

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP
BORREGO SPRINGS WATERMASTER
In-Person Meeting at Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center
Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

I. Opening Procedures

- Andy Malone (Technical Consultant, Borrego Springs Watermaster) called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- Mr. Malone confirmed that three of the six Environmental Working Group (EWG) members were present at the start of the meeting. Jim Dice, Danny McCamish, and Dr. Michael Wells were not in attendance. In attendance at the meeting were the following individuals:

Environmental Working Group Members	Jim Bennett, County of San Diego (and Watermaster Board Member)
	Mark Jorgensen, Community Rep. (and Watermaster Board Member)
	John Peterson, retired County Groundwater Geologist, California Professional Geologist and Certified Hydrogeologist (and TAC member)
Watermaster Staff	Andy Malone, Watermaster Technical Consultant (West Yost)
Others Present	Travis Brooks, Land IQ
	Stephanie Tillman, Land IQ
	Melissa Riedel-Lehrke, Land IQ
	Jim Dax
	Geoff Poole, BWD general manager
	Diane Johnson, BWD Board member

I. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

II. Biological Restoration of Fallowed Lands

A. Task 3 – Brush Pile Wildlife Sand Fence Case Study

Travis Brooks (Land IQ) provided a status update on Task 3 of the Restoration of Fallowed Farmlands project, which is to conduct studies on the effectiveness of various restoration techniques to minimize airborne dust emissions (*e.g.* as sand fences) and promote revegetation of native plant species. Mr. Brooks described that work to construct the sand fences is in progress by the subcontractor, Jake Fredericks.

There are four types of sand fences that are being constructed for monitoring and evaluation at two land parcels located in the North Management Area:

- Mulch strips
- Scattered trees

- Tree fences
- Traditional sand fences

Two types of monitoring devices are being installed (upwind and downwind of the sand fences):

- Erosion pins
- Dust collectors

UCI staff and students will be performing the monitoring and data analysis.

B. Task 4 – Farmland Fallowing Rehabilitation Strategies

Travis Brooks (Land IQ) provided a status update on Task 4 of the Restoration of Fallowed Farmlands project—Farmland Fallowing Rehabilitation Strategies. The objectives of this task are to utilize the information obtained in Tasks 1 to 3 to recommend the most effective fallow strategies across the Basin.

Prior to the EWG meeting, a draft report on fallowing recommendations was distributed to the EWG for review and comment. Key findings were presented at the meeting. Each of the fallowing strategies explored in Task 3 was evaluated in Task 4. Mr. Brooks reviewed a “decision tree” for fallowing strategies that considered: dust control effectiveness, time and effort to install, cost, visibility, suitability for key environmental conditions identified in Task 2, and biological benefits such as wildlife protection and habitat. Mr. Brooks also reviewed a matrix of pros and cons for each fallowing strategy.

Discussion ensued on various strategies to accelerate biological restoration, including: flood irrigation to flush soil salinity; removal of invasive species, and plantings with startup irrigation. Discussion also focused on the feasibility and the associated costs of such strategies. Mr. Jorgensen stressed that removal of invasive species would likely be necessary no matter what strategy is employed, and that planting of rye grasses (and other non-native plant species) should be removed from the Watermaster’s “minimum fallowing standards” in the Judgment.

The EWG has the opportunity to provide written comments on the draft Task 4 report through December 13, 2024 and should meet in January 2025 to discuss the comments and feedback with Land IQ. The draft Task 4 report is available for review and comment via a Google Doc:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/14d8lIbsTg6sCQCqwFJmmsrtet_c8Lxi6LZNxjYbelu4/edit?usp=sharing

Mr. Brooks offered support to EWG members for their review using the following contact information: tbrooks@landiq.com; 310-266-4627.

III. Field Tour

- A.** The meeting shifted to a tour of the BWD parcel to observe the progress of sand fence construction and installation of monitoring equipment. Three of the four sand fence types were observed and discussed: mulch rows, scattered trees, and tree fences. The two monitoring techniques were observed and discussed: erosion pins and dust collectors.

Mr. Brooks also explained some of the schedule delays that are being encountered with the construction of the sand fences.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at the conclusion of the field tour at about 12:00 p.m.