

Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study

Stakeholder Oversight Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes June 4, 2012

1. Call to Order

Chairman Allen Ishida called the meeting to order.

2. Additions/ Deletions from Agenda

There were no additions or deletions from the agenda.

3. Public Comments

Juventino Gonzalez Rodriguez from the community of Lanare brought a sample of some material left behind near his water cooler.

Chairman Ishida introduced Julietta Martinez, a new Tulare County Board Representative.

4. Approval of Minutes from May 7, 2012

A motion was made by Denise Kadara and seconded by Tom Frantz; The minutes were approved unanimously.

5. Summarize Goals of this Meeting (CWC)

Ms. Firestone offered a recap of SOAC's work so far, and an overview of goals for the meeting. She indicated that the focus of this meeting would be to review the scope of potential pilot project, approve the projects, and identify next steps.

The scope of the pilot projects or studies was determined by the following criteria. Each potential pilot will have 4 components:

- 1) Description of the problem.
- 2) Description of the potential solution.
- 3) Adapting potential solutions to individual communities and make recommendations based on how solutions fit representative communities.
- 4) Develop policy recommendations to include in the final report to the legislature based on the identification of barriers through the SOAC process.

Chairman Ishida explained that Tulare County had been engaged in this process for awhile, but that the other three counties would have the opportunity to fine tune the process of designing solutions and policy recommendations specific to their communities.

6. Scope and Components of Potential Pilot Projects

Ms. Firestone explained that there were five 'top priority' issues identified by the SOAC. Those were:

1. Management/non-infrastructure solutions to reduce costs and improve efficiency
2. Technical solutions to improve efficiency/reduce O&M costs
3. Water Quality: New Source Development/Individual Household (non-system solutions)

4. Lack of Funding
5. Lack of Empowered Residents

She went on to explain that each project selected would be subject to the following review process:

Technical review by consultants to determine feasibility of a project.
Pilot project stakeholder advisory groups for each project.
Community review teams.
SOAC review of final recommendations.

Ms. Firestone encouraged the group to participate in opportunities to review potential pilot projects—with that hope that the process will remain diverse and be representative of all stakeholders, including community residents, elected officials, IRWMP representatives, representatives from CSDs, etc.

She explained that each volunteer would be responsible and committed to the review process by:

- attending the meetings
- contributing individual community information

She explained that the desired outcome of the SOAC process is:

1. Database and characterization of DAC water needs in the Tulare Lake Basin.
2. Evaluation of key potential solutions to address priority issues.
3. Implementation Roadmap including a list of promising solutions for each of the 300plud DACs in the Tulare Lake Basin
4. Stakeholder facilitation tools.
5. Policy recommendations.

7. Recommend Approval of the Potential Pilot Projects/ Studies as Outlined in the Handout Dated June 4, 2012

Ms. Firestone asked participants to voice any questions or concerns about the process.

Chairman Ishida asked how long the process of evaluating projects would take. John Dutton from Provost and Pritchard responded that the process would take about one year after the SOAC approved moving forward.

Mr. Dutton raised the question of how involved stakeholders wanted to be in the evaluation and selection process of pilot projects.

Chairman Ishida mentioned that the SOAC could move faster than the grant schedule. He elaborated that the report is due in 2014 but could potentially be submitted in 2013 if the project moved quickly enough. He emphasized the importance of taking speedy action addressing disadvantaged community water needs while there is political interest.

Mr. Dutton stated that he is confident that this process is going to generate additional interest and funding from State agencies.

Ms. Firestone mentioned that a lot of other stakeholders are working towards solutions that can build on the SOAC's work and can provide additional resources—the SOAC can compliment all of these efforts—from IRWMPS to Rotary International's efforts.

Ms. Firestone mentioned the pros and cons of specific government options, and the estimated cost of such processes. She also reviewed the Implementation Roadmap. She explained that the project team is trying to perform a thorough review of the different options, not implementing the solutions, but empowering communities by giving them information to pursue viable solutions.

Sue Ruiz mentioned that the community of Easton is contracting with an engineering firm to move towards solutions, and stated that a private well option has not even been offered. She asked how and when this information was going to get back to communities rather than just staying in this study.

Mr. Gonzalez Rodriguez said that in his community it's not important for one person to get paid a lot to do nothing, he suggested they only need a bilingual secretary and a guard to do the job right. He is worried about what it is costing the community for no benefits and no results.

Ms. Firestone highlighted the importance of community engagement when making decisions.

Charles Lackey stated that this process is like a "filter" for projects and options. He questioned if the SOAC needs to spend any more time developing this "filter". He questioned the level of detail and explained that something flexibility would be key so that the filter could be adjusted as the study continued.

Sam Logan of Visalia, asked which communities were included in the study. He wanted to know if short term solutions for the communities were being considered. He elaborated that as a Rotarian he wanted projects to fund that would support immediate solutions. He questioned if water vending machines were an acceptable short term solution for these communities.

Chairman Ishida answered that the Rotary may know of the appropriate technology to provide immediate solutions.

Ms. Firestone clarified that the database housing community information does not include solutions or current funding status. She stated that it is also important that interim solutions selected are a good investment.

Mr. Prado stated that it would be important to select projects to actually test the theories and find out if the funding is available or not.

Mr. Gonzalez Rodriguez indicated that a vending machine would help his community 100% and went on to say that residents currently have to travel eight miles to get safe drinking water. He explained that this means residents pay for bottled or vended water, gas to travel to purchase the water, and pay for water that they cannot drink.

Ms. Firestone reiterated the need for the SOAC's approval of the pilot projects to move forward and flush out possible solutions.

A SOAC member recommended a guidebook at the end of the study. He acknowledged that a report would be given to the legislature, but a guidebook would be very valuable to the communities.

Tom Frantz commented on number three, financing and governance recommendations. He asked if recommendations were going to be made on how to finance the solutions for the entire Valley. He indicated that residents of disadvantaged communities cannot pay for solutions directly and society will have to help.

Ms. Firestone replied that financing will be analyzed for each project. She asked again for a motion to approve the pilot projects.

Charles Lackey made a motion to move forward. Sue Ruiz seconded the motion.

Denise Akins took a roll call vote and the pilot projects were approved unanimously.

Ms. Firestone asked that volunteers be involved in at least one of the pilot projects. She expressed her desire for the momentum to continue and not lose the power in this group.

8. Administrative Matters

There was a discussion on the future of the SOAC. It was the SOAC's desire to continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis throughout the pilot project process. Staff will look into options to continue meeting.

9. Committee Comments

There were no Comments.

10. Next Meetings

The next meeting will be July 30, 2012.

Meeting adjourned.