

Borrego Springs Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Community Meeting Summary

March 16, 2018, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Steele Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center
401 Tilting T Drive, Borrego Springs, CA 92004-2098

- **GSP Advisory Committee Present:** Rebecca Falk, Bill Berkely, Gina Moran, Jim Wilson, Dave Duncan, Ryan Hall, Jim Seley, Diane Johnson
- **GSP Core Team:** Geoff Poole, Beth Hart, Lyle Brecht, Leanne Crow, Julia Chase
- **GSP Consultant, Dudek:** Trey Driscoll
- **Borrego Water District (BWD) Board:** (Quorum Present) Joe Tutusko, Ray Delehay, Lyle Brecht, Harry Ehrlich
- **LeSar Development Consultants:** Rachel Ralston
- **Center for Collaborative Policy:** Meagan Wylie
- **Members of the Public:** 102 attendees
- Interpretation/translation services provided by the Borrego Water District

GSP Background and Process

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

- SGMA signed into law Jan. 1, 2015.
- All groundwater basins have to achieve sustainability by specific dates depending on overdraft level.
- The need is to reduce collective pumping in the basin. All pumpers over 2 acre-feet of water per year have to collectively reduce by 70% by 2040.
- There are potential adverse impacts if the area does not substantially adjust water use. Those who live and work in Borrego Springs prefer to decide how to manage water use to achieve sustainability.
- BWD and the County of San Diego (the GSP Core Team) are currently developing the GSP to bring the basin into sustainable use.
- The GSP is in development and a draft will be released in December. Community input sessions will take place on an ongoing basis to solicit feedback on draft plan components.
- The Borrego Water District received a Proposition 1 grant to assist with identifying socioeconomic concerns and potential impacts within the Borrego area. This is the first meeting to begin the outreach process.

Community Input/Listening Session

Summary of Issues and Concerns	
Topic	Clarifications / Additional Information
Rising water rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees for residential use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water rates/usage related to homeownership and landscaping ○ There should be state and local assistance to switch to desert landscaping • Business concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water rates increases operational costs for businesses and organizations potentially impacting donations • Rates should be subject to consumption increase; those using more should pay more • Increased EDU rates (sewer)
Economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job loss due to sustainability measures, e.g., agriculture, golf course reductions • Economic viability of town in the face of reductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Businesses ○ Residential population ○ Home values
Land use designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify alternate land uses for major economic shifts such as large percentage of agricultural land being fallowed
Water use allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of water to subdivided lots that are not yet developed • Golf course water usage • Historic usage percentages (70% agriculture, 20% golf course, 10% municipal) are not sustainable – reconsider these allocation percentages when developing GSP • Establish a baseline in acre feet per year within Borrego Springs first and then consider allocations for other water users
Sustainability strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring water in to Borrego through “primary water” strategies • Intra-basin transfers are being considered • Careful planning for rollout of reductions will be important to GSP success
Water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about nitrate levels in aquifer
Environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with wildlife loss due to critical overdraft • Concerns with dust due to ongoing drought and land use changes
GSP development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate representation in GSP outcomes in all facets of the Borrego community, including small businesses, tourism industry, and residents • Careful consideration of timing for fee increases will be important • Balance economic and community impacts of the GSP in Borrego
Community meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for Spanish interpretation and translation at all community meetings

Additional Comments Received (Comment Cards, Emails, Etc.)

Issue/Concern	Additional Details
GSP development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community should be involved with development decisions • Climate change needs to be figured into the recharge estimates • Considering imposing a limited moratorium on residential development • Country Club Heights / DS-24, also known as “Rudyville” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subdivided lots not yet developed potentially receiving water allocations • Adequate representation of rate-payers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern that rate payers are not being given adequate representation nor credit for their combined financial investment and role in the economy of the community, and how that might play out in the decisions being made in terms of water allocation and price (including EDUs and “add ons”), property valuation, and the future viability of the residential and small business/nonprofit sector, which includes retirees, middle-class and part-time workers, second home buyers, winter residents, and tourists, among others. ○ The Borrego Springs economy is already tenuous due to climate, extreme seasonality, low year-round population, cost of utilities, limited jobs, etc., which only adds to the concerns related to water and SGMA stated above.
Sustainability strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I attended last Monday’s meeting and wanted to follow up my question with some background info. Through a broker, Rick Vesce, discussions took place with the farmers whether they would be willing to fallow their agricultural land if it would be zoned for solar parks. There seemed to be interest with the farmers but the BWD gave no positive signals at the time. Today I could see a compromise solution whereby enough agricultural land is fallowed to eliminate the overdraft. The fallowed land could then be used for solar either by the farmers PPA with SDGE) or bought by the municipality for producing its own electricity. Several municipalities in California have chosen to become their own utility. High electricity rates are like water rates the second curse for lower income residents in Borrego, particularly in summer. • Another solution to the overdraft was proposed by Jim Engelke, an architect and environmental consultant. He proposed to drill a few groundwater wells along the riverbed in Coyote Canyon, install pumps powered by a small solar array. They would simply pump water into the riverbed and feed and replenish thereby the Borrego aquifer. I think it would be worth while to reach out to Jim and get more info about this possible solution.
Community meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include community meeting ground rules in all noticing/agenda packets, e.g., 3-minute max for preparing comments

Next Steps

- Summary of outreach presented at BWD annual town hall meeting on March 28, 2018 at 4 p.m. and to the GSP Advisory Committee the following day, March 29, 2018 at 10 a.m.
 - Visit <http://www.bvgsp.org/sustainability-plan.html> for more information
- Socioeconomic data gathering and analysis to commence in March 2018.
- Community engagement strategy and materials development commencing in May 2018.
- Draft GSP issued in December 2018.
- Community engagement for feedback on draft GSP to begin after draft plan release.

Contact Information for Additional Feedback

Name, Title	Email	Phone
Rachel Ralston, LeSar Development Consultants	rachel@lesardevelopment.com	619.549.2584
Esmeralda Garcia, Borrego Water District	esmeralda@borregowd.org	760.767.5806
Dave Duncan, GSP Advisory Committee	daveduncan@earthlink.net	none