

Ratepayer Gathering Notes

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

The Library – Guests: Jack Laughlin, John Peterson

In attendance: Lee Scharf, Kathy Dice, Ralph Batie, Heather Davidson, Jennie Edwards, Gary Edwards, Jan Nicholas, Don Nicholas, Rebecca Falk, Saul Miller, Betsy Knaak, Jim Roller, Linda Laughlin, Ray Shindler

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; by doing so:
 - we will greatly increase the probability of reasonably priced water of better quality –ongoing monitoring for water quality is essential for our population;
 - we will minimize the ongoing decimation of our groundwater dependent ecosystems, which consist of flora and fauna whose success must be considered in the overall water allocation calculus.

Future scheduled meetings:

Will soon set up an informal meeting to plan the letter-writing campaign

Tuesday, May 7 10:00 am The Library **Supervisor Jim Desmond**

Wednesday, May 8 5-6:00 pm The Library Guest: **Bill Berkeley – Hydroponic Farming**

*** Remember, May 21st is the deadline for submitting our questions/comments to the GSA.

Another fine gathering; this time punctuated by the long-term historical perspective and bolstered by solid, time-tested science. Thank you, Jack and John.

Interesting to have begun the gathering with the **question**: has the period of time from 1980 to the present been a dryer or a wetter 30-year period than the previous 30 years. The answer is provided at the end of these comments.

John came to Borrego as the SD County hydrologist, bringing groundwater (quantity, not quality) monitoring to the valley in 1983. It became immediately clear that the use of water at that time was not sustainable.

What drove the decision-making for the Board of Supervisors at that time was development; public awareness of the basin's over pumping was essentially nonexistent, and the dynamics that drove Borregans was development. The County came down on John to quit fighting the issue – he was asked to continue monitoring, but not to fight. It was not until the development of the BS Resort by the Cameron family (1980) that ratepayers began to question the amount of water being used. The Cameron family had such pull at the County level that there simply was no resistance possible.

At that point, and historically, agriculture was not even a part of the calculus; the water issue was emerging with development, specifically what we now refer to as "recreation" (ratepayer, recreation, agriculture.)

Jack's recruited Jim Rickard, Gary Greene and Clark Shimeall, all technical folks who together checked and confirmed John's data relating to aquifer over drafting. However, the majority of the BWD board were developers, or involved in development and were either in denial or refused to cooperate in matters of water stewardship. At some point around that time period Jim Rickard got a Grand Jury involved in issues regarding finances during the RH development; the resistance was such that Jim Rickard ended his involvement at that time.

With the involvement of Dave Van Cleve, Mark Jorgensen and others and SD State worked on getting the hydrogeological model updated and upgraded, a model that supported John's model. Jack's efforts stopped when all his efforts were stymied by the County due to influence from developers, and had no support from BWD.

Jack does recognize the successful efforts made by the current Board to bring BWD back from near bankruptcy and for its efforts in developing the GSP, an impressive document in his estimation.

Interestingly, both John and Jack have determined that the current GSP, when compared to the study done in the 1970s, come to the same conclusions and state essentially the same things.

According to Jack, the fear of deep pockets, and therefore about litigation has been ongoing. It's because of AAWARE that the USGS study was updated, and, in his estimation, the USGS model is a good one.

Kathy Dice pointed out that initially, ABDSP was supposed to include all these lands; it was the State that gave the land to be farmed, and then in turn, it was the farmers with the money who developed Rams Hill.

Becky raised the matter of the lack of transparency that has shrouded BWD's relationship with the AC (and, therefore, with all stakeholders). We hear there are negotiations going on in the dark; we hear about deep pockets, that allocations are being negotiated, that a stipulated agreement is being negotiated, that enforcement may be different than what we expect. We hope/expect that these will all be brought to public hearings.

So, to summarize a few points:

- Agriculture has historically been protected from any substantive discussion about water usage.
- The Borrego community did not become interested/involved in the water issue until the Cameron family began developing the BS Resort.
- Historically, the BWD Board and the County of SD were driven by development (which in our case seems to have been Rams Hill.)
- Behind the scenes negotiations focused on interests other than the ratepayer seem to have been the model over the years.

Answer: The last 30 years have been wetter.

Food for thought:

For a period of 30 years – from 1963 to 1993 – the decline in sub basin water storage was minimal (about 10,000 AF.)

- In 1992, BWD pumped 4174.66 AFY – this usage continued at this level until 2003
- 1992 marks the first year of the quickest decline in our sub basin storage (BWD's usage did not change in any significant way for the next 11 years.)
- 2003 marks the first year of BWD's reductions in water usage (2007 appears as an anomaly – 4256.82)
- By 2003, the sub basin had lost approximately 100,000 AF (BWD's usage had remained unchanged.)
- 2010 marks the beginning of the 5-year period (2010-2015) set by SGMA to determine the pumper's BPAs.
- In 2010, BWD was pumping 2730.50 AFY (a reduction of 1444.16 AFY in 7 years.)
- By 2010, the sub basin had lost approximately another 100,000 AF since 2003, in 7 years (and BWD had reduced its usage by almost 1500 AFY.)
- By 2017, BWD was pumping approximately 1700 AFY (a reduction of approximately 1000 AFY in 7 years.) [I don't have the exact figures for pumpage since 2010, but will get them.]
- By 2017, the sub basin had lost approximately another 60,000 AF in 7 years (and BWD had reduced its usage by some 1000 AFY.)

So, over a period of 14 years, BWD reduced its water usage by approximately 2400 (significantly more than we use presently.)

During this time frame, sub basin storage declined faster than ever before.