

## **County of San Diego Water Quality Working Group Meeting Summary**

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 p.m.

County of San Diego Watershed Protection Program

Watershed Conference Room

5201 Ruffin Road, Suite P, San Diego, CA 92123

### **Members Present**

Stephanie Bauer, Port of San Diego

Chris Cate, San Diego County Taxpayers Association

Stephanie Gaines, County of San Diego

Louis Guassac, Member-at-large

Cid Tesoro, County of San Diego

Kim Williams, Geosyntec

Midori Wong, SANDAG

### **Supporting Roles**

Candis Compton, County of San Diego

Sheri McPherson, County WPP

Jeff Pasek, City of San Diego

Mark Stadler, San Diego County Water Authority

Lewis Michaelson, Katz & Associates

David Pohl, Weston Solutions

Danielle Thorsen, Katz & Associates

### **Other**

Stephanie Bracci, City of San Diego

Michelle Landis, ASLA

Marian Marum, ASLA

### **Introductions**

The facilitator welcomed the group and explained the full agenda for the meeting. He briefly explained the purpose of the Water Quality Working Group as a part of SANDAG's Quality of Life Funding Strategy and how it differed from other Quality of Life working groups. Attendees introduced themselves, and the facilitator provided some background on the new member from the San Diego County Taxpayers Association, Chris Cate.

### **Administration**

#### *Meeting Summary*

The facilitator asked for comments and clarifications on the January 2010 draft meeting summary. There were no comments or questions so the meeting summary was deemed final.

#### *Select Representation for SWG (main and alternate)*

As part of the SANDAG Quality of Life, a representative was needed for the Quality of Life Stakeholders Working Group (SWG). Since there were new members and people were still

arriving, the facilitator suggested that the selection of a representative be moved to the end of the meeting so that everyone would have an opportunity to consider volunteering for the position.

#### *Change of venue*

Due to the small size and narrow layout of the current meeting room, a new meeting place was suggested, especially in case more observers attend. Ms. Gaines suggested moving the meetings to a conference room in the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) building across the street from the current meeting location. Because the room is occupied sometimes during the WQWG monthly meeting time, the Director of the Water Quality Control Board offered its hearing room for those times. The facilitator suggested viewing the room first to make sure it would be amenable for working group discussions. As meeting locations are determined, that information will be posted on the WQWG Web site.

#### *Review Webpage*

Ms. Gaines reported that the County launched the WQWG Web page. She presented the site to the working group. The Web page includes an overview, background, working group documents, links to external Web sites and Ms. Gaines' contact information. All of the information regarding the working group will be available on the Web page.

#### *Review Roster*

Originally all of the copermittees for NPDES permitting in the region were invited to attend the WQWG meetings. Since it was problematic for them all to attend, a new strategy was developed for copermittees representing north, central and south county to participate. To recognize the role of those who cannot attend as often, those participants are listed as "Supporting Roles" on the roster. They will still get all of the information about the working group.

### **Develop Definition of "Water Quality" for Working Group**

As part of developing the WQWG, discussions with key leaders and stakeholders around the region discovered that 1) water quality is uniformly considered important, but 2) almost everyone has different definitions and objectives for water quality.

The WQWG is being asked to come up with a definition that is appropriate to the context of its discussions within the framework of SANDAG's Quality of Life Funding Strategy. The primary assumptions involved are that SANDAG is looking for help in defining infrastructure needs that are regional in nature and that currently lack a dedicated funding stream. The group began with a presentation by the County on the aspects of water quality that it included in its original proposal to SANDAG plus subsequent additions.

The initial proposal included:

- surface water/urban runoff quality
- ground water quality
- wetland/creek restoration (environmental component)
- education and outreach
- regional monitoring

In subsequent discussions, additional areas suggested included protection of reservoirs and integrating water quality with habitat and water supply.

Using these aspects as a starting point, WQWG members added for possible inclusion the following elements or aspects:

- Ocean water (such as bays, beaches, and estuaries)
- Protection of reservoirs, in terms of runoff from land surrounding reservoirs
- Recycled water
  - Have to consider if there is an existing funding stream
  - Stormwater capture could be considered recycled water
- Water conservation may contribute to water quality, but it has an existing funding stream
- Biota and habitat improvement, such as creek and wetlands restoration

Parameters were discussed in order to define what water quality aspects ought to be included. Some parameters considered in developing the definition include the following:

- Water supply and water quality may overlap and the line may be blurred
- The water quality need should be regional in nature:
  - Can only or most effectively be solved on a regional basis rather than municipally or locally
  - Needs to be attractive to individual jurisdictions to seek a regional solution rather than doing it on their own
  - Need to consider addressing/funding at the watershed scale
- Beneficial uses may be a helpful construct for defining needs
  - Federal Clean Water Act perspective
  - Specific uses for which we would want to use the water and whether those uses are impaired (e.g., swimmable, drinkable, fishable)
- Public perception of need/benefits will matter
  - For example, aesthetic and community benefits
  - How can water quality add value to those in the region

The group agreed that beneficial uses may be a useful way of organizing the group's thinking about water quality needs. Ms. Gaines asked if the initial list of needs combined with the ones suggested by the group could serve as a working definition going forward and the group agreed. The facilitator indicated this discussion did not need to be considered the final word and would probably be worth revisiting at a later point after the group develops criteria for prioritizing needs and objectives.

There was discussion as to what is meant by something being solved on a regional basis. The strongest argument for becoming a part of a SANDAG funding measure would be if it could only

be solved on a regional basis. A need that could most effectively be addressed on a regional basis could also be a strong argument. Given that there is interdependency among many elements, there could be a regional vision for water quality coupled with local solutions.

### **Water Quality Needs Assessment**

Ms. Gaines requested the WQWG's input as part of the needs assessment process. She introduced David Pohl from Weston Solutions, who will be helping with the needs analysis. The county is looking for stakeholders to help establish high priority goals and objectives for the region for water quality. Based on the feedback, the consultant will determine if enough funds can be generated through a variety of funding mechanisms or can we only do the top level programs. An initial report is due to SANDAG in September.

Ms. Gaines explained the needs assessment process and strategy in terms of the "Top-Down-Bottom-Up" approach that has been used. The County started the process in January and a report is due to SANDAG in September, but they have through 2012 to work on the process to refine goals and handle more of the details.

Mr. Pohl then presented a matrix, the purpose of which was to give the group a sense of the types and categories of water quality projects, but he indicated the list is a starting point. The matrix included surface water protection, groundwater protection and community amenities as categories and included projects such as stormwater infrastructure, low-impact development and land acquisition.

The group discussed whether groundwater protection includes well-head protection. The group considered whether the public would see a benefit in supporting private wells. A case for groundwater protection would be stronger than for well protection since it is for the public. Wells were included under groundwater protection because it is part of the overall supply and because groundwater contamination could be a potential water quality issue.

According to Mr. Pasek from the city of San Diego, few municipal wells currently exist, but more will be developed. They will be a component of the overall water supply. It is difficult to determine what funding will be available for municipal well projects. The available funding is for the infrastructure for treating the water, so water protection may not be covered.

### **Other Comments:**

- If we are focusing on beneficial uses, we should return to that framework.
- Comparing the previous and current discussion, the Needs Assessment seems to be more geared towards the experts.
- The beneficial use concept makes sense as being a part of the quality of life issues and for the SWG.

### *San Diego River Pilot Watershed*

Ms. Gaines explained that since there is a limited timeframe, the WQWG determined at the last meeting that it made sense to use data from other plans that have been put in place. In keeping with that approach, the County is proposing to use the San Diego River watershed as a pilot for the needs assessment because of the wealth of data about needs and projects already developed for that watershed, such as the Special Drainage Area reports. There are a lot of large-scale development projects for LID or regional water quality improvements in that watershed that can be extrapolated for the rest of the region.

Ms. McPherson described another body of work already developed that could be used, the IRWM Planning Process by the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG). The RWMG developed the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) to develop the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, which could be used by the WQWG. The RAC was a 4-year process, but the WQWG initially only has an 8-month window, so it helps to use existing plans and goals, such as the IRWMP.

### *Develop Goals & Objectives*

#### ***Review San Diego IRWM Goal Setting Process***

Ms. Gaines asked the group if based on the working definition of water quality developed by the WQWG, would any of the IRWM goals and objectives work for them? There was some discussion that the IRWM goals may be too broad, particularly as they relate to the protection, restoration, and maintenance of habitat and open space.

#### ***Review LA IRWMP Goal Setting Process***

Ms. Gaines presented the Los Angeles IRWM as another example. The Los Angeles IRWM was a stakeholder process with very detailed goals and objectives. She briefly reviewed the IRWM Planning Process and the goals and objectives that came out of it. She asked the group if they thought that information is pertinent to the WQWG?

The facilitator clarified that this group is not tasked with developing similar detailed plans. The purpose of the WQWG is to frame broad-level goals and objectives and to provide guidance to the QOL Stakeholder Working Group. These other plans are being used as examples because they have similar goals and objectives.

Ms. Gaines recommended everyone review the links and do some research, so they can discuss it more at the next meeting. Ms. McPherson said that the Los Angeles and San Diego plans have a list of projects that provide a scope of projects that could be considered. The projects may be updated this spring, so these projects are living documents.

#### ***Select representation for SWG)***

The facilitator asked that a SWG representative and alternative be selected, keeping in mind that the SWG meets on the third Wednesday each month. At the last meeting, Ms. Bauer from the Port of San Diego volunteered to be the acting SWG representative, but she encouraged others to

consider serving in that role. The representative needs to be a good resource and advocate, but most importantly a good representative of this group. Ms. Bauer suggested that Ms. Gaines would be a good selection.

The group agreed that someone from the county would be good for this role as well as someone with an understanding of regional management. The group understood that the county does not want to look like they are “running the show,” but they are in a good position to serve in that capacity. The facilitator asked the WQWG if they had any objections to Ms. Gaines serving as the SWG representative. There were no objections.

Mr. Stadler from the Water Authority volunteered to serve as an alternate. The alternate would attend as many of the WQWG meetings as possible and stay abreast of the issues. If Ms. Gaines cannot attend a SWG meeting, he would step in to represent the WQWG. There were no objections to Mr. Stadler being the SWG alternate representative, and Mr. Stadler accepted the role.

### **Prepare Alternative Funding Strategies/Mechanisms for presentation to SWG**

Ms. Gaines presented a list of funding mechanisms developed at an April 2009 SANDAG brainstorm session. The facilitator noted that Benefit Assessment District was missing from the list. Ms. Gaines asked the group if they wanted to have an interim meeting in early March to provide input to the March SWG meeting, which is dedicated to funding mechanisms. It was decided that it made more sense for the WQWG to provide input about funding mechanisms after it decides what is to be funded.

### **Wrap up/Next Steps**

Ms. Gaines said the next meeting will be a continuation of the discussion of goals and objectives and the needs assessment.