

January 8, 2025
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP
*** APPROVED MINUTES***

In-person at the Borrego Library, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs & also via Zoom

**THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS
WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES**

Please note that discussion items might be arranged according to interest for public discussion and might not exactly follow the agenda as given below.

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

John Peterson, Chair - Present
Jim Dax, Vice-Chair - Present
Bill Berkley - via Zoom (cannot vote)
Bruce Durbin - Present
Bill Haneline - Absent
Rebecca Falk - Present
Nancy McRae - Present
Seat #7 - Vacant (to be filled by Ann O'Connor)
Seat #5 - Vacant

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of December 4, 2024

MOTION: Falk
SECOND: Dax
VOTE: Unanimous (of the 5 members able to vote)

C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (will be limited to 3 min): Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject matter within the Group's authority that is not on the posted agenda.

No members of the public spoke during this portion of the agenda.

D. ACTION ITEMS:

1. Plan review for a "B" designator parcels 198-410-29-01 and 02; Harry Jones applicant. Site address is 434 and 436 Sun and Shadows Drive Borrego Springs Ca 92004. The project is fire damage repair for an existing duplex.

Harry Jones: May 22, 2024 structure burned down. Permit to build duplex exactly as it was. County is giving them a big run around. He's been here for 40 years and never needed to come before Sponsor Group (SG). He needs SG to complete a Form 554 from the County. It's a zoning issue. The structure now meets current building standards and county has approved that. Have done everything except for zoning. County won't sign off until SG "signs off." Requested that SG stamp the drawings, but SG doesn't have a stamp. Falk questioned whether County is requesting SG approval of an exemption. Peterson will be contact person with County and find out exactly what needs to be signed off.

Across the street neighbor, Stephanie DePalma, said they and the whole neighborhood want it to be rebuilt. Need affordable housing.

MOTION: Falk - That the SG support and approve this project.

SECOND: Dax

VOTE: Unanimous (of the 5 members able to vote)

E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. Presentation regarding recent revisions to the sustainable yield for the Borrego Springs Groundwater basin.
Andy Malone, West Yost Engineering firm presenting for the Borrego Valley Watermaster Board.

Redetermination of the Sustainable Yield for the BS Subbasin. Just completed and Water Master Board (WMB) approved in December.

- The Judgment and Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) established the initial Sustainable Yield (SY) for the Subbasin = 5,700 acre-feet per year (afy).
- The SY is used to set a “Rampdown” of pumping allocations for all Parties to the Judgment to achieve sustainability in the Subbasin. Total pumping allocations = SY by 2040.
- Judgment requires the SY to be re-determined by January 1, 2025 and every five years thereafter through 2035.

Borrego Valley Hydrologic Model (BVHM) is used to estimate the water budget of the Subbasin -> SY

- Judgment requires the redetermination of the SY by: data collection, use data to refine and update BVHM model, use model runs to redetermine the SY.
- The BVHM is a numerical groundwater-flow model capable of simulating hydrology of basin inflows and outflows (water budget) and how water levels and storage in basin will change at various levels.

Scope of Work was executed by scientists at West Yost (Technical Consultants) with Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Board oversight.

- Collaborative effort, held 12 meetings and provided monthly updates to WMB.
- General Process: Perform work incrementally and publish task memoranda.
- TAC reviews and comments on technical methods used and results, conclusions and recommendations. This info is all on WMB website and documents all the work that went into it.
- (John Peterson) “TAC members are all registered professionals appointed by WMB subject to the Judgment.”
- TAC and Technical Consultant (West Yost) prepared separate recommendations for the WMB. Included a lot of peer review and input from TAC and Board.
- Here were the tasks completed: #1 Compare Farm Management Plan (FMP)-estimated pumping to actual for Water Year (WY) 2022; #2 Update water-use factors in the FMP; #3 Correct errors identified in the 2021 BVHM; #4 Perform model recalibration and redetermination of the 2025 SY; #5 Determine the SY (time period used 1940 - 2022).

Objective #1: Improve the ability of the BVHM to estimate groundwater pumping.

- Prior work indicated BVHM underestimated groundwater pumping by up to 42%.
- Used pumping data from WMB well-metering program to compare metered pumping vs model-estimated pumping.
- Adjusted model parameters to get the best match.
- Aimed for model-estimated pumping within +/- 10% of actual metered pumping.

First objective to improve ability of model to estimate groundwater pumping, especially in agriculture areas that have been unmetered. The model has a process to estimate historical pumping based on historical use, crop type, methods, precipitation, etc. WMB began a well metering program in 2021 and that info was used to help improve the model. A graph was shown that illustrated the significant underestimating which has been corrected with new model. They now have more confidence in ability to estimate groundwater pumping.

Objective #2: Improve the ability of the BVHM to simulate groundwater-levels and water budget (inflows outflows, resulting changes in storage).

- Identified several errors in earlier versions of the model that caused uncertainty and lack of confidence.
- Corrected errors.
- Used measured groundwater levels to recalibrate the BVHM to best match model-estimated groundwater levels vs measured groundwater levels. Were able to characterize a historical water model for the basin and use that to project future. Some well data goes back to 1945, but each well is different. Go through process for each well. Trend of groundwater decline is seen across the basin.
- The adjusted and recalibrated model was used to simulate the historical groundwater levels, water budget and the SY.

How is the SY calculated?: Net recharge is derived from water budget (natural inflows minus natural outflows). That determines sustainable yield - the amount of water that can be pumped without causing overdraft conditions. Natural inflows are: stream bed recharge, subsurface inflow (water percolating down from mountains), return flows from irrigation/precipitation. Natural outflows are: evaporation of shallow

groundwater, subsurface outflows (water percolating off to somewhere else). Some deep rooted plants do suck up water. *Groundwater pumping is not a natural outflow.*

The new model projected a SY of 7,952 acre feet/year (aft) for time of 1945 - 2022. Formula: Natural Inflows of 8,726 afy minus Natural Outflows of 784 afy.

Objective #3 - Account for uncertainty in model. No model is perfect. The recalibrated model is not be the only version of the model and 7,952 afy is not the only valid estimate of SY. Ran 1000s of versions of the model with different parameters to come up with a range of SYs. Range was 7,568 afy to 8,078 afy, with the average being 7,803 afy and the “best” being 7,952 afy.

Conclusion #1: The Calibrated BVHM is a good simulator of hydrology of basin and can confidently be used to redetermine the 2025 SY.

Conclusion #2: The 2025 SY should be set between 7,600 - 8,100 afy.

Conclusion #3: The calibrated BVHM should be used to project future groundwater levels and storage under future pumping plans and climatic conditions. It can assess the long-term sustainability under a ramp down to the 2025 SY, evaluate the WMB’s current carryover rules and support the GMP Assessment Report.

Recommendation Reports TAC and Technical Consultant both prepared recommendations to the WMB with opinions and justifications to assist WMB in establishing the 2025 SY. The majority TAC recommendation was to set at 7,952 afy but they ended up recommending 7,900 afy. All info was shared with public in November 2024 to solicit feedback. At the December WMB meeting 7,952 afy was adopted as the SY. A graph was shown illustrating the difference between the 2020 SY allocation of 5,700 afy and the 2025 SY allocation of 7,952 afy.

McRae question about good years vs drought years. A: 2023/24 (good years) were not included in modeling. Will be recalibrated in 2030 starting with 2023 through about 2028.

MP (Stephanie DePalma): 2020 - 2022 fields had gone fallow. Now discussing development here which will ramp up usage. How are new homes, new RV parks, businesses, etc. taken into account in the SY models? Also UCI did an analysis that plants need some of our groundwater - how is that accounted for? A: Re-estimated long term sustainable pumping rate from 5700 afy to 7952 afy, but it’s still a significant decline in pumping that occurs in the basin. Groundwater basin is now viewed as a renewable resource and we’re no longer mining it, as was done historically.

MP (Shannon Smith): The 7,952 afy is the water supply available to the entirety of basin. Any new development is subject to that level, so there is not a risk of over-pumping the basin.

Andy Malone: They have not reviewed the groundwater study by UCI. This model can estimate that groundwater uptake and indeed it does estimate a few hundred acre feet per year. But that was not strictly addressed in this model - did not investigate or refine. That may be a future effort of the WMB to improve that portion of the model at the next five year update.

MP (Jim Wermers): Recharge includes a natural inflow from plants. For example say growing plants throw off 6 acres/year. Recharge is naturally occurring. Does this affect how much agriculture and golf course can be allocated? A: Yes, if the overlying land uses and their water uses change over time, that will change that portion of the budget. Over-irrigation = plants use some but not all water, some returns to aquifer. Future projections can include change in land use, for example not getting return flows from fallowed land. Use forward projections to see if we really will be sustainable with new model.

F. GROUP BUSINESS:

1. Status of Sponsor Group seats and the process of getting new applicants for the opening(s).

For the opening that has been open for a year, Ann O’Connor has been officially appointed, but must go through training before sitting on SG. We now have another open seat, and are likely to have 1-2 more vacancies during this calendar year. Get the word out - we need applicants.

3. Subcommittee Reports: None
4. Meeting Updates: None

5. Correspondence received: Letter from the San Diego Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Coalition regarding Rams Hill SPA 24-001.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2025. However, this could be postponed until March 5, 2025. This is dependent on potential items for the agenda.

The Chair has appointed the following BSCSG Members to serve as points of contact for the following areas:

- a) Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline
- b) Dark Sky Ordinance and issues, Rebecca Falk
- c) Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax

Attended meeting on Saturday, they approved that we would be a member of group. Next meeting in 6 mos. Primarily this is regarding SANDAG issues of transportation. 500,000 people in county have no representation on SANDAG. This is their seat at the table if they get approved.

Falk: Desmond is disparaging SANDAG. Dax: No Supervisors or others have attended meetings.

- d) Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline and Jim Dax. They met with Vivian regarding possibilities to improve fencing areas. Boulder placement, watering creosote. LCDZ is supposed to get back to them, but hasn't yet.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: Falk

Second: Durbin

Vote: Unanimous Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Emails sent to the Chair at petersonenv@hotmail.com will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Potential topics for the February or March agenda include: 1) Status update for the East County Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) program. Stephanie Neal presenting for PDS San Diego County, 2) review of the County Capital Improvement Plan.

Comment by Bruce Durbin - Development of Carmel Mountain Incited county to make sure that corridors - entire systems remain open. Example of how the plan is affecting local communities: when Bruce was a kid Santa Ysabel was all working ranches and dairies in Santa Isabel. That could have all been sold off to developers in early 90s. What owners ended up doing is selling conservation easements to the County to create, for example, Santa Ysabel nature preserves. Paid for by developer fees. As they working on this particular area, it is an opportunity to look at land around state parks and find apparatuses to fund the conservation corridors. Get involved.

Falk - Ten years ago work was started, but it got postponed. "Word" was the land east of BV Road might be part of conservation plan.

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If this Agenda is revised, a revised copy will be posted 72 or more hours prior to the meeting. The final Agenda may include additional Administrative or Non-Action items. For further information and to be added to the Sponsor Group email list to receive agendas and agenda packets, contact the Chair at petersonenv@hotmail.com. Address U.S. mail to: Community Sponsor Group, P.O. Box 1371, Borrego Springs, CA 92004-1371. For agendas, minutes and Community Plan, visit: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/gpupdate/comm/borrego.html>.

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when submitted, you may contact us. In all cases, we will take reasonable steps to verify your identity before granting access or making corrections.

Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group Members:

Chairperson: John Peterson; Vice-Chairperson: Jim Dax; Secretary: Nancy McRae
Members: Bill Berkley, Jim Dax, Bruce Durbin, Bill Haneline, Rebecca Falk, Seat #7 vacate.

Standing Committees (with both Sponsor Group members and members of the public): None