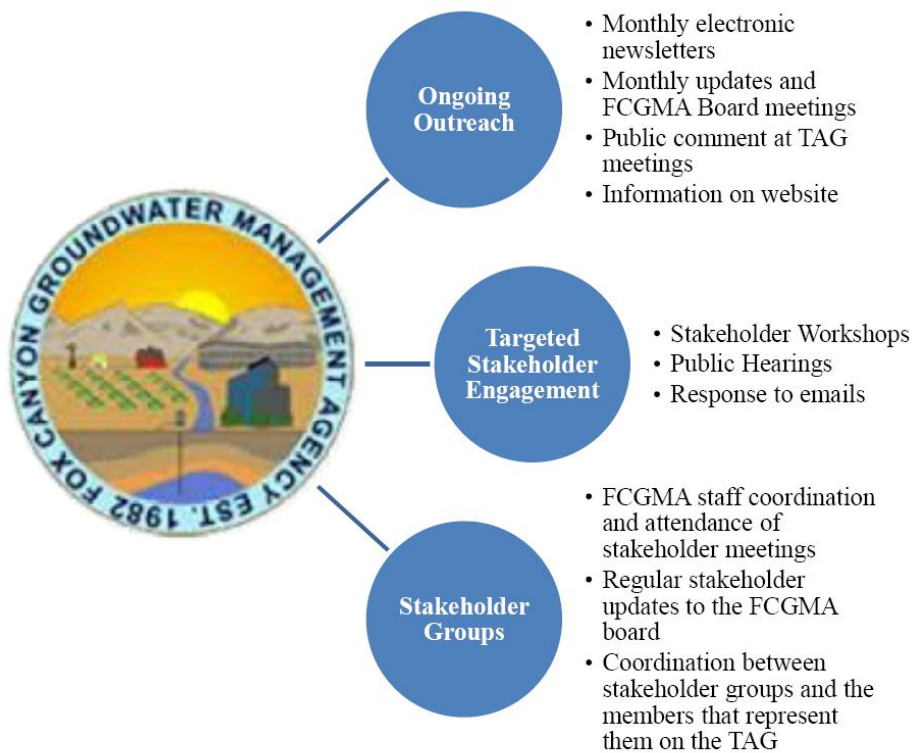


Regarding parts of other basins' Community and Engagement Plans that we should emulate:

- All of the plans are more visually interesting than the IWVGA's C&E Plan.
- All of the plans stress collaboration, public engagement and diverse Stakeholder participation.
- All have Lists of Interested Parties (Stakeholders) that are continually updated. Most send out (electronically) regular monthly newsletters to the list.
- Most seem responsive to the Public, listing addresses and/or phone numbers for the public to contact staff to answer questions and/or requests, and staff will respond to inquiries.
- Graphic below summarizes necessary engagement:



- Santa Cruz has a good C&E plan with an excellent timeline and concrete actions that we can copy.
- Pleasant Valley has a very important statement below:

3.1.1. Why Public Engagement is Important

"The basins within the FCGMA jurisdiction underlie a variety of land uses and communities with varying needs and interests relating to sustainable management of groundwater resources. Participation from a diverse group of stakeholders will allow the FCGMA to make management decisions that take into account the varying needs and interests in the Basin."

Searles Valley Minerals, Inc. (Searles) views the IWVGA C&E Plan as mostly adequate. It should be updated and some of the wording should change to reflect implementation of the GSP rather than formation of the GSP. However, most of the necessary language is present in the Plan. The problem is with implementation of the plan. The actions of the GA should follow the objective as stated above in Pleasant Valley C&E 3.1.1, specifically "make management

decisions that take into account the varying needs and interests in the Basin.” They should then be able to speak directly to how those needs and interests were taken into account, while making those decisions.

The current C&E plan contains the statement on page 4 “Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.” On page 5 “Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision.” Also on page 5 in the Communication Objectives, the second and third points under guiding principles state “Inclusivity and respect for all views”, and “Assurances of two-way communication.” The GA should follow these statements and objectives in the current C&E Plan. Currently the stakeholders feel that the GA’s decision-making process is opaque and the public meetings are pro forma.

Stakeholder engagement is more than a “touchy-feely” phrase. It means that decisions made for the public good are based on information from the public about their wants and needs. Obviously, there will be conflicts in this process because different stakeholders and members of the public have different views. However, the potential for agreement increases in proportion to the extent that engagement is consequential, inclusive and evidence-based. In addition, the process is stronger since decisions are based on knowledge of the issues. There will be less opposition if all stakeholders think that their wants and needs have been considered by the group.

Specifically regarding the implementation of the projects and plans in Chapters 5 and 6 of the GSP, the Stakeholders Searles works with would like to see concrete information about timelines and costs of the various large projects proposed. They also want to know how those projects will impact them. In addition, they would like to have some input on the discussion of the feasibility and implementation priority of the projects. For project implementation, the GA should make sure the public is informed prior to start of projects being implemented.

The discussion during the May 11, 2022 IWVGA public meeting on the RFP for Imported Water Pipeline Alignment Study is an example of good public communication. However, the discussion during the same meeting that revealed the apparent decision made by staff not to investigate importing water through the LA aqueduct is a great example of how **not** to communicate to the public. The decision was supposedly based on TAC percolation studies in the El Paso area for recycled water not being favorable and some information that LADWP had initially indicated they wanted a 3 to 1 swap for LADWP water. This is a major decision with large financial implications and yet the Board and public were ill-informed and unaware of this decision. Was there any public discussion? Was the public notified that the percolation studies would apply to imported water as well as recycled water? What were the parameters for decision-making? When was this decision made? Did the GA Board vote on this? Did the GA Board actually make a decision on LADWP water? No one is sure. From a C&E point of view, this is an example of how not to communicate.

Finally, if and when the PAC recommends greater stakeholder engagement, we have to be mindful of the confidentiality concerns of the GA staff and Board and the US Navy’s claimed national security concerns.

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To: Policy Advisory Committee

From: Judie Decker, Eastern Kern County Conservation District Representative

Subject: Improvement to the Communication Plan for the IWW GA Board

Date: May 12, 2022

1. Introduction The Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) was tasked with creating new public communication ideas or improving the existing ideas already stated in the Groundwater Authority Board's (GA) Communication and Engagement Plan that was prepared for the GA Board several years ago. One reason given for this task is the fact that the approved Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) has many management actions listed, but no mention of any public engagement process. It is important to realize that the public confusion that is evident in the questions asked at GA and IWW Water District meetings is substantially coming from a lack of a formal plan and schedule for the work underway. **How do these tasks feed into an ultimate groundwater sustainable condition for the IWW Basin?**

2. Recommended Next Step The most important task that the GA should undertake is the creation of a Plan of Action, Schedule and Budget for each Management Action listed in the GSP. This Plan should state what the action item will be, who will be doing it, what the estimated timeline for completion of the task will be, and the expected outcome. This plan also needs to have a budget that can be tracked from the very beginning. **This will provide the public precise information of management actions needed to achieve sustainability and its cost. These plans should be on the GA Board's website and updated regularly.**

3. Suggested C&E Improvement Steps Earlier this year a subcommittee of the PAC reviewed the existing C & E Plan and created improvements. This subcommittee recommended several items that are extremely important: the action plan mentioned above, the use of Fact Sheets and an improvement and expansion of the GA web site. A set of Fact Sheets need to be developed to give to the public and to put on the GA Board's web page. These Fact Sheets need to cover basic information such as basin hydrology, SGMA, and Groundwater Authority governance. An example Fact Sheet describing basin hydrology was prepared and presented to the Board.

The GA needs to revise and update its website. It should make sure that comment reports and letters, from Technical Advisory Committee members, PAC members, the GA Board, and the public are posted. Items of importance that are currently being discussed by the Board need to be available from the start. Technical reports, management action plans, budgets and Annual Reports need to be promptly posted. The Board needs to actively engage the public. This is going to be especially difficult given the time that has passed, the general public lack of knowledge and understanding, and the many lawsuits *that* are now in place that add greatly to the confusion. It is essential that the Board engage and provide clear and accurate information to its public. The proposed projects listed as GA Management Actions are all very expensive. The public needs to know that most of the expenditures for the development of the GSP and for the planning of an imported water pipeline are being paid for by State grant money and yes, even with this State support, water in the future will become more expensive. **They also need to know that the clear goal is that they will *actually* have water in the future.**

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IWVGA C&E PLAN Comments/Suggestions

11 May 2022

From: Lyle Fisher, PAC Member, Representing Domestic Well Owners

- In reviewing our C&E plan it appears that we had provided what was needed to be done for an effective communication plan but we failed to tell the GA how to do it and therefore the Board did nothing at all with our plan. The GA Board effectively approved our C&E plan, filed it, and there it languished and not ever used or referred to.
- Item (d) (4): Method to inform the public about progress and status of projects and actions that should be used is a “*Fact Sheet*”. A *Fact Sheet* should contain the name of the project, how it fits in the overall GSP, what useful data will be derived from the project. How will the project assist, aid and achieve groundwater sustainability? The timeline for the project should be clearly stated for the project start date and the projected completion date. Manpower that will be required/necessary to complete the project. How much the project will cost and the source of funding for paying for the project.
- These fact sheets should be made available to the public online on the GA website. They should also be made available at any public meetings (Monthly GA Board, Monthly PAC and TAC or any other public meetings) where the project is going to be discussed.
- Maybe the GA Board should consider retaining a “Public Relations” person for a period of time or temporarily until it appears that the public is becoming better informed and has a better understanding of the SGMA law and how the law is going to impact life in the Indian Wells Valley into the future.
- In response to “Corrective Action 1”: All monthly GA Board meetings are open to the public where the public and stakeholders are provided time to address the Board. In addition to time given to the public to comment on specific agenda items. The PAC meetings are open to the public with the same public comment periods.
- Social media avenues need to be explored for alternate venues available to provide information to the public relating to the GA Board upcoming public meetings and/ or progress and ongoing work/accomplishments.
- Growth, for the Indian Wells Valley is fine, but water use and where that water will come from is of paramount importance. Currently, water to support new growth comes directly from the residents that are already here. New growth would merely be stealing water from the current residents limited and dwindling supply.

- Other C&E Plans suggested a phased approach to outreach where different approaches are tried and then evaluating what worked well and what did not work as planned before further pursuing an approach that did not appear to work well.
- Key Message (from another C&E Plan): *“To be successful, management efforts and supplemental water supply efforts will require beneficiaries to support funding mechanisms.”* (Priceless)

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General Communication and Engagement and C&E Plan Update Recommendations (Outline)

Background: DWR GSP Approval document recommended C&E Plan update to focus on the next phase to achieve IWV groundwater sustainability, GSP implementation and execution:

- IWVGSP GSP self-Identified short falls, gaps, and actions to resolve
- Additional DWR Recommended Corrective Action #1 on public engagement
 - Address GSP Implementation Management Actions & Projects
 - How to engage stakeholders defined in PAC membership & the water code

PAC Tasking Actions

1. Recommendations on how to Inform and engage public participation in *GSP implementation and execution phase*:
 - Monthly Integrated schedule (integrated budget, financial, staffing, and task/function progress tracking) specifically including: Status for all GSP Projects and Management Actions and General administrative functions of the GA
 - Publish Fact sheets for Key Elements of Projects and Management Actions
 - Identify Key elements for GSP Implementation (General & Stakeholder-focused)
 - Methods of engagement
 - Targeted evening workshops updating key projects and management actions
 - Semi Annual Integrated Schedule Update Overview and progress vs GSP
 - Imported water acquisition and delivery (WWTF, Recycled water facility Interconnect), perhaps the most important element for all stakeholders
 - Email lists, improved one-stop Website, targeted social media (as used by community and stakeholder preference)
 - Target outlying or disadvantaged communities such as Trona and Inyokern
 - Communication by individual community method (ie. IYK General Store)
 - Employ/appoint a C&E Director to coordinate all aspects of a cohesive plan strategy and execution. Report monthly at GA meetings
2. Recommended changes to C&E Plan, dependent on final PAC recommendations in #1:
 - Document key elements, actions & communication methods for GSP implementation & execution most necessary for community engagement
 - Key elements related to GSP Implementation and execution
 - Any new or updated methods of engagement, especially those related to stakeholders groups
 - Selected aspects of the approved GSP not incorporated in IWVGA C&E Plan Consistent with final PAC recommendations in #1 above
 - All recommendations presented in March 2020 PAC Report also remain applicable
 - Codify, document, and execute these recommendations in our C&E Plan for DWR

Respectfully Submitted,
David Janiec
PAC Member

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C&E PLAN UPDATE

West Katzenstein

5-13-22

Background

The DWR has mandated that the Groundwater Authority (GA) improve its C&E activities.

The GA has developed one of the few Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to be approved statewide. This is due to the GSP's in-depth technical understanding and characterization of the basin, assessment of pumping, and legal considerations. Descriptions of this significant amount of work exist in various technical reports, GA determinations and rulings, the groundwater model, and the GSP.

Several outreach efforts have been undertaken by the GA and have had some success in awakening the public to the groundwater situation and the existence of the GA. However, these forums have not helped the public gain even an introductory understanding of the work of the GA or the GSP.

The recent initiation of a general adjudication and the resulting efforts to contact every stakeholder and citizen of the IWV can be assumed to have alerted most stakeholders and motivated many to take an active interest in the management of groundwater.

The public can now be expected to actively seek information regarding groundwater. The primary sources of information are the web and social media.

Numerous sources of misleading, inaccurate, and incomplete information are prominent in printed media, the web, and social media. This has resulted in members of the public forming strong but misguided opinions regarding the status of groundwater in the IWV and the actions of the GA.

Limitations of current C&E efforts

The GA has no dedicated comprehensive systematic effort to provide C&E.

No comprehensive introduction to groundwater management in the IWV is available. In-depth focused information is available in a variety of written products of the GA. It is extremely difficult for a newly interested member of the public to gain an overview of the situation.

It will be critical that the adjudication be based on accurate technical data. It is likely that conflicting technical assessments of the basin will be presented at the legal proceedings. The GA is lacking a concise summary of the excellent technical understanding and modeling of the basin that the GA has developed at much effort. Such a summary should provide links to in-depth work.

The GA website does not appear prominently when a member of the public searches for information on groundwater in the IWV. Furthermore, the website does not immediately engage the user with introductory material, overviews, and links to more detailed information. A curious member of the public

will likely go to another site for the information being sought. The GA website needs to stand on the high ground for visibility, accuracy, and meeting the needs of any viewer.

Needed C&E Actions.

The GA should establish a compelling presence on the web and social media. All contacts should point to the website for in-depth information.

The GA should host regularly scheduled public meetings, announced on public media and the website.

The website should be expanded to provide introductory and overview material that can provide answers to questions from the public. This material should have links to the substantial body of work already accomplished, so the full depth of this work can be found. Examples of information formats that might be used include fact sheets and FAQ.

The GA should consider establishing a function specifically dedicated to C&E. This might be a Public Affairs Officer as suggested by Tom Bickauskas.

Update the C&E Plan.

The C&E plan should be updated to include the specific actions listed above.

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Regina Troglin

Trona Representative

C&E Plan Comments

From my perspective the C&E plan is lacking in many areas, which have primarily been discussed at prior meetings. The main components that I see are still issues now are: the lack of board usage, no communication indications with sub-stakeholders, and a lack of viability of the plan in the current methods with which individuals and organizations communicate. Hearing from other committee members and members of the community brought to light just how out of touch the current C&E plan is.

In the past the Authority has primarily relied upon a mailing system that did not include sub-stakeholders at all, an email roster that isn't always followed, and the general meetings in order to communicate with the public. An issue that was brought up during the 2019 meetings when the GSP and other large items were passed by the board was that the public didn't feel informed about what was going, that the mailers that were sent out looked like spam, and those that did read the mailer were left with even more questions since they weren't clear about what was going on. I am in full support of using mailers when appropriate, however the contents and presentation of those mailers needs a serious overhaul. Just sending out a card stock mailer, or simple email isn't enough. Having the fact sheets available to the public both online in an easy to read format, as well as mailing those fact sheet, IN COLOR, is imperative to providing proper information to the public. But along side mailers there was no real information being presented in the newspaper or being posted around town. The information that I saw the most of in Ridgecrest started to pop up about a week prior to the votes, maybe two prior, when information had supposedly been sent to residents much sooner than that. This showed a lack of communication on the Boards part. Also in the past, when asked about communication issues with the public some (not all!) of the current and past members have blown off those concerns. The public has been very vocal that they want better communication and information about what is going, and not just silence when they are asking questions.

For Trona, this was extremely evident that there was a massive problem within not just the C&E plan but how the town is viewed as a whole. Trona gets 100% of it's water from the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin, however that water is provided based on a purchase agreement between Searles Valley Mineral (SVM) and the Searles Domestic Water Company (SDWC). Because Trona doesn't physically sit over the basin itself there was no communication with residents to let them know what was going. Even before and during the hearings regarding SVM the Board did zero to communicate with residents about the potential impacts and issues which were being seen. By not communicating with the community in Trona the Board has become public enemy number one, and many feel that the Board has zero intentions on addressing the concerns of sub-stakeholders. Technically even SDWC isn't a stakeholder since they do not actually pump from the basin, but instead purchase the pumped water from SVM. It's a complicated and weird situation but not uncommon here since it's been going on for about 90 years. The C&E plan update needs to actually address how the board communicates with sub-stakeholders, since currently it doesn't do it at all.

By not addressing sub-stakeholder groups directly via all means that are provided to general stakeholders, the Board has opened the door for massive miscommunication issues within sub-stakeholder groups. Unfortunately, because of the lack of communication and misinformation put out

by community members others, like myself, have had to dig deeper and deeper into documents and find information on our own since when we do ask for that information majority of time we never hear back or get answers. It becomes frustrating over time and many have given up entirely in trying to change the situation. There is zero reason that a statement cannot be added to the C&E plan that specifies that information put out to stakeholders, also gets sent to sub-stakeholders in the same formats. By providing information equally amount all stakeholder groups it gives the appearance that the Board is actually attempting to communicate with those sub-groups and isn't just ignoring them.

Lastly, as pointed out at two other meetings the C&E plan must be updated to include all current methods of communication. Just sending out mailers, or emails, or putting a statement in the newspaper here in Ridgecrest isn't a viable option. Majority of the stakeholders within the area use social media or other means of communication to get their information. Reading, let alone subscribing, to a newspaper is rare to say the least. There was a note about the IWVGA website getting an update/overhaul which is desperately needs since the current site is lacking in information and the information it does have is hard to find if you're a lay person. All information and communications from the Board need and must be done in lay-mans terms and not in government/legal speak that the average individual doesn't understand.

This starts by having fact sheets with lay-mans information about all of the issues and information that has so far been provided to the public. And yes, there will be many many many many fact sheets that will need to be produced; which take times and effort and money. However, it is necessary step in order to get the PROPER information into the publics eyes. But with these facts sheets is the most important aspect of communicating with the current demographic in the area. Social media and online communications are 100% necessary and completely unavoidable. The fact the C&E plan did not take that into account is of great concern, since social media has dominated the information spheres for well over a decade. The great thing about social media is the fact that the Board could have a twitter, Facebook, Instagram account which publishes the fact sheet and meeting times and other important information in a timely manner and those posts can then be reshared into the many groups and chats across the communities.

The C&E plan should also have a more detailed section regarding video presentations and information publishing, since another segment of the population gets information in small doses via Facebook videos, TikTok's which are 30 second or less, YouTube full length video, YouTube shorts, Instagram videos, Instagram TV, and Twitter videos. The list I am sure is much longer than that in terms of video presentation outlets but those were just off the top of my head that both myself and by daughter use on a daily basis. 20 years ago sure it wasn't necessary to use social media in this way but in todays world it is, since not everyone is going to take the time to sit down and read a full out pamphlet or fact sheet no matter where it is posted. Instead, they would rather watch the information in a format that is both entertaining and informational. Both of which are not that hard to achieve in the current atmosphere of social media.

Last the C&E plan should also include the encouragement for the Board to hire a PR firm, or individual who can handle all the aspects of public communication. While it is nice to keep things with individual groupings, it would be wisest and in the best interest of all stakeholders and sub-stakeholders for a experienced person or firm to be putting out the information. And again this does cost money, but

its a lot cheaper in the long run to have someone publishing the right information vs. continuing to fight against misinformation and having this ongoing headache.

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Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority

Communication and Engagement Plan

Project Implementation Phase

1. Introduction

Communicating with key stakeholders and the general public poses a challenge due to the fact that there is no single method of communication that effectively reaches everyone. In fact, there will undoubtedly be those that can't be reached despite best efforts to utilize multiple media sources. Yet it is critical that messaging from the Groundwater Authority ("Authority") reach as many people as possible as implementation of the projects included in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan ("GSP") progresses.

2. Opportunities for Public Involvement and Engagement

Understanding reaching stakeholders and members of the general public requires multiple tools for effective engagement, it is recommended the following communication methods be considered by the Authority throughout implementation of the GSP.

2.1 Meetings

Groundwater Authority, Policy Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and special Authority meetings/workshops will be noticed in accordance with the Brown Act. Agendas for regularly scheduled meetings to be posted on the Authority's website (www.iwvga.org) a *minimum* of 72 hours prior to the meeting. To the extent possible, documents to be discussed during meetings will also be made available a *minimum* of 72 hours prior to the meeting, preferably earlier, to provide adequate time for public review. Meetings will be open to the public as well as available to virtual participation and recorded for the benefit of those who are unable to attend.

2.2 Interested Parties Email List

The Authority currently maintains an "Interested Parties" list of email addresses. The Authority needs to put forth an effort to encourage people to provide their email address in order to expand its ability to communicate directly with as many as possible. The list can be used to provide a regular (monthly?) update from the General Manager on the status of projects and relevant actions taken by the Board. The updates should also be uploaded to the Authority's website.

2.3 Print Media

Significant project milestones should be promoted through press releases to local print media such as The Daily Independent and The News Review. Both papers also employ digital media to expand their reader base.

2.4 Presentations to Community Groups

Local community groups such as Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Democratic Women's Club, Republican Women's Club, etc. regularly seek speakers for their meetings. The Authority should identify a limited list of representatives available to meet with these groups and present consistent messaging about project implementation. These events are often covered by the local press providing an additional outreach opportunity.

2.5 Authority Website

Maximize the potential outreach opportunities of the Authority's website. As almost everyone has access to the internet, the website has the potential to reach the largest group of stakeholders and the public with updates and information. The Authority should take every opportunity to direct people to the website so it is the first place people look when seeking information about the Authority's progress on implementation of the GSP.

Links to the Authority website should be available on all Authority member websites including the City of Ridgecrest, Indian Wells Valley Water District, and Kern County, at a minimum.

2.6 Social Media

The Authority currently does not utilize the various social media formats. It is very easy to set up a Facebook page or an account on one of the other platforms. Once set up, implementation project updates or other messaging can be posted and shared with the potential to reach hundreds "in real time".

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