

**Borrego Water District
MINUTES
Conservation
Standing Committee
Wednesday, June 4, 2008
9:00 a.m.
806 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004**

Attendance: Directors: Shimeall, Smiley
Staff: Richard Williamson, General Manager
 Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
 Wendy Quinn, Recording Secretary
Public: Greg Stumpf Ronald Del Guercio
 Jim Engelke Marshal Brecht
 Bob McKee Beth Hart
 Lane Sharman, BWX Ron Del Guercio
 Connie Smith, BSUSD

Director Shimeall reported that a school assembly would probably be held on Friday, and awards presented for students' posters, essays and PowerPoint presentations related to water conservation. The District is providing cash prizes. She suggested inviting the winners to the next Board meeting.

Connie Smith reported that the elementary school is nearing the close of its poster contest, the middle school is working on essays and high school students are preparing PowerPoint presentations. The School District plans to select a teacher next year for the Water Education for Teachers (WET) program in Tucson. They are also working with a landscaper to remove at least half of their turf in front of the high school.

1. REPORT ON WATER USE TRENDS AT BWD

- Annual
- May 2008 to May 2007

Rich Williamson noted that the report on water use trends was presented at the last Board meeting. Jerry Rolwing distributed the draft reports. Mr. Williamson requested that the next draft include data for May 2008 so they can be compared to May 2007. He further suggested separating the statistics from irrigation meters, and Mr. Rolwing agreed to investigate. Director Smiley questioned why the 2007 usage appeared lower than what was reported in the 2002 Groundwater Management Plan, despite growth. Mr. Rolwing will look into it. Director Smiley pointed out that a subtotal for irrigation and landscaping was not provided, and Mr. Rolwing agreed to adjust the figures.

2. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Letter of request from Jim Wilson, President, Board of Directors of Christmas Circle Community Park, for \$1,330 for removing 1,330 square feet of grass, per BWD Conservation Management Plan

Director Smiley expressed support for a reimbursement to Christmas Circle for turf removal, but wanted to ensure the sprinklers had also been removed or adjusted so there

would be water saved. Jim Engelke questioned whether the rebate could be offered, since commercial establishments are not subject to tiered rates. Mr. Williamson explained that the incentive program and the tiered rates are two separate components of the Conservation Management Plan. Bob McKee expressed concern that residential customers would be paying for conservation incentives to commercial entities via tiered rates. Mr. Williamson replied that tiered rates are not expected to generate much revenue. Any that is realized will be used to offset the conservation incentive cost, but most will be funded from the capital budget. Director Smiley supported the rebate for Christmas Circle if they can demonstrate reduced water use, and Beth Hart suggested inviting representatives to a Committee or Board meeting. Mr. Rolwing agreed to contact them. Mr. Williamson recommended that staff meet with representatives of Christmas Circle and bring back information for the next Board meeting. Greg Stumpf noted that Christmas Circle was also seeking financial help with their irrigation system improvements. Mr. Williamson suggested the District could assist them in exchange for use of park space to display water conservation educational material. Mr. Rolwing pointed out that \$15,000 had been earmarked for conservation efforts, and assistance to Christmas Circle would be good public relations. Lane Sharman suggested that the District review plans for the system improvements before offering funding.

Ms. Hart reported that The Springs golf course was planning to remove some turf and asked whether they would be eligible for a rebate. Mr. Williamson explained a similar situation at De Anza golf course, where he proposed to offer credits which could be sold to a developer as mitigation. Since it is uncertain whether the County would recognize the credits, Mr. Sharman recommended that the District approach the County with a recognition request.

Director Shimeall pointed out that it is less expensive for developers to pay the District's preservation fee than to fallow farmland. Mr. Williamson concurred, and noted that all District fees would be reviewed and restructured as appropriate during the coming year.

Mr. Sharman suggested that the Committee present a package of recommended rebates to the Board every 90 days in order to streamline the application approval process.

Mr. Stumpf pointed out that the District offered rebates for turf removal without specifying that water savings must be demonstrated. Mr. Williamson suggested simply asking how much turf was removed and what it was replaced with, then assuming water would be saved. Ron Del Guercio stated that he was removing turf and replacing it with desert landscaping, but couldn't quantify the water savings. Mr. Sharman suggested checking to see how districts in Nevada handle their turf removal rebates. Mr. Stumpf asked whether a rebate application form was available, and Mr. Williamson replied that one would be prepared. The program doesn't actually begin until July 1. Mr. Rolwing suggested putting the application form on the District web site. Mr. Williamson agreed to have a proposed application form and instructions available for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

Director Shimeall recalled that Mr. Engelke had inquired about low flow toilet rebates for a church and was told they were not available to commercial customers. However, with the tentative approval of the turf removal rebate for Christmas Circle, it should be reconsidered. Mr. Williamson pointed out that the program is evolving, and Director Smiley agreed that a rebate for the church should be considered.

Mr. McKee asked whether a home buyer is obligated to continue conservation practices implemented by the seller. It was the consensus of the group that he/she would not.

- Letter from Margaret Lacey Schneider requesting credit for removing 38,500 square feet of lawn, per BWD Conservation Management Plan

Director Shimeall understood that Margaret Lacey Schneider, who was requesting credit for removing 38,500 square feet of lawn, owned several properties. Is the rebate limit per home or per customer? It was the consensus that the limit was 2,500 square feet per residence. Mr. Rolwing agreed to respond.

Ms. Hart pointed out that if a Tier 2 customer reduces usage by 10 percent and qualifies for Tier 1, they may be back in Tier 2 the following year if they are unable to conserve more. Mr. Williamson and Mr. Rolwing agreed that more detailed policies need to be established, and some issues will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Stumpf urged the District to consider lot size in assessing tiered rates. Mr. Rolwing suggested if a customer reduces water usage by 30 percent in one year, he/she would qualify for Tier 1 for the next three years. He further pointed out that the four-year average, which is the basis for calculating the ten percent reduction to get into Tier 1, would continually decrease with conservation efforts so the ten percent amount would decrease as well.

Mr. Del Guercio reported he was having difficulty locating a landscaper to modify his yard. Mr. Williamson suggested the District issue an RFP, check references and maintain a list of contractors. Mr. Rolwing added that the District could provide training and certification. Ms. Hart suggested training also be provided to customers and gardeners, who often over-water.

- Status of Tiered Rate Proposal

Mr. Williamson reported the revised tiered rate proposal is going through the Proposition 218 process. So far there have been no protests. Board action is scheduled for the last meeting in June.

- Discussion of public outreach option/FYE 2009 budget

Mr. Williamson reported that next year's budget proposal includes \$324,000 for Water Conservation Program Implementation, including conservation investment subsidies. Funds are also proposed for investigation into a sustainable water supply. Copies of the proposed budget are available for public review, and comments are welcome. Mr. Del Guercio asked whether there was written information available on the sustainable water supply issue, and Mr. Williamson replied that Bill Mills is working on a plan, which should be available by the end of the month.

3. REPORT ON SEMINAR AT JOSHUA TREE REGARDING IRRIGATION SYSTEMS – JERRY ROLWING

Mr. Rolwing reported on a recent seminar he attended, organized by a group of high desert water agencies. He distributed a list of web sites providing information on water conservation. The workshop included advice on conservation and equipment. Mr. Rolwing suggested BWD consider a similar event, perhaps with the assistance of an irrigation consultant as the Joshua Tree group did. Director Smiley noted that March 9 through 15, 2009 is National Groundwater Awareness Week, which might be a good time. Director Shimeall pointed out that many people do their planting in the fall, so it was the consensus that November would be better. Mr. Rolwing will start the planning process. Mr. McKee asked that the web site for the Tamarisk Coalition be added to the list of sites. Mr. Rolwing circulated some brochures from the seminar, and Director Shimeall suggested including some in future billings.

4. **PROGRESS REPORT ON CIMIS STATION IN BORREGO**

Mr. Rolwing reported that the CIMIS site is presently down. Sergio Fierro of the State Department of Water Resources visited last week, and Mr. Rolwing is trying to reach him.

5. **NATIONAL GROUNDWATER AWARENESS WEEK – MARCH 9-15, 2009**

Information on National Groundwater Awareness Week was included in the Agenda Package.

6. **UPDATE ON NATIONAL/REGIONAL WATER CONSERVATION ISSUES AND PROGRAMS**

Mr. Williamson noted there has been much publicity lately regarding water issues, and focus on the "water footprint," or how much water it takes to produce certain items. Director Shimeall reported that the State Water Project has reduced its allotments to 35 percent of the former level.

7. **CLOSING**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m. The next Conservation Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 2, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.