

County of San Diego Water Quality Working Group Meeting Summary

Thursday, May 27, 2010

Time: 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100, San Diego

Members Present

Michael Beck, Endangered Habitats League
Chris Cate, San Diego County Taxpayers Association
Chiara Clemente, Regional Water Quality Control Board
Stephanie Gaines, County of San Diego
Bill Harris, City of San Diego, Storm Water Department
Kris McFadden, City of San Diego
Tim Murphy, City of Carlsbad
Jeff Pasek, City of San Diego
Midori Wong, SANDAG

Supporting Roles

Michael Drennan, Weston Solutions
Lewis Michaelson, Katz & Associates
Danielle Thorsen, Katz & Associates

Introductions

The facilitator gave a brief overview of Working Quality Working Group's (WQWG) progress.

Meeting Summary

The facilitator asked for comments and clarifications on the April 2010 draft meeting summary. The meeting summary was approved by the members in attendance.

Needs Assessment Progress/Update

Draft Schedule

The facilitator reviewed the updated Needs Assessment Progress schedule. The report from the WQWG is not due to the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) until October, a month later than previously scheduled. The schedule change will allow the WQWG an additional month for finalizing the report. The group will still aim for completing the report in September.

With the extra month available, Ms. Gaines asked to involve the San Diego River Park Foundation and San Diego River Conservancy in the WQWG. These organizations could contribute to the community benefits and water quality portions of the needs assessment in support of the bottom-up approach.

Q: Where are we getting the data for the cost estimates?

A: The cost estimate is being developed based on the San Diego River as a pilot watershed. The only disadvantage to the San Diego River watershed as the pilot is that it does not have a lot of agriculture, but it does have some that can be generalized for the county. Based on this pilot, the group will make water quality assumptions regarding the physical, chemical, and biological makeup of the water in the watershed and what needs to be done to treat it. The data will come from these assumptions.

Q: Will you make the distinction that some pollutants come from urban land use?

A: No, we are not making the distinction for this cost estimate. Our concern is not how the pollutants arrived in the water.

Scaling Assumptions for Region

In the last meeting, the group discussed managing pollutants from the various land uses and using three sizes of BMPs: small, medium and regional. Since the intent of using the term “regional” referred to a large area rather than multiple jurisdictional solutions, the term “large” will be used in place of “regional.” Based on the group’s assumptions, Mr. Drennan proposed estimating the percentage of land use in a watershed to which each of the three BMP types would be applied in order to determine an overall cost estimate. While there may be certain cost efficiencies with large size BMPs, it was also acknowledged that there are a variety of limits on where they can be used. The group wanted to estimate the percentages of the various BMP sizes by looking at the watersheds and determining what was practically feasible.

The group considered the following issues in regards to the BMPs:

- Land use
 - Developed land
 - Cost estimates will be based on developed land
 - Undeveloped land
 - Cost estimates can be projected for future development from developed land calculations
 - Will not consider whether it is publicly or privately funded in the calculations
- Public vs. private funding
 - QOL aims to find what needs public funding for public benefit
 - Assume that private development would pay for development-related water quality costs
- Compliance
 - Some water quality programs may be subsidized for compliance
 - Other programs may have to meet compliance regulations that are not subsidized, creating additional costs

The City of San Diego will share with the WQWG their estimated costs and data for meeting compliance for the next 20 years for their watersheds for which they have that data, e.g., Chollas Creek. The group agreed that a subcommittee of County consultants can meet with the City separate from the regularly scheduled WQWG meetings to review the City's data. WQWG members are welcome to attend. Mr. Harris said the City could also determine how to divide the BMP types in individual watersheds based on water quality needs, land use and feasibility.

Members suggested allocating large-scale BMPs to the watersheds within San Diego County to see how many can be done within the parameters as well as to look at examples of large-scale BMPs implemented in watersheds outside of San Diego County. Some benefits and problems considered with large-scale BMPs are as follows:

- Have better treatment function
- May be more cost effective
- Finding opportunities and sufficient land for these projects can be difficult
- Have more cost benefits, such as recreation, based on the L.A. report
- Not the only solution to water quality problems
- May be more predictable in determining cost

Some benefits considered with medium-scale BMPs are as follows:

- May be more feasible than large BMPs for the existing pattern of development in San Diego County and the consequent problems

Some benefits and problems considered with small-scale BMPs are as follows:

- May be more applicable in areas that are already highly developed
- Where small scale refers to the household level, difficult and costly to gain compliance from individuals

The group also discussed what they would like incorporated in the report:

- Develop a range of percentages for the land use for each type of BMP
- Factor in how other watersheds are different from the San Diego watersheds when scaling up
- For the validity of the report, mention open space (although cost does not need to be determined) to show that all relevant land uses were considered
- Divide the watersheds in San Diego County into three categories:
 - San Diego River Class
 - San Luis Rey Class
 - Pueblo Class
- Look at where land is and is not available and where facilities could be developed, similar to the Los Angeles report
- Determine not only the cost of the projects, but also the benefits
- Show the process behind developing the numbers

- Acknowledge that water quality is a big problem so the cost may be high
- Provide next steps in tackling water quality issues
- Include in the appendix the quantity of large-scale BMPs to be implemented
- Perform a cost per unit reduction for each BMP
 - Distinguish between holistic benefits and pollutant removal so the cost to comply is clear
 - Mr. Drennan said they are not scoped to do a cost-benefit analysis, but they can reference the cost of other watersheds
 - Categorize the analysis by first identifying source control options, then treatment control BMPs, and then programs
 - Estimate the cost for individual BMPs

Q: For the three sizes of BMPs, do you have to estimate their distribution within the watershed?

A: We don't have to estimate their distribution, but simply using one type of BMP won't provide as realistic estimate as we can to SANDAG.

Q: If you developed three cost estimates for each BMP at 100%, would that show you what is most cost effective?

A: It would show what is the most expensive, but not how cost effective it is.

Q: How does this interface with the requirements for new development and redevelopment?

A: We are making assumptions based on urban and agriculture land use since they are more likely to use certain BMPs.

Q: How many watersheds are we going to select?

A: We will start with the San Diego River Watershed and will use existing plans for the other watersheds.

Q: Are the BMPs all structural, or are non-structural BMPs included?

A: The treatment range for each type of BMP will be defined in the analysis.

Workshop Process for June Meeting / Project Examples

For the next meeting Ms. Gaines asked members to bring examples of water quality projects that they would like funded. The examples should include descriptions, images (~2 MB JPEGs) and cost estimates, if possible. Project suggestions may vary in size, cost and benefits and may be combined with other projects to meet WQWG objectives. The group will determine which elements of these projects they would like included in the needs assessment report to present to the SWG. Ms. Gaines presented a few example projects to give the members a feel for what they are looking for.

Based on the example projects presented, the group discussed the feasibility and costs of implementing some of the strategies in San Diego, such as concrete removal, rapid indicators, and education and outreach to various groups, such as local farmers. Special studies may be helpful to determine which strategies would be beneficial.

Mr. Beck presented to the group a large-scale example project for the El Monte Valley Nature Park concept plan. The project's two primary objectives are to restore a major habitat and to reclaim water for potable use. In reference to the water quality benefit, there is very little development in El Monte Valley and the immediate watershed for the area is quite small, so the water quality benefit is not as significant as it would be for other locations.

SWG Proposed Criteria and WQWG Planning Framework Comparison

The facilitator reviewed the draft threshold and evaluation criteria for prioritization developed by the SWG at its last meeting. The SWG criteria are still undergoing revisions and may be refined more by the SWG at its next meeting.

Although the criteria should be considered by the WQWG in planning, the WQWG should not be constrained by them. While unfunded mandates are a key threshold criterion from the SWG's perspective, the WQWG can consider whether there is anything the region should care about in respect to water quality that isn't mandated. The SWG believes proposed projects must be specific enough so that voters understand the value of what they would be paying for, but flexible enough to address future demands.

The group received a framework developed by Stephanie Gaines comparing the framework developed by the WQWG with the SWG draft criteria. With this comparison, the group can evaluate and ensure that the WQWG projects and guiding principles are in line with the SWG criteria. When comparing the two, the only criterion that has not been fully addressed by the WQWG is Operation & Maintenance. A framework comparison is not necessary to include in the needs assessment, but it is a good exercise to demonstrate that the SWG funding criteria have been considered.

Q: Is the SWG's first threshold criterion talking about the same unfunded mandates that the Board of Unfunded Mandates determined with regard to NPDES stormwater requirements? Does it have to be a regulatory mandate?

A: No, the Board of Unfunded Mandates language came out after the whole Quality of Life process. It does not have to be a regulatory mandate.

Q: Do the working groups have a say in the SWG criteria?

A: Representatives from each group can provide their feedback within the larger SWG group. The WQWG has a strong nexus to the SWG process since it was created in response to the SWG and can fashion their criteria to meet the needs of the SWG.

Next Steps

For next month's meeting, the WQWG will hold a workshop reviewing potential projects. Due to scheduling conflicts, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 29, from 10 a.m. to noon. [After the May 27 meeting, the group corresponded with each other to extend the June 29 meeting time from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.] The date and place for the subcommittee meeting with the City and County of San Diego representatives will be determined by the subcommittee members.

Since the SWG is not meeting in August, the WQWG meeting schedule will be changed to now meet in July and go dark in August. The July meeting will tentatively take place on Tuesday, July 20, from 10 a.m. to noon.