

Meeting Highlights: June 9, 2010

Owens Lakebed Planning Committee

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Overview

The Owens Lakebed Planning Committee met June 9, 2010, in Keeler. The master plan's environmental review process will run concurrently, to the degree possible, with plan development. The Committee will determine, in consultation with environmental specialists, when to commence the formal environmental review process and hold the initial scoping meeting.

The Planning Committee reviewed the approval process for dust control measures and brainstormed new measures or hybrids of existing approved measures. Examples included adding islands into shallow flood, transitioning shallow flood to vegetation, applying brine in areas, developing solar facilities, and integrating the Delta with shallow flood.

LADWP presented an overview of its water supply and conservation measures, describing Owens Valley aqueduct water supply and water application on the lakebed.

The Planning Committee refined a draft communication plan. The goal of the communication plan is to inform and solicit input from a range of interested parties throughout plan development. The communication plan identifies tools to communicate with the stakeholder forum and broader community, including expanding an email list, developing a web site, and creating fact sheets.

Action Items

Staff	8/1/2010	Develop map with landmarks, current land uses and region for widespread circulation and understanding
Web Site	ASAP	Add to Web Site DWP 2002 Wetland Habitat Function & Values Assessment Report DWP 2006 Wetland Mitigation & Monitoring Plan
Tammy Branston	6/15/2010	Share Google earth links
Gina B	6/22/2010	Share Agency Forum Overview
Gina B	6/30/2010	Develop a short paragraph / overview of project (goals & objectives, etc.)
Marina Brand	6/30/2010	Share Public Trust overview document

Agency Forum Scheduled June 16, 2010

The Agency Forum will meet June 16 in Sacramento. The purpose of the agency forum is to gather state agencies with the County to talk over policies that affect the lakebed. On June 16, the agency forum will concentrate on policies that could affect or constrain the lakebed process and legal planning frameworks. Julie Bear and Andrea Jones will observe on behalf of the Planning Committee. Gina Bartlett will circulate an overview about the agency forum.

Communication Plan

The Planning Committee reviewed a communication plan. The intent of which is to keep informed and solicit input from interested parties. The plan has “bursts” of activities in the fall and in December timeframe. The first is to conduct briefings and outreach on the planning project and draft plan objectives. The second is to conduct briefings on the draft plan. The web site is under development and will be updated regularly.

Map: Planning Committee members recommended that staff develop a map that contextualizes the location of the Owens Lakebed, key landmarks, and current land uses. Eventually the map could have proposed lands uses. The audience for this map would be the general public, media and outsiders who don't know much about the lakebed.

Public Workshop: Since the master plan will undergo a California Environmental Quality Act environmental review, the planning committee would like to schedule a combined informational workshop on the plan with a scoping meeting. The Planning Committee will wait until later in the year to see if the schedule is conducive to a combined meeting. The goal is to maximize public input while respecting the number of meetings stakeholders have to attend.

Meetings should be scheduled in the evening. The newspaper and radio often do stories in advance, which help with outreach and attendance.

Web Site: A web site is under development. The web site will be updated regularly.

Key Outcomes: The group agreed to develop key outcomes at the end of each meeting which could be shared with the email list.

Environmental Planning

Chuck Holloway, LADWP, Environmental Planning, provided a broad overview of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. The plan will undergo an environmental review. No one, at this point, is certain about when the formal environmental review process will commence. The major CEQA steps are:

- Initial Study
- Notice of Preparation / Scoping Meeting
- Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
- Public Review
- Final Environmental Impact Report

The board of the lead agency (a formal CEQA term) would approve the final Environmental Impact Report. The agencies are planning to meet together to discuss who would be the appropriate lead agency. Either the State Lands Commission, as the primary landowner, or LADWP are likely candidates.

CEQA requires that an analysis on potential wildlife impacts occur. Because the lakebed has been studied extensively and multiple environmental documents prepared, biologists will review studies and data to identify data gaps. This type of review will take place for other resource issues. Scientists and technical experts will identify data gaps and determine how to proceed with the methodology.

Next, staff will work with executives on the lead agency issue and continue discussing the schedule as it evolves.

DWP Water Resources (Supply & Conservation)

Bob Prendergast, LA Department of Water & Power, provided an overview of Los Angeles (LA) water resources. Supply from the Eastern Sierra has decreased over time while LA's demand has remained relatively constant. Increasing imports from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta has made up the shortfall.

LA has four main water supply sources: State Water Project, LA Aqueduct, Colorado River Aqueduct and groundwater from local LA aquifers. The demand for Colorado water has exceeded supply. Groundwater pumping in LA is less than in the past due to groundwater contamination. However, LADWP may be able to address groundwater quality issues through new treatment facilities.

Bob reviewed LA's water conservation program. This multi-pronged effort has resulted in LA's water demands remaining relatively constant even though the population has increased. Bob's view is that water supplies are likely to be more constrained in the future than they are now. For these reasons, the LADWP would like to consider water conservation in concert with effective dust mitigation.

Dust Control Measure Approval Process

Ted Schade, Great Basin Air Pollution Control District Director, provided an overview of the dust control measure approval process. He reminded everyone that, first and foremost, the lakebed is a dust control process. He summarized the following steps are taken to approve a new measure.

1. Testing at a large enough scale to be accurate and over time to experience varied conditions, usually for about 1 year.
2. Submit measure to Great Basin Board for approval
3. Submit to Air Resources Board for approval
4. US Environmental Protection Agency Approves

Measures must work well to control PM10 and be cost effective. Many measures have failed, such as chemicals, tree rows, piles of brush and sprinklers. Rigorous tests and models can assist in the testing process. Combining existing best available control

measures into “hybrids” requires testing, but much can also be analyzed through existing mathematical models.

For cost effectiveness, \$10,000 per ton of pollution controlled is a standard measure. This is based on farming in the Central Valley. The Owens Lakebed estimates are around \$1000 per ton. The District is committed to identifying ways to reduce water use and still achieve dust control.

Newly approved measures require a change to the 2008 State Implementation Plan (SIP) and an environmental review on that SIP change.

Public trust is another issue that must be factored into the process. The State Lands Commission owns the land and approves the lease for any activity. Essentially, this means that State Lands approves any measure. State Lands guiding doctrine is public trust. Because the Owens Lakebed was a navigable lake at the time that California became a state, State Lands still considers Owens Lakebed to be under this public trust doctrine for navigable waters. Activities consistent with this include public access, habitat, and view shed.

Planning Committee Brainstorms Potential New Dust Control Measures

- Integrate delta into dust control. Reduce berms from ‘pinching’ delta - allow delta to flow and move
- Tilling in conjunction with shallow flood
 - Rotation with vegetation to make it last longer
- Shallow flood AND
 - “Swiss cheese” pattern of islands within shallow flood, diverse habitat
 - flood and managed vegetation (transition shallow flood with managed vegetation)
 - Shallow flood with islands with some gravel on them
 - Shallow flood with gravel and islands
 - Shallow flood with islands with solar in between
 - Diversity of habitat associated with Shallow Flood
- Reduce water in deeper shallow flood to create more muddy bank or edge
- Selective water use
 - Fresh water used up higher for plants. When water flows down to low areas it is of poorer quality / salty, in areas not that hospitable to vegetation
- Solar
- Groundwater as source
- Apply brine
- Managed vegetation with grazing (integrated into dust control)
- Modified moat & row: berms plus shallow flood in between via generator/solar pump. Similar to Kern National Wildlife Refuge duck ponds.
- Public access
- Apply local gravel (color sensitive) on old moat & row areas
- Manage salt

- Permeable fabric
- Biomass, algae for biofuels

Conditions Necessary for Solar

Yamen Nanne. LA Department of Water & Power Solar, provided an overview of the complex considerations that must go into any type of solar project on the lakebed. The timeline is to implement a demonstration project by October 2011 on the lakebed. Wind tunnels and model testing have occurred.

Owens Lake lies in an excellent region for solar power. There is available and reliable existing transmission to deliver energy. One objective is to use land that needs mitigation (disturbed) for solar projects (rather than undisturbed or pristine lands). Owens Lake is a strategic location since it is in the middle of the state.

Photovoltaic (PV) is a proven technology. The shape of the panels keeps dust down. They require low water use and only have to be washed about three times a year. Floatovoltaics cover a water source. They cost three times as much as the standard PV. Emerging technologies have been looked at, yet we are taking a conservative approach and focusing on proven technologies.

The wind tunnel test with Great Basin considered tilt, spacing, foundations, and fencing—24 different runs overall met criteria. Some angles are not optimum, yet the model results improved when gravel rows were added. Bad soil conditions at T1A-4 require more costly concrete ballast supports over the less expensive standard “mats” that can be used in better soil (10 fold increase). More soil studies are needed. T-37 (southern end) has undergone geotechnical foundation lab testing to test the bearing capacity of the soil. For the pilot, the technicians are looking for consistent soil types on about 5 acres. The goal is to get solar to work in a small area and then explore expansion as appropriate. One possibility would be to grow salt grass under or between panels.

Existing transmissions lines have capacity up to 300 megawatts. Proximity to these lines is important. Additional transmission (from Mohave to Rinaldi) will need to be added for new solar and wind. Solar power could be used locally and off-set energy use for lakebed operations.

October is the target date for the pilot project, in time for the wind season. A monitoring period will provide real life case studies and data on dust reduction.