon at 4:30 at the Library. Jim Bennett, from the County and member of the GSA, will be their guest. Should be informative and interesting.

Ray just sent a link to an article in the San Diego Tribune by Harry Jones outlining the GSP and its effects on Borrego Springs - <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/story/2019-04-04/plan-unveiled-to-cut-borrego-springs-water-consumption-by-75-percent>

Again, want to thank Geoff Poole for taking the time to spend an hour with us, knowing he would be in the hot seat. Geoff was as open and transparent as possible under the circumstances. My experience with Geoff is that he is a straight shooter, willing to take the time when asked, and presents the material clearly and fairly.

Lots of concerns were addressed, too many for me to remember, so what I'll do is list a number of topics in bullet point form to serve as triggers ... at least this works for my fading memory (any corrections, please let me know and I'll get them out):

- How do we address the County directly? Is this possible and what can we expect. (Ray is under the impression that the County tends to be somewhat Ag-friendly.)
- Saul brought up the concept that we might consider requesting a lesser reduction than what is set out in the Plan; this might be a positive approach that, in the long-run, would lessen the economic impact on water purchases moving forward.
- The question was raised and discussed about the cost/value of the farmland to be purchased for water. There is talk about contracting appraisers, but the bar, at least for now, was set by RH which paid \$10k/acre per Kathy Mielke at our last meeting. It's a complex issue, since what is being purchased is water, rather than land, and the current usage on the given piece of property must be reduced by the 74% (approx..) from a BPA (baseline pumping allocation) that still seems to be somewhat in flux.
- Where do BWD and the GSA stand regarding the ratepayer objective of 1700 AFY. It appears that BWD is in favor of proportional cuts and not an initial allocation as we outline. But it is not clear that this has actually been specifically addressed and no action has been taken.
- The issue concerning adjudication and legal costs was raised. It appears BWD has considered these scenarios from an economic standpoint ... we are not privy to the figures. I will make a concerted effort to get this information out since it is clearly not only valuable, but would represent a thawing in the current lack of trust and transparency perceived by many ratepayers. BWD and the ratepayers are one and the same entity – openness has to be part of this relationship.
- Ray has graciously agreed to lead the conversation on the adjudication process and costs during our April 17 meeting. Ray's knowledge and career experience make him a truly important asset in our process. Please make an effort to come to this essential gathering.
- Ralph raised the issue of beneficial use and users; he's just witnessed a similar process in E. Oregon, where the pumpers were farmers, Indian tribes and more, so he's got a perspective we should tap into. How do we define ourselves as the best of the beneficial users.
- We appear to be at the point where the issue, in the larger sense, is economic; and our current position largely involves process. We might want to begin framing our goals in these terms to see what we come up with.

Activities for upcoming gatherings and breakout groups:

1. Letter writing campaign (Interested so far: Gretchen, Joanne, Ralph [if you are interested, drop me an e-mail; we'll get organized soon])
2. Sanjiv sent me some information on Petition Sites; I'll give these a look and get back to Sanjiv and the rest of you in the hopes we can put something together. Any tech savvy folks ???
3. I'll be preparing a summary of our position (four points) to be submitted to the GSA for review and comment. Will run this by you in the next month or so for review and comments.
4. Anyone have access to an e-mail list we could use (with permission) to promote our position?

5. Any other ideas as to how to attain our goal? (Such as: tamarisk removal, is there an unknown end-use for the wood; limited replanting with native vegetation; water set-aside for GDEs; local fundraising outside BWD to purchase farmland; ...)

Please go to the BWD website (<http://www.bvgsp.org/>), click on the Ratepayer Gathering tab, and access schedules and notes from each gathering.

Please follow upcoming issues of the Borrego Sun. We will be featured in various ways. Your concerns will now be a regular part of our local paper.

Thanks again for your involvement. Come to our meetings. Voice your concerns. Help us further clarify and draft our objectives. Bring a friend to the next gathering.