Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study
Stakeholder Oversight Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2012

1. Call to Order

Vice Chairman Richard Valle called the meeting to order.

2. Additions/ Deletions from Agenda

The minutes from the December 5, 2011 meeting were not available for review and therefore item number 4 was deleted from the agenda. The balance of the agenda was approved by the committee.

3. Public Comments

There was no public comment.

4. Summarize Goals of this Meeting

Ms. Firestone informed the group that the goal of the meeting was to prioritize water issues and related projects. She displayed a flow chart of the processes which was also provided to the participants as a handout. She stated that the SOAC needed to finalize a list of common problems, then come to agreement on the list. She further explained that the group would then narrow that list into priority issues.

Ms. Firestone explained that the project team will present a wide array of potential solutions that address those priority issues at the next meeting. She went on to say that those will be developed by the project team into potential pilot projects. She indicated that the SOAC will select pilot projects based on the priority issues and using scoring criteria that will be developed. She explained that all of this will be accomplished by April, 2012.

Ms. Firestone reported that much work was being conducted on the development of the database. She explained that there were various permissions from several entities to share data, which took time to obtain. She also asked for volunteers to participate in a subcommittee to contribute to the development of the database on various subjects, such as water rates. She circulated a sign-up sheet.

5. Finalize List of Common Problems Identified in Breakout Sessions

All attendees were give a handout with the question: "What are the biggest problems you think are facing communities in this region related to drinking water and wastewater?" Participants were given an opportunity to contemplate the question and provide their feedback. Ms. Firestone advised participants when the time was up, and explained that all of the problems mentioned at the previous meeting had been recorded. She explained that the information had been consolidated into a spreadsheet.

Ms. Firestone explained that the project team had grouped, by category, all of the indentified problems in an effort to make them easier to understand. She explained that later in the meeting, the SOAC would vote on whether the list was appropriate, accurate, and complete. She explained the draft list would be revised to reflect the consensus of the group.

Ms. Firestone asked participants to make notes as she went through the list. She indicated the categories were as follows:

A. Inadequate Existing Infrastructure
B. Inadequate Funding to Make Improvements
C. Poor Water Quality
D. Lack of Affordable Interim Solutions
E. Insufficient Quantity of Water
F. A Changing Regulatory Environment
G. Inability to Address the Source of Pollution
H. Lack of Economies of Scale for Sustainable Operations and Maintenance:
I. Lack of Funding to Offset Increasingly Expensive Operations and Maintenance Costs
J. Lack of Technical, Managerial and Financial (TMF) Capacity by Water and Wastewater Providers
K. Inadequate Accountability to DAC Residents by Water or Wastewater Providers
L. Resistance to Change by Existing Institutions
M. Lack of Informed, Empowered, or Engaged Residents
N. Lack of Political Will to Solve Water & Wastewater Challenges in DACs
O. Segregated Community Development
P. Lack of Information on DACs
Q. Lack of Vision and Integrated Planning to Develop Sustainable Solutions

Dr. Longley mentioned that another problem was that lack of water and wastewater infrastructure data in GIS format.

Ms. Firestone asked the group if there were any common problems that did not seem appropriate or that were missing. She asked the group to look back at their list of problems from the beginning exercise and suggest anything that was missing. Groundwater storage was added to Item E- Insufficient Quantity of Water

Juventino Gonzales Rodriguez said that everything on the list was accurate. He added that he would like to add proper management of systems from local water boards. He invited everyone to visit his community.

Supervisor Judy Case said that the term "good water" should be defined. She said that if the Committee was going to make statements about 'good water' then the term should be defined. Ms. Firestone asked if the group could use the Safe Drinking Water Act guidelines as the definition for "good water". Dr. Longley

agreed that there was a need to define what safe water is for the purpose of the study.

Ms. Firestone asked the group if they could agree to keep water quality on this list, and define the goal in the larger study. Julie Allen asked why the group would not accept the EPA's definition of water quality issues.

Mike Hickey said GIS data available online should be added to 'Lack of Information' and that it is a lack of institutional capacity. Kara Brodfuehrer suggested that Lack of Oversight should be added and Ms. Firestone suggested that it should be added to Lack of Planning. Another participant said surface water supply should be added. Walter Ramirez suggested that inadequate/confusing information on notices should be added to political will. Joe Prado suggested that political will be changed to public support or political will. Mike Carnes suggested that "inability to attain funding" and "fund ongoing O & M" was really one issue. The Committee agreed to combine Items H and I into one.

One participant said the degree of remoteness of some communities was a barrier to addressing problems. Ms. Allen suggested adding to Item B the capacity to develop grant applications . She explained that a lack of grant writing capacity and lack of ability to pay for grant writers and engineers to do preliminary studies was a barrier to obtaining grants.

Mr. Quevedo suggested adding remoteness as an issue and participants should keep in mind that people in remote areas are taxpayers also and deserve attention in their communities. He stated that sometimes grants are given to communities without residents knowing what is going on.

Denise Kadara said the lack of inclusion of remote communities into planning processes was a problem. She explained that a lot of communities, because they do not have a tax base, get shut out of regional planning efforts.

Ms. Firestone made amendments to the list of common problems per participants' suggestions, which was projected for participants to view. She directed participants' attention to the list and asked if there was anyone who could not support the list. Karen McBride suggested that some communities did not know that there were opportunities to train local people to serve on boards and operate systems so that local control could be maintained and develop local job opportunities.

Mr. Quevedo said that grants were sometimes misallocated because there is no prioritization and that grants are not focused on cleaning up the water which ultimately costs taxpayers.

One participant said that constraints on the eligibility of entities to receive money was a barrier to solving community water problems. Marisela Mares Alatorre

said that the lack of community knowledge of health impacts was a problem because it meant that people did not view solving these issues as a priority.

Ms. Firestone asked for a roll call of the SOAC. Denise Akins of Tulare County did a roll call of the committee members to vote on the final list. Vice Chairman Valle called for a vote. The list was approved as amended.

Ms. Firestone asked the group to count off before a break.

6. Discussion of Priority Issues

Participants broke into 4 working groups to discuss their perceptions of the greatest challenges to water issues in the region. They answered 3 questions:

A. If one thing could happen as a result of this study that would make you feel it was a success, what would it be?

B. What can this study do to make the biggest impact towards developing solutions here in the Valley?

C. If you had to vote on your top 3 priorities from this list of common problems, which would you pick and why?

Ms. Firestone asked the groups to bring their discussions to a close and report back to the larger group.

Mr. Prado reported for Group 1. He stated that the lack of funding for infrastructure, lack of water quality, lack of technical managerial and financial capacity (TMF), lack of economies of scale for operation and maintenance, lack of integrated planning and lack of political will were the group's top priorities.

Sue Ruiz reported Group 2's priorities were: deliver clean water, get a clear vision for how to do that, train providers, narrow focus on how to resolve issues, provide interim solutions, and changing regulations are the primary problems. The highest priorities were educating residents, getting funding, and developing a clear vision.

Group 3 reported that the biggest problem is inadequate funding to make affordable improvements before it is a crisis issue. They also indicated that lack of economy of scale, lack of TMF and local control, and poor water quality also contribute to the problem.

Group 4 reported that focus on water quality was a big issue, political will, and affordability were problems. They indicated that the lack of knowledgeable and empowered people to run the system is an issue, along with lack of good information and good planning.

Ms. Firestone informed participants that each person was provided three colored sticker dots to put under each heading to vote for their 3 highest priorities. Ms.

Firestone clarified that each participant was to vote on three different issues, not the same issue.

Participants circulated and cast their votes for their highest priorities.

Ms. Firestone announced she would tally the votes.

7. Draft Scoring Criteria

Dawn Marple, Provost & Pritchard discussed draft scoring criteria with the group. She mentioned all of the potential pilot projects that the project team presents will be subject to the scoring criteria developed by the group. She presented draft scoring criteria guidelines. She asked the group to take the examples and think about the criteria before the next meeting.

Ms. Marple said that during the next month's meeting the group would have to pin down what scoring criteria would be used and determine how projects would be ranked. She asked participants to take the draft criteria home and submit comments.

8. Finalize Priority List

Ms. Firestone presented the tallied results from the vote:

Physical Infrastructure

A. Inadequate Existing Infrastructure (Ranked 7th):
Infrastructure that is aging, poorly constructed, or of insufficient capacity to meet current or future community needs

B. Inadequate or Unaffordable Funding or Funding Constraints to Make Improvements (ranked 3rd –tie):
Lack of affordable or accessible funding for system improvements; Inadequate funding to make successful grant applications to get infrastructure improvements (i.e. lack of funding for grantwriters, preliminary engineering, etc.); funding isn't always getting to the communities that need it most

Source Water Quality & Quantity

C. Poor Water Quality (Ranked 2nd):
Existing contamination of drinking water source (acute and chronic contaminants), increasing groundwater pollution, new and emerging contaminants, problems with secondary contaminants (i.e. taste, color, smell, etc.), health impacts

D. Lack of Affordable Interim Solutions (Ranked 9th tied):
Residents either face high cost of having to purchase and haul bottled water or other alternative water supplies, and / or face the health impacts of exposure to contaminated water

E. **Insufficient Quantity of Water (Ranked 10th tied):**
Insufficient supply or lack of reliable water supply, including surface and groundwater, including groundwater storage capacity, surface water storage and supply

F. **A Changing Regulatory Environment (Ranked 9th tied):**
Changing water quality and water treatment standards, including more stringent requirements as well as new and emerging contaminants

G. **Inability to Address the Source of Pollution**
Insufficient information on the source of water pollution and inability to address or protect water supply from existing and continuing sources of pollution

Institutional Capacity

H.

I. **Inability to Fund Increasingly Expensive Operations and Maintenance Costs Due in Large Part to Lack of Economies of Scale (Ranked #1):**
Small systems serving primarily low-income households and remote locations cannot keep rates affordable and still generate enough revenue to run the system safely over the long term; Lack of funding resources to operate and maintain water or wastewater systems at affordable levels and lack of funding for planning and replacement of infrastructure as it ages

J. **Lack of Technical, Managerial and Financial (TMF) Capacity by Water and Wastewater Providers (Ranked 4th):**
Lack of adequately trained technical, legal, financial, and managerial professionals, as well as inadequate training and ongoing education and assistance for existing water and wastewater providers; complete lack of institutional capacity for areas without a provider; lack of knowledge of available training, assistance, and educational support to support local employment in these sectors

K. **Inadequate Accountability to DAC Residents by Water or Wastewater Providers (Ranked 10th):**
Water or wastewater providers that are not accountable to residents, such as being unresponsive or failing to communicate information properly

L. **Resistance to Change by Existing Institutions:**
Resistance to changing an existing institutional structure, both by water and wastewater providers as well as by residents, professional contractors and technical advisors

Empowered Communities

M. Lack of Informed, Empowered, or Engaged Residents (ranked 3 tied):
Residents lack good information, or do not feel that they have the power or ability to change their situation, or are not engaged in decision-making processes that impact local water or wastewater service, including inadequate or confusing information about water quality and what is safe drinking water, lack of information to residents on grant opportunities available to the community, knowledge about health impacts

N. Lack of Public Support or Political Will to Solve Water & Wastewater Challenges in DACs (Ranked 5th):
Public officials, water policy decision makers, and voters are not prioritizing developing and funding solutions to existing water and wastewater challenges in disadvantaged communities and/or are not responsive or accountable to DAC residents

O. Segregated Community Development (Ranked 10th):
Demographically segregated DACs have historically been and continue to be physically and politically separated from larger water and wastewater systems or cities

P. Lack of Information on DACs (Ranked 8th):
Lack of information about water rates and usage, lack of information about water quality in areas that have no public water provider (i.e., private wells), barriers to accessing information on water quality (i.e., confidentiality requirements), lack of information about wastewater treatment in areas without wastewater system providers, etc. Lack of data on water and wastewater infrastructure compatible with GIS and online so it can be accessed by the general public

Q. Lack of Vision and Integrated Planning to Develop Sustainable Solutions (ranked 6th):
Lack of shared visions of sustainable solutions for DAC water and wastewater needs within community planning documents, water planning documents, individual water and wastewater provider plans, county general plans, and Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMPs), lack of regional coordination and planning with larger entities in planning efforts.

Ms. Firestone asked the group whether anyone felt that what the group had ranked was not an accurate reflection of the group's priorities. A participant said lack of funding may be the most important but didn't see how the study could address the problem.

Ms. Firestone said that it was important to keep in mind that some solutions to priority issues will be projects while others will be policy recommendations.

Ms. Firestone asked whether the group could agree on the top priorities that were listed. Vice Chairman Valle asked if the group could vote at the next

meeting on the priorities. Ms. Firestone stated that in order for the project team to stay on schedule the list needed to be finalized at this meeting. He asked for a roll call vote to approve the prioritization list as ranked. It was approved unanimously.

Ms. Firestone requested that participants turn in their handouts to the consultants.

Ms. Firestone asked the group to clarify whether they wanted to narrow down the list of priority issues to a smaller number than the 15 that were included in the priority list. She explained that the study's resources would be used to provide solutions to the priority issues identified by the Committee. She went on to say that in order to best use the available resources a smaller list would allow the project team to concentrate their efforts to the top priorities as identified by the SOAC. Isabel Soloro stated that it would be better to focus on a few issues and be able to provide more attention and resources. One participant suggested that the top five priorities should be the priority issues. There was discussion about whether that meant the issues ranked 1-5, which was actually 6 separate issues because two were tied for third place, or whether it was the top 5 issues total. Eugene Patterson made a motion to focus on the first top 5 priorities, not including duplicates. It was clarified that this meant the issues ranked 1-4 since there were two tied for 3rd. Marisela Mares Alatorre seconded the motion. Sue Ruiz asked whether there was the opportunity for discussion. Supervisor Valle said that there was a motion on the table and asked for a vote by roll call.

Ms. Akins called roll and members cast their votes. The following SOAC members voted in favor: Denise Kadara, Maricela Mares-Alatorre, Eugene Patterson, Juventino Gonzalez Rodriguez, Richard Valle, and Charles Lackey. The following SOAC members dissented: Becky Quintanna, Sue Ruiz, and Donald Denney. The motion carried with 6 votes in favor and 3 against.

Ms. Firestone stated that it was important to strive for consensus if possible so that the whole group would feel the prioritized list accurately represented the issues the region faced. She expressed concern that the process was not allowing for that to happen. She asked if people that voted against the motion could explain what their concerns were.

Ms. Ruiz stated that she felt strongly that the lack of political will and public support should be included as that was the only reason these issues would be addressed or not.

Vice Chairman Valle explained that a vote was taken and if there was concern it should be taken up at the beginning of the next SOAC meeting.

Chairman Valle asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Charlie Parker made the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned.