

Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study

Stakeholder Oversight Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

October 24, 2011

1. Welcome to Committee Members, Project Team Introductions, Member self – introductions
Acting for SOAC Chairman Allen Ishida, County of Tulare Supervisor Steven Worthley convened the meeting. Members of the SOAC and the audience introduced themselves.
2. Review of rules governing the meeting process and links to legal resources
Elizabeth Klotz of County of Tulare County Counsel reviewed the legal aspects of the Brown Act and provided committee members with legal resources handouts.
3. Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study Background, Purpose, and Goals
Laurel Firestone of Community Water Center (CWC) mentioned that while the SOAC process is subject to the Brown Act, the process will be facilitated at times like a workshop. Ms. Firestone reviewed Ground Rules and encouraged full participation. She went on to say that meetings will be recorded and minutes will be circulated. Ms. Firestone encouraged attendees to contact CWC or Tulare County staff with questions about the project. She announced that later in the meeting, the committee would be electing officers and encouraged attendees to consider volunteering for the positions.

Ms. Firestone presented background information on the Tulare Lake Basin region. She explained that many disadvantaged communities(DACs) lack basic water services. She stated that the region has some of the poorest schools that must devote valuable resources to pay for water.

Ms. Firestone indicated that adequate water and sewer systems are a basic need. She iterated that these issues need to be addressed by finding sustainable long-term solutions. Ms. Firestone emphasized that the region is among the poorest in the nation, and this process is an opportunity to establish a model for addressing the challenges of the nation's declining infrastructure.

Ms. Firestone said that traditionally these infrastructure needs have been approached separately, and many DACs have been left out of the process altogether. She said that the Tulare Lake Basin DAC partners have come together to address these challenges in a comprehensive manner. Ms. Firestone explained that the Tulare Lake Basin is a large region that covers a vast area. She informed the committee that this process will be analyzing community needs and will ensure that DACs will be able to attract funding and resources to implement solutions.

Ms. Firestone concluded by encouraging all attendees to participate fully.

4. Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study Scope of Work
Denise Akins, Administrative Analyst of Water Resources (County of Tulare), presented the Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Scope of Work. Ms. Akins announced that the purpose of the study is to assess the needs of DACs throughout the Tulare Lake Basin, and those needs will be folded into the Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (IRWMP) process. She said that the problem for DACs is that they lack the funding to do the preliminary work to be shovel ready, which is necessary in order to be included in the IRWMPs grant applications.

Ms. Akins reviewed the five tasks of the project. She indicated that the first is to collect data and the second is the stakeholder and community outreach process. She said that the SOAC is key to the second task and will identify priority projects. Once those priorities are established, a second round of stakeholders will be established in impacted communities. Ms. Akins went on to detail task three which is to select priority projects and studies and design pilot projects. She stated that the fourth task is to implement a Pilot Project Stakeholder process and the final task is to develop a report on the process.

Ms. Akins reviewed the composition of the SOAC and the roles, responsibilities, and time lines associated with the project.

5. Stakeholder Oversight Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Ms. Firestone presented more detailed information on the SOAC process. She emphasized that this is a stakeholder driven process and offered that the priority is to get the information from the people. She also said that this is a 'thinking outside the box' process. She explained that it is meant to focus on communities that traditionally have not been included in the discussion of the issues, namely disadvantaged communities that have been left out of the process. Ms. Firestone stated that this process is unique because it looks beyond capital infrastructure projects to find human and administrative solutions that will provide innovative alternatives.

Ms. Firestone said that the SOAC process will identify pilot projects and studies by developing a matrix for selection criteria, adding that the group will work to implement the solutions as well. A "pilot project," according to Ms. Firestone, is a new model for shared solutions. She included examples such as regional treatment plants, and new models for regional consolidations and operations and management. Ms. Firestone said that each of the pilots or studies will be guided by a focused stakeholder process for a particular area. She detailed an example process by saying that the SOAC would identify priority needs in the region, then work together to identify potential projects in the region. She explained that the selection criteria will be applied to all projects, and some projects will be recommended as pilot projects to the County of Tulare Board of Supervisors. Ms. Firestone further explained that while not all projects will be funded, all will be catalogued and may be eligible for future funding opportunities.

Ms. Firestone indicated that this project was an opportunity to develop a new shared solutions model for regions. She explained that it is not a lottery system, a useless study on a shelf, or a series of meetings to discuss problems. She clarified that viable solutions will come out of this process.

Ms. Firestone went on to outline other efforts that address DAC needs including counties, IRWMPs, legislative efforts, regulatory agencies, and academic studies. Member Juventino Rodriguez, speaking through translator Maria Herrera, stated that his community of Lanare has unsafe drinking water, no sewer system, and pays \$80 per month for water. He stated that he is one of the many residents who go to Sacramento to lobby for change. He indicated that he has invited engineers to come to his community to come and see the poverty and suffering.

Supervisor Worthley said a process will be developed for prioritizing projects, and asked residents to keep in mind that all projects will be evaluated against those criteria. He encouraged people to resist the urge to compete for being the worst off. Supervisor Worthley dismissed the committee for a break.

6. Elect a Vice Chair for the Committee

Following the break Supervisor Worthley reconvened the committee and asked for volunteers to be a vice-chair and secretary from among the voting members. Kings County Supervisor Richard Valle of the Board of volunteered to be vice chair in an effort to maintain regional diversity. Valle was nominated and elected.

7. Elect a Secretary for the Committee

Member Tom Franz was nominated and elected secretary.

8. Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study database presentation

John Dutton from Provost and Pritchard introduced Gavin O'Leary to give the presentation. Mr. O'Leary detailed data mapping that had been completed. Mr. O'Leary reported that some studies have already been done to capture DAC water data. He reported that Self Help Enterprises (SHE), CWC, Keller-Wegley, had all gathered data and reported that this study would turn that into useful information. The SOAC would identify what data is missing and help fill in any gaps. He also reported that some groups had collected data that might be sensitive and agreements were being established to draw upon that data. He stated that currently GIS data was being provided by the Department of Water Resources, California Department of Public Health, IRWM groups, the US Census, and the County of Tulare.

John Dutton presented a list of data categories. He explained that the list is included in the member's binders and will also be available on the study's website. Ms. Akins provided the website address.

Julie Allen mentioned that water quality and supply was on the list and asked if that referenced capacity. Mr. Dutton clarified that it did reference supply.

Supervisor Valle asked whether private wells are on the list of data categories. Ms. Akins responded that because private wells lack water quality data they will be identified by assessing where populations exist, but where there is no water system identified.

Ms. Firestone suggested that it would be helpful if anyone knows of data that is not included, but can contribute it to the database. She stated that for instance, if community members have tested wells that have problems, that data would be useful for the study database.

Member Denise Kadara asked if the project team knew how many projects or studies would be funded.

Ms. Akins replied that half the funding of the study is reserved for pilot projects and studies. She explained that the number of projects and studies funded will depend on the committee's decisions on what the priorities are and which projects they decide to move forward based on the amount of money is available.

9. Public Comments

Acting Chair Worthley opened the public comment period.

Jesus Quevedo asked what the County would do with the money if there was money left over from the study. Denise Akins indicated that all money allocated to this study would be spent. She also mentioned that there were funds available from Proposition 84 that may fund identified projects.

Mr. Dutton said that this project should be used to generate momentum for California's water infrastructure needs. One Board member asked if there was enough money to complete the project. Mr. Dutton confirmed there was sufficient funding available.

Supervisor Valle stated that many of his communities were shovel ready and asked if this process would hold up funding for that. Supervisor Worthley said that most DAC's were not shovel ready and there was nothing to stop those projects in the region from being funded if they were ready. He explained that the objective of the project was to come away with an understanding of the magnitude of the problem so that stakeholders can assess the situation and identify funding needs.

Member Tom Frantz asked whether the Tulare Lake Basin DAC study would look at the cost/benefit ratio. Mr. Dutton said that a cost benefit analysis would be conducted as a function of pilot projects. Supervisor Worthley explained that the committee would probably want to direct funding to regional solutions for more densely populated communities. Mr. Frantz asked if an overall cost/benefit analysis would be conducted to assess the benefit of having clean water in the region.

Ms. Firestone stated that this study is to help bring money into the region to solve water problems. She went on to say that the last thing the process should do is argue that some regions are needier than others. She added that a concerted regional effort to bring funding into the region is necessary to ensure all communities have these basic services.

Ms. Firestone mentioned that the SOAC will determine how projects are prioritized, adding that stakeholders should not feel they are competing with one another. She explained that the objective of the project is to determine and demonstrate need. Ms. Firestone said that a study would be completed and that recommendations would be made to the state about how these problems should be addressed.

10. Review administrative matters. Discuss use of nameplates, the travel claim form for reimbursement of mileage to scheduled meetings, contact with the media, the membership roster, County staff contact information, and website location

Ms. Akins reviewed administrative matters with the committee, such as mileage reimbursement, bylaws, scope of work, website, and project fact sheets. Supervisor Worthley clarified that mileage reimbursement was for travel to and from the SOAC meetings. Ms. Akins announced that SOAC members were required to complete ethics training. She indicated that she will provide training information to committee members.

Set date for next Committee meeting and determine items to be included on next Agenda.

Ms. Akins announced that 3-5 p.m. was the popular meeting time per those who responded to the survey. Member Becky Quintana said that she would need it to go from 5-7 PM because she is a bus driver and does not get off work until 4:30. Another member mentioned the fog as an obstacle. It was decided that meetings would occur from 4:30-6:30 PM on the first Monday of the month, December through April. January will be an exception due to the first Monday being a holiday and the second Monday is when the Water Commission meets. January's meeting will be held on January 9, 2012 from 5-7 PM.