MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP
BORREGO SPRINGS WATERMASTER
Meeting Conducted Virtually via GoToMeeting
Thursday, June 12, 2025, 4:00 p.m.

I. Opening Procedures

- Andy Malone (Technical Consultant, Borrego Springs Watermaster) called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- Each EWG member gave a short bio to the other meeting attendees, followed by the Master's students from the University of California, Irvine (UCI).
- Mr. Malone confirmed that five of the six Environmental Working Group (EWG) members were present at the start of the meeting. Dr. Michael Wells was not in attendance. In attendance at the meeting were the following individuals:

Environmental Working Group Members	Jim Bennett, County of San Diego (Watermaster Board Member)
	Mark Jorgensen, Community Rep. (Watermaster Board Member)
	Danny McCamish, Senior Environmental Scientist for the Colorado Desert District of California State Parks
	Jim Dice, Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center
	John Peterson, retired County Groundwater Geologist, California Professional Geologist and Certified Hydrogeologist (and TAC member)
Watermaster Staff	Andy Malone, West Yost (Watermaster Technical Consultant)
	Lauren Salberg, West Yost (Watermaster Staff)
Others Present	Travis Brooks (Land IQ)
	Diane Johnson (Borrego Water District)
	Gina Moran (Borrego Water District)
	Ciara Cipponeri (UCI)
	Justin Felder (UCI)
	David Garmon (Tubb Canyon Desert Conservancy)
	Laurel Brigham (UCI)
	Martha Gonzalez (UCI)
	Nikki Fiore (UCI)
	Tory Jaimez (UCI)
	Geoff Poole (Borrego Water District)
	Trey Driscoll (Intera)

II. Public Comments

Public comment was made by David Garmon. Comments included:

- Recommendation that the EWG review the final report on the Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE) project. The GDE study is largely a biological study more appropriate for the EWG than the Technical Advisory Committee to review.
- Recommendation that the scope of work to review the GDE study and determine next steps be performed with more urgency, instead of spreading the work out over water years (WY) 2026-2027.

III. Biological Restoration of Fallowed Lands - Findings from the Monitoring of the Experimental Sand Fences on Fallowed Farmlands in the North Management Area (UCI Presentation)

UCI Students from the Masters in Conservation and Resource (MCRS) Program (Martha, Ciara, Tory, and Justin) gave a presentation on the methods, results, and conclusions from Experimental Sand Fences on Fallowed Farmlands project and final report.

In summary, the study concluded that the fallowing treatments that were most effective at controlling wind erosion, minimizing dust emissions, and promoting biological restoration were the Tree Fences and Scattered Trees (compared to the Mulch Rows and Sand Fences). However, longer term monitoring is recommended to confirm these conclusions. The Tree Fences and Scattered Trees were also identified as the most cost-effective treatments.

During and following the presentation, EWG discussion included:

- The cost estimates for each treatment method on Slide 31 of the presentation.
- If there were more time and funding, it would be interesting to study combinations of the treatments (*e.g.,* tree fences along the boundaries of the parcel and scattered trees within the interior).
- Desire to extend the monitoring period to gather more information on the long-term results of the sand fence treatments. Geoff Poole (BWD) noted that the BWD is considering funding for ongoing monitoring of the sand fence treatments to further evaluate the fallowing options and is working with UCI to prepare a scope of work.
- The study did not include any offsite study locations to evaluate seedling responses in different environments (*e.g.,* wetter conditions).
- What the soil salinity measurements represent.
- Praise from the EWG for the UCI students and their work performed.
- UCI MCRS students thanked the EWG for their time and attention to the project.
- When asked if any of the findings from the UCI MCRS projects would cause Land IQ to change any recommendations from their final report entitled *Recommended Retired Farmland Rehabilitation Strategies,*[1] Travis Brooks (Land IQ) replied "no."
- The next EWG meeting is scheduled for August. The main agenda item is to develop recommendations for the Board based on the results of the *Biological Restoration of Fallowed Lands* project.

[1] Available on the Watermaster's website at: https://borregospringswatermaster.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Task04-05-Retired-Farmland-Strategies-and-Prioritization-2025-03-31.pdf

IV. Public Comments

Public comment was made by Diane Johnson:

- There could be opportunity for citizen scientists to support the ongoing monitoring of the sand fence treatments, although there is some complication because the experiments are on private property.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.