

North Bay Regional Water Policy Summit "Kick-Off"

October 19, 2000

"The world will not evolve past its current state of crisis by using the same thinking that created the situation."

Albert Einstein

SUMMARY OF EVENT

For the first time in over 30 years, elected representatives from our vast region were invited to participate in an open discussion about our water supply. The water supply system, commonly called the Russian River Water System, collects and delivers water from and to large and small communities throughout Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, Lake and Marin Counties. As a key to our regional environmental health, quality of life, and plans for the future, the North Bay Water Policy Summit "Kick-off" was convened and hosted by the City of Petaluma on October 19, 2000.

The Summit "Kick-off" was an opportunity for the elected officials and general public from throughout the region to gain awareness about the Russian River and Eel River watersheds, the Sonoma County Water Agency's existing water delivery system, water conservation programs and measures, and state and nation-wide trends in water management. The elected officials participated in two facilitated discussions providing critical elements of developing a regional water policy, and a regional policy governance structure. Seven of the eight prime water contractor's elected representative's attended and participated in the discussions, as did many representatives from other agencies and communities connected and affected by the transmission system. The facilitated sessions elicited focused input regarding the primary elements, key stakeholders and governance structure necessary to begin the process of crafting a North Bay Regional Water Policy.

Over 300 people from throughout the region listened to four presentations and two distinct elected official discussions, and submitted written questions and comments. Over 50 pages of public comments were received, and over 30 pages of elected official's notes were collected from this event. The entire Summit event was video taped by Petaluma Community Access. Media coverage included Channel 50 news, the Press Democrat, Argus-Courier and several other local and regional newspapers. The following morning, several radio stations interviewed elected officials on the Summit outcomes.

In addition to the educational presentations, each elected official in attendance was provided with a detailed "Fact Pack" that included facts on the Russian River watershed, the regional water delivery system, and other relevant information. This "Fact Pack" can be accessed directly on Petaluma's web site found at: www.ci.petaluma.ca.us, or it is available in hardcopy by contacting your local water representative's office. The Summit "Kick-Off" event videotape is available for \$25.00 from Petaluma Community Access.

The Summit "Kick-Off" demonstrated that elected officials with differing perspectives and jurisdictional requirements can come together to work effectively on an issue of such historical divisiveness and ramification. "Water connects us all" was the theme of the evening, and it seemed to define the underlying purpose of beginning this regional discussion and process. The summit discussion maintained a collaborative and positive tone, as each participant provided input toward developing a regional water policy. Clearly, the officials are interested in coordinating and planning as a region and not as individual entities. But most exciting were the identified specific next steps and commitments to keeping the energy and momentum of this historic summit alive.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

By the conclusion of the Summit, a series of next steps were identified. These actions are summarized below.

1. The elected officials expressed decided agreement to move forward as a region. A regional agreement is preferable to individual arrangements with the Sonoma County Water Agency.
2. The elected officials agreed that there are many existing positive elements to our infrastructure and management, and that some of those elements should be maintained and built upon. In this spirit, it was agreed that the existing advisory structure is a good format to *begin* the process of a governance transition.
3. Each prime and non-prime contractor agreed to return to their respective Boards with a proposal to appoint an elected official to serve as a temporary policy liaison at the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) meetings. The purpose of the temporary appointment will be to work through a process to establish an effective and representative regional watershed policy governing body.
4. With the elected representatives, the WAC will develop an options paper for watershed governance by February 2001. With the release of this options paper, the Summit participants agreed to reconvene in early 2001.

ELECTED OFFICIAL'S INPUT

The following questions were asked of the Summit event: "Why are we here? What is it that we are doing and why?"

In response and discussion, elected officials provided the following exchange of input:

- ☞ A "Same Page" is needed for elected officials
- ☞ A need for peer collaboration and process
- ☞ An understanding of all contractor's perspectives
- ☞ The current process has broken down
- ☞ A need for identification of all stakeholders

In addition to the notes collected from the open discussions, the elected officials submitted written comments and questions to the Summit staff and volunteers. Over 30 pages of written input were collected. This core input to a Regional Water Policy was synthesized and categorized below as elements, stakeholders, and governance structure.

Core Elements of Developing a Regional Water Policy

Clearly, the elected officials understand that developing a regional water policy is ambitious and requires a significant understanding of the depth, complexity and diversity of water elements and the delivery system. Much of this understanding was communicated by asking for establishing definitions, boundaries and issues, as well as compiling significant categories of facts and datum. The following elements were cited:

- Full stakeholder involvement
- Knowledge of impacts to date
- Mining
- Potter Valley Project
- Timber Practices
- Dry Creek
- Definition and understanding of water use agreements
- Conservation plan
- Filtration vs. watershed management for protection of water quality
- Reliability of service
- Groundwater research and recharge studies
- Watershed conservation council
- Collaboration
- Definition of "Region"
- Define water resource elements (natural system appropriations)
- Conservation needs evaluation

- Identification of barriers and constraints
- Drought Action Plan
- Public education
- Legal ramifications
 - Water code
 - Federal problems (NMFS, fish, water quality)
 - Purchase of Potter Valley
- Best Management Practices
- Full disclosure of financial arrangements
 - Volume, uses, tiered cost plans
 - Liabilities, lawsuits, purchase of Potter Valley District
 - Project costs
- Prioritize conservation over diversion
- Full cost/benefit of each city's water use conservation practices
- Information sharing/education/briefing booklet
- Watershed probation
- Regional perspective
- Countywide xeriscape ordinance
- Protect ecosystem
- Groundwater management
- Recycling wastewater to potable standards
- Storage
- Dry well concepts, rainwater cisterns and permeable surfaces
- Back-up wells
- Achieve economies of scale by doing joint studies
- Reclaimed water for golf courses
- Preservation of water quality
- Balance of different needs/interests/cultural issues
- Technological improvements
- Research models

Regional Water Policy Stakeholders Identified

The elected officials identified the following stakeholders in developing a regional water policy:

- Recreational groups
- Tourism
- PUC
- Resource agencies
- Schools
- Business groups
- North Bay Watershed Association

- Next generation
- Russian River Watershed Council
- Friends of the Eel River
- Upper Eel Watershed Forum
- Sonoma County Conservation Action
- Tribal governments
- Army Corps of Engineers
 - 3 Special Districts
- USDA
- Forest Service
- 6 Counties
- Potential, current and surplus users
- Wastewater users
- Chambers of Commerce
- Watershed Committees
- Sierra Club
- US Fish and Wildlife
- California Fish and Game
- Mayors' and Councilmembers' Association
- Ratepayers
- Agriculture
- Industry
- FERC
- EPA
- Schools - all levels of elementary

Regional Water Policy Governance Structure

In developing a governance structure for a regional water policy, the elected officials identified many alternatives, avenues and forums for regional coordination and implementation. The following summarizes this input:

- Policy board in each county reporting to a northern bioregion/ecosystem council or group.
- Metropolitan Water District JPA
- Define boundaries of water policy
- Partnership agreement that is inclusive of all users and stakeholders and is equitable in all facets
- General policy group
- Maintain State > SCWA > Retailer structure
- Spirit of Cooperation
- North Bay Watershed Association as model
- LAFCO

- 6-7 categories of issues with staff from each contractor on committees. Action Plans used to reach out to stakeholders.
- Identification of what works currently
- Use WAC and support elected official participation
- Consensus – full, partial, no
- Policymaker input
- Steering committee of elected officials
- Subcommittees of public, stakeholders and staff- draft policy- this goes to elected officials and stakeholders
- Survey needed
- Implementation plan with guiding principles
- Establish JPA which establishes a regional council or authority; this is an elected authority that is separate from any city or county governing body
- 7th Generation principles
- Cal Fed Principles
- Look at existing EIR- 5, 25, 50 year steps
- Include Sonoma, Marin, Lake, Mendocino and Humboldt Counties
- Research models
- Differentiation of major vs. minor players
- Workshops
- Adoption by voters

GENERAL PUBLIC INPUT

During the Summit, Summit staff and volunteers collected over 50 pages of written public input. In addition to the synthesized input captured below as public questions and public comments, the general public identified important elements of a governance structure for a regional water policy. These governance suggestions are presented in this section.

Public Questions

“How do city officials plan to educate themselves on water issues with no scientific staff advisors?”

“What will be our most lucrative conservation targets by category? Where are the best opportunities to impact, reduce and control usage?”

“What percentage of water goes to the various user categories, i.e., residential, agriculture etc.?”

“What safeguards and checks and balances are to be incorporated to make system cost-effective both for the contractors and the delivery system?”

“What percentage of rainfall recharges aquifers in Sonoma County? How are land use practices changing this percentage?”

“Can the Open Space District apply funds to secure wild watershed lands for recharge?”

“Isn't the tertiary treated water from Santa Rosa going to the Geysers cleaner than the natural Russian River Water? If so, why build the pipeline?”

“The drought emergency plan requires new hook-ups to retrofit houses for water conservation until they save enough water to provide for their new use—why do we have to wait for a drought to accomplish this process?”

“How much water is there, if enough water is left in the river and ground for ecosystem health?”

“How many people can that amount of water support? How will we stop growth as we reach that number of people?”

“Where are the Supervisors? I thought they wanted to provide leadership. I guess they do not think this water summit is important.”

Public Comments

"I lived through the Marin water shortage (24 years ago!). To this day, the habit of not wasting water stays with me! While waiting for hot water to come to the kitchen sink I fill the kettle with cold water run off and it gets used as needed when needed—a daily small savings!"

"Comprehension of the mutuality and interdependence of all the players. There must be no master/servant relationship."

"Surplus water is quantity in excess of the water needed, and should be used to sustain and reestablish endangered species."

"Restore Eel River water resources to that watershed."

"Do nothing except where there is overwhelming consensus."

"The intention of this summit is great...however a process that integrates the audience would prove beneficial."

"Quality! Address mercury from mining, road and geothermal sources; phthalates, estrogenic mimics, viral implications of reuse."

"Develop a sustainable development plan as the core element of a regional water policy. The sustainable development plan is an established and effective process supported by USEPA."

"Cities and other public entities should be taken off ground water supply and hooked up to the aqueduct before extensive growth continues."

"Reclamation, Reuse and Conservation, Protection from Contamination, Public Information"

"Education, Awareness, Economy and Responsibility of Self."

"Develop at least 3 alternatives."

"Local water development with water table replenishment."

"Farm Bureau, North Bay Agriculture Alliance...over 27,000 acres...should be at table."

"We should be looking for methods to recycle and reuse the already reclaimed Russian River water which sits in the storage ponds at the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Plant."

"Cooperation of contractors in assessing actual river capacity so as to control growth."

"Adoption of regional growth rate with specific rates for each city, town or specific plan area"

"Must meet more regularly."

"Performance standards and a holistic view of region-wide issues."

"Take the decisions away from the Board of Supervisors and the Water Agency and consider forming a regional council for water resources policy."

"Capacity estimates should be based on sustainable management practices that allocate significant portions of the water pie to fish, water quality recharge and community needs."

"Nobody should be making a fortune on water supply, only recover system cost."

"Use Cal Fed principles...solutions must be durable, affordable, equitable and implementable."

"More temporary storage."

"In 1991, the Resource Renewal Institute did an in-depth study of water in Marin Municipal Water District. We found that the district had mis-measured both reserve capacity and projected demand- but most important, the district had seriously underestimated the potential savings through conservation, reclamation and efficiency programs. We found that MMWD could meet projected demand through 2025 with no additional water from the Russian River- with an aggressive conservation program. These same principles apply in Sonoma County. We have huge untapped potential to reduce demand and reclaim gray water...at far less cost than increasing system capacity."

Stakeholders

The following list of suggested Regional Water Policy stakeholders was obtained from written public input collected at the Summit.

Watershed Councils
Rate Payers
Consumer Health Advocates
Preservationists
Health Care
Residents
Environmental experts
Public utilities
Local and Regional political entities
Nature lovers
Agriculture
Landowners
Fish
Tourism
Animals
Plants
Ecosystems and Cycles
Public
City and County Government
Water Agency
Biologists
Hydrologists
Engineers
Sustainability Theorists
Planners
Traffic & Housing Advocates/Activists
Environmental Activists
Farmers
Business and Industry
Developers

Governance Process

The following information relating to Regional Water Policy development and governance was obtained from written public input collected at the Summit:

Consensus: Do not allow the SCWA to control water supply. Do not allow them to gain control of ground water. Limit their control of surface and reclaimed water.

Create subcommittees of stakeholders for each element of the regional water policy.

Regional water meetings

Open, transparent system with meaningful public discussions about policy.

Respect each other's needs

Many open forums to get all issues on the table

A sifting of those issues to find priorities and limiting factors

Public Meetings Important

Full, open meetings with format of Urban Water Management Plan meetings with publication afterwards.

Contractor's Co-op

Developing a plan that achieves best use of water given those priorities and limits.

Set forth steps for carrying out that plan

Reconvene this Summit group by end of February 2001.

Mayors' and Councilmembers' Water Task Force will pretend to know what they're doing.

The Town Hall Coalition will be hosting a public input meeting regarding water policy on January 11, 2000.

The Sierra Club hosted ameeting on October 26th.

Special Thanks and Acknowledgements

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The City of Petaluma

Mayor and City Councilmembers

North Bay Water Summit Subcommittee

Pamela Torliatt, Jane Hamilton and David Keller

City Management and Staff

Presenters

Joe Myers, National Indian Justice Center -- BJ Miller, UC Berkeley
John Garn, ViewCraft -- Roberta Borgonovo, California League of Women Voters

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Facilitator

Chris Pack
Community Matters

Welcome

Pamela Torliatt, Vice Mayor
City of Petaluma

Presentations

Joe Myers, National Indian Justice Center
B.J. Miller, U.C. Berkeley, Former DWR Board Member
John Garn, ViewCraft, Municipal & Community Program Consultant
Roberta Borgonovo, Director, League of Women Voters of California

Commentary

Katherine Austin, Councilmember, City of Sebastopol
Sam Salmon, Councilmember, Town of Windsor
Jared Huffman, Board Member, Marin Municipal Water District

Closing Comments

David Keller, Councilmember, City of Petaluma

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(art work for water faucet and drops)

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Petaluma, California