

MEETING SUMMARY

CV-SALTS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE POLICY (TELECONFERENCE) SESSION NOTES – SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 9-11:45 AM

PREPARED FOR: Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority (KRWCA)

PREPARED BY: Stephanie Tillman/Land IQ

DATE: September 18, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this meeting summary is to document the presentation and discussion items from the September 17, 2020 CV-SALTS Executive Committee Policy Session. The main purpose of this meeting was to update the committee on the CV-SALTS basin plan amendments implementation status, Management Zone developments, the Lower San Joaquin River water quality objective setting process (in relation to the P&O study), and public education and outreach committee activities.

BACKGROUND

Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) is a collaborative stakeholder driven and managed program to develop sustainable salinity and nitrate management planning for the Central Valley. The goals of CV-SALTS are as follows:

- Sustain the Valley's lifestyle
- Support regional economic growth
- Retain a world-class agricultural economy
- Maintain a reliable, high-quality urban water supply
- Protect and enhance the environment

CV-SALTS includes four working groups:

1. Technical
2. Public Education and Outreach
3. Economic Social Cost
4. Other (CEQA, policy development, etc.)

ACRONYMS

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| AID – Alta Irrigation District Archetype | NIMS – Nitrate Implementation Measures Study |
| ACP – Alternative Compliance Program | OAL – Office of Administrative Law |
| BP – Basin Plan | OPP – Office of Public Participation |
| BPTC – Best Practicable Treatment and Control | P&O Study – Prioritization and Optimization Study |
| EAP – Early Action Plan | SGMA – Sustainable Groundwater Management Act |
| GSA – Groundwater Sustainability Agency | SMCL – Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level |
| IAZ – Initial Analysis Zone | SNMP – Salt and Nutrient Management Plan |
| ICM – Initial Conceptual Model | SSALTS – Strategic Salt Accumulation Land and Transport Study |
| ILRP – Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program | WQO – Water Quality Objective |
| LSJR – Lower San Joaquin River | |
| MUN – Municipal beneficial use | |
| MZ – MZ | |

SUMMARY AND RELEVANCE TO KRWCA

- **Basin Plan Amendments – Update and Implementation (Anne Walters)** – The public comment period on the Staff Report and revised Basin Plan language closes on October 19. USEPA approval is still pending. Salinity control program notices to comply will likely be sent out during the end of October/early November timeframe. A Regional Board hearing is planned for Dec 10 and 11, 2020 to adopt the BPA language.
- **Management Zone (MZ) Pilot Study Projects (Daniel Cozad) – Project Update** – Management Zones are in various stages of decision making for governance, funding, organization, technical consulting, etc. Documentation of MZ meetings (meeting notes and participants) are posted on the CVSC website.
- **Prioritization and Optimization Study** – Tom Grovhoug (Larry Walker & Associates) gave a presentation on the LSJR water quality objective (AGR) setting process. Bobbi Larsen (Sommach, Simmons and Dunn) facilitated a discussion on potential questions the Executive Committee would have to address to set WQOs for agriculture. The possibility of using the LSJR approach was discussed. Since the P&O Study workplan includes using archetypes, the decision process for selecting those archetypes was discussed, including timeframe and selection criteria. Committee participants will receive materials for a discussion at the October meeting; planning for decisions to be made at November meeting.
- **Public Education and Outreach Committee (Daniel Cozad)** – Reminder to fill out outreach matrix. A webinar on the salt control program is planned for Tuesday December 15, 2020 (half day). Notice for the webinar will go out with the notices to comply.

MEETING NOTES

BASIN PLAN AMENDMENTS – IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE - ANNE WALTERS (REGIONAL WATER BOARD)

- Nitrate notice to comply in Priority 1 areas – status update
 - USEPA meeting planned for end of September to get final USEPA approval
- Notices to comply for salinity – likely end of October/beginning of November timeframe
- Update on 12-month BPA and nitrate early action plans
 - Agenda has link to hearing notice (December)
 - Agenda also has links to proposed BPA, draft staff report, and comment/response matrix
 - Comment period ends Oct. 19
 - Most comments were addressed and not unreasonable
 - EJ community asked for some provisions over and above what State Board required, but Regional Board is keeping with State Board requirements and recommendations

MANAGEMENT ZONE – STATUS UPDATE – DANIEL COZAD AND MZ SUPPORT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Collaborative between private and non-profit (addressed in last meeting)
- All MZs have contracts in place for development of EAPs and preliminary proposals
- Coordination for sampling for all water contaminants
- Regional Board gave presentation on wastewater consolidation program and funding opportunities
- Next steps for most groups will be to finalize governance
- Equitable cost allocations will be next issue
- Website includes notes and participants for each MZ (maintained by Charles from Catalyst)
- More outreach activities are beginning
- Some MZs had reviewed Office of Public Participation’s guidelines
- Division of drinking water working on technical guidance to help MZs know the difference between the Division of Drinking Water and division of funding assistance; also putting together guidance on fill stations, point of entry, etc. but may not be done in time for the first of the Early Action Plans

PRIORITIZATION AND OPTIMIZATION STUDY

SALINITY MANAGEMENT TARGET SETTING – BOBBI LARSON (SOMMACH, SIMMONS AND DUNN) AND TOM GROVHOUG (LARRY WALKER & ASSOCIATES)

- Link in agenda to San Joaquin BPA
 - Presentation included in agenda package also

- Important to understand water quality objective setting in the LSJR and how we can potentially apply that for the BPA
- Reach of LSJR (83)– Merced downstream to Vernalis
 - Three major tributaries – Merced, Tuolumne and Stanislaus
 - Typically, water quality improves as it moves downstream because river is being fed by these tributaries
 - Original water quality objectives was 700 dS/m EC
- **Goals** – set WQOs, protect beneficial uses, meet water code requirements, satisfy requirements for BPA, and gain stakeholder acceptance
- **Guiding Principles** – engage stakeholders, practical approach to sensitive crops, use modeling tools, understand means of attaining candidate WQOs
- **Approach** – work with LSJR committee, evaluate different beneficial uses, develop range of potential WQOs, ID range of salinity control measures, model scenarios to understand effectiveness of management options, engage ag stakeholders, develop WQOs for normal to extended dry periods
- Critical point in river for salinity determinations was between Merced River and The Tuolumne River – Crows Landing and Patterson monitoring points
- Historical data was used in model to create a baseline (no project) condition
 - Peaks in salinity in late spring and late summer
 - Wet conditions and normal and dry conditions
 - Large range in salinity river because of different years and different times of the year
 - Ran a planned scenario in model. Grassland Bypass project (to address selenium) – modeled effect of implementation of that project
 - Also looked at other engineered solutions such as controlling salinity to be able to bring the salinity values all down to 1000 using reverse osmosis – not a practical alternative, but needed to understand what it would take (created a bookend)
- **Modeling Tools**
 - Hoffman Model – used to estimate EC of ag supply water for sensitive crop (almonds)
 - Crop yield (90%), rainfall (dry conditions [5-6 in/year]), leaching fraction (15%) (2016 report that describes modeling)
 - WARMF Model – used to evaluate effectiveness of management options on EC levels in LSJR
 - Watershed model – climate, soils, land use, hydrology
 - New Melones releases were considered and was a key component in getting the regulation passed
- Stakeholder Engagement
 - LSJR Committee – Central Valley Water Board, ag reps, POTWs, water supply interests
 - Ag Stakeholders – LSJR water users
 - Dennis Westcot

- Steve Grattan (UCD)
- Key stakeholder considerations
 - Balance between desired supply quality and ag runoff constraints
 - High salinity water can be managed – better than no water
 - Development of less restrictive objectives applicable during droughts
- Water Quality Objective/Performance Goal (EC microSiemens/cm – note this unit) (30-day running average)
 - 1,350 was threshold for no reduction in yield; 1,550 threshold for 90% yield
 - Wet and above normal 1,350 goal (Mar-Oct); 1,550 (Nov-Feb)
 - Below normal and dry
 - Critical
 - Extended dry period – 2,470 (75% yield); 2,200 annual average (top of MUN WQO)
- Comparison to Another Approach
 - AGE Class approach described in SNMP
 - Class 1 <1,000; Class 2 1,000-3,000; Class 3 3,000 to 7,500; Class 4 >7,500
 - Identified by literature
 - Classes were not proposed to be adopted
 - Rather, approach will be revisited after P&O study
 - Not an alternative/competing approach
 - Issues – same problem as with 700 EC default; Regional Board must consider site-specific conditions, allow relaxation as appropriate
 - Use LSJR as case in point
 - AGR Class needed to protect almonds
 - Attainment of Class 1 is problematic per LSJR modeling
 - Requires site specific study
- Questions to consider
 - Can tools used in LSJR be used in P&O study? - Yes
 - Was existing data used in LSJR? Was new data collection required? – Yes; Yes (more new information/qualitative – how water is managed, irrigator’s practices, etc.)
 - What are the biggest challenges in considering groundwater in addition to surface water? Data gaps, point of compliance, complexities of water supplies, varying quality in different aquifers
 - How can complexities/dynamics of water management be addressed? - Data collection; appropriate selection and use of models

- How will archetype areas be selected? – Willing stakeholders, representative conditions, diversity of conditions, data availability, boundaries
- Not all areas will have poor quality water
- What will be done with areas that have opted out of the P&O Study?
 - Those dischargers have opted out of the P&O development process, but their areas will still be part of the study – can't exclude a piece of the puzzle
 - Those dischargers will have to comply with more strict regulations
- We will need water districts as stakeholders – some have not been involved up to this point; whereas some are indirectly involved with CV-SALTS process
 - In LSJR, water supply interests were involved at the more concrete level of data requests, etc.; they were brought in at specific, intentional times
 - Might need to engage with them sooner because baseline information will be needed.
 - A lot of uncertainty right now because of voluntary agreements
- What is the decision that the Executive Committee is trying to make and when? – At end of October/November, need to decide about archetypes. Draft P&O Study workplan incorporates archetypes. What are key policy questions that need to be answered? Discuss at October meeting with some materials for information, then make some decisions in November about how to move forward with archetypes.
 - Recycling water – how and when – one of the policy questions that need to be answered.
 - How will we choose the archetype? What kind of criteria will we use?
- Using models
 - Intent in P&O Study Workplan is to use existing models
 - Would need a workplan for modeling (details not included in P&O Study workplan)
 - For example, could do that with archetype model criteria selection
 - Detailed workplans would address how we intend to achieve what is in the workplan – easier to start with something written
 - Review Task 3.2 before next meeting
 - Task 4.1.1 also has additional policy questions to consider

PEOC UPDATE

- Reminder about outreach matrix – important as MZs move forward
- Developing a salinity webinar – looking at week of Dec 14 (tentatively planned for Tuesday, Dec 15)
 - Notice of webinar will be included with Salinity notices to comply from Regional Board

MEETING SCHEDULE - Next policy meeting –October 22, 2020, 9am-3pm; (longer meeting in 2 parts)