

**MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP
BORREGO SPRINGS INTERIM WATERMASTER
Meeting Conducted Virtually via GoToMeeting
Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 2:00 p.m.**

I. Opening Procedures

- Andy Malone (Lead Technical Consultant, Borrego Springs Watermaster) called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.
- Mr. Malone called roll and confirmed that five out of the six Environmental Working Group (EWG) Members were present at the start of the meeting. The following individuals were present at the meeting:

Environmental Working Group Members	Jim Bennett, County of San Diego (and Watermaster Board Member)
	Mark Jorgensen, Community Rep. (and Watermaster Board Member)
	Danny McCamish, Senior Environmental Scientist for the Colorado Desert District of California State Parks
	John Peterson, retired County Groundwater Geologist, California Professional Geologist and Certified Hydrogeologist
	Dr. Michael Wells, retired District Superintendent for the Colorado Desert District of California State Parks (arrived at 9:48 am)
Watermaster Staff	Samantha Adams, Executive Director (West Yost)
	Andy Malone, Lead Technical Consultant (West Yost)
Others Present	Leanne Crow (Board Alternate) – County of San Diego
	Trey Driscoll, Dudek

- *EWG Meeting Guidelines.* Mr. Malone covered the guidelines for Committee meetings, which specify that (a) Committee meetings are open to the public and (b) public comments are allowed during the public comment period at the beginning and end of each EWG meeting.

II. Public Comments

No public comments.

III. Topics of Interest for the Environmental Working Group

Mr. Malone reviewed the updated table which described: potential EWG topics to address; the relevance of the topic to the Watermaster’s mission; how the EWG could be involved or engaged in the topic; potential cooperating entities and supporting resources; the EWG ranking of the topics by relative importance; and the EWG members interests and/or expertise in each topic. Mr. Malone explained that the table is to be used to help prepare a recommended scope-of-work and budget for WY 2022. The top-ranked topics were:

1. **Biological Restoration.** Biological restoration could be a solution for addressing potential adverse impacts associated with fallowing agricultural lands, such as air-quality degradation, invasive species growth, and abandoned wells.

2. **Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs)**. More study may be necessary to determine if historical GDEs are still dependent on groundwater, or not.

IV. Develop a Recommended Scope-Of-Work and Budget for the EWG for WY 2022

A discussion amongst the EWG members ensued, mainly focused on Biological Restoration of fallowed lands. The topics of discussion included:

- What constitutes biological restoration vs. stabilization of the land?
- Various strategies for biological restoration and stabilization, including seeding, planting, watering, wind breaks, shade cloth, mulching, control of invasive species, among other strategies.
- It was universally agreed that biological restoration will be expensive and that outside funding will likely be necessary for implementation. There was discussion on forming a mitigation bank where developers that would impact desert habitat could participate in a mitigation bank that would support biological restoration in Borrego Springs.
- Some parcels will have a higher “biological value” compared to other parcels, and that EWG efforts could be to identify and rank those parcels of high biological value. An initial GIS analysis was discussed as an appropriate start.
- John Peterson suggested an EWG field trip to view the existing and potential future fallowed lands.

Mr. Malone informed the group that, based on the feedback received, he would prepare a scope-of-work and budget, and circulate via “Reply All” email to gain a consensus for a EWG recommendation for the Board.

V. Public Comments (time permitting)

- No public comments.

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Malone adjourned the meeting at about 3:56 p.m.