

Draft Meeting Notes

Conservation Work Group

April 6, 2007 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Members Present

Al Budris	Central Coast Rainwater Harvesters
Richard Youngblood	Marina Coast Water District
Stephanie Pintar	Monterey Peninsula Water Management District
Steven Leonard	California American Water Company
Manuel G. Fierro	Citizens for Public Water

Observers

George Riley	Citizens for Public Water
Eric Zigas	CPUC (ESA Water)

Chairperson Kasower convened the group and instructed the members that they were responsible for reporting the group's progress in a status report to the Regional Plenary Oversight Group REPOG at the next meeting.

The Conservation Work Group began deliberations with the question of "how much conservation is prudent relative to the ability for consumers to cut back further on use during droughts and water shortage emergencies?"

Issues that were raised included:

- Water demand hardening as more conservation is adopted can diminish water purveyors' capability of delivering reliable water supplies during shortage periods without mandatory rationing programs.
- Inclining rates may not be "inclined" enough. Some water users will use water no matter how inclined the rates. It is simply not as expensive as other costs and values they perceive that they are facing.
- There must be a feasible balance of conservation programs and drought period supply reliability. It is easier to cut back to more stringent conservation use-levels during periods of extreme shortage than it is to find and bring on line new supplies.

The work group asked: What can the Regional Dialogue process do to effect feasible and acceptable conservation programs region wide? A number of ideas were discussed:

- Where are we on a water conservation scale relative to other areas?
- It would be interesting to describe the level of regional water use that just satisfies human need per capita and how we would get there.
- Can we better define the "feasible and acceptable" level of conservation given our portfolio of supplies, their reliability, and the community's interest in augmenting supplies to reliable levels under various shortage scenarios?
- Where are we in the risk/benefit array of conservation? How demand-inelastic is the region? And how inelastic do we want to become?

- Pricing increases and conservation program adoption could be performed incrementally. We could observe how each new increment of consumers' water cost affects their water use. This approach allows us to better observe the impact of inclining rates.
- Alternative supplies during extreme drought emergencies may be difficult for the Monterey region to access. Legal and institutional constraints to inter-basin transfers of water could hamper emergency transfers and lack of facilities tends to isolate the region from emergency aid.
- Water rates do not reflect the value of water.
- There is no consistent regional conservation message.
- We need to communicate with environmental groups about the nature of conservation and water supply reliability and the successful conservation programs in the Monterey region.

Next Steps

The Conservation Work Group raised a number of important analytical opportunities for the Regional Dialogue process to support. There were no priorities or decisions made by this group at this point.