



## Meeting Highlights: September 15, 2010 Owens Lakebed Planning Committee

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy  
With assistance from Maryann Thomas, MWH

### Meeting in Brief

The Planning Committee identified zones in the lakebed that would be designated as a preserve (for habitat and wildlife), mining, grazing and solar potential along with dust control. The next step is to further refine the zones based on habitat values, water efficiency, operations, and other considerations. Public recreation and access will be discussed at the October meeting. Tribal experts will be working on how cultural resources should be addressed in the plan.

The Planning Committee is considering a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) as the legal framework under guidance from the California Department of Fish & Game. The NCCP would require two additional steps: a formal "planning agreement" and a science panel. The other option is to do a Master Plan with a master lake or streambed alteration agreement. Planning Committee members are vetting these options with their organizations before reaching a decision.

Web site: <https://owenslakebed.pubspsvr.com>.

### Action Items

Who	Due 2010	Action Item	Status and Links
Teri Cawelti Andrea Jones	done	Revise objectives to make them more organized and streamlined	<a href="#">Objectives</a> on web
Planning Committee Members	Oct 1	Conduct briefings with constituent organizations	Ongoing <a href="#">Briefing Materials</a>
Solar Work Group	Done	Develop proposal for "Renewable Energy" zone and criteria if appropriate	<a href="#">Renewable Zone</a> on web
Tillemans	9/1/2010	Designate 3600 ft project boundary on map	

### Announcements and Updates

**New State Lands Representative:** Jennifer DeLeon is taking over for Marina Brand of State Lands. Marina is now working for the CALFED Science Program.

# THE MASTER PLAN

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## Objectives

The Planning Committee reviewed the objectives for the second time. Generally, committee members were supportive of the objectives, but recommended some improvements.

- Insert some introductory notes indicating that the objectives are coequal and mutual; the plan is striving to address as many of the objectives as possible.
- Reorganize and simplify the objectives as they tend to be repetitive and topics are not grouped together.
- Add something about measuring the quantity of water to be saved so that the Master Plan will define specifics about how much water could be saved.
- Make it clear that water efficiency and exploring waterless dust control is part of the plan objectives. New dust control measures would go through the Great Basin approval process. Those steps would be outlined in implementation.

Teri Cawelti and Andrea Jones offered to revise the objectives based on this feedback.

## Vision

The Planning Committee made some modifications to the vision statement. The statement was written to reflect the Planning Committee's visioning session held in summer 2010. Upon review, the committee thought it would be advisable to refine the statement and diagram to reflect the group's deepened understanding of member interests: specifying view shed, habitat and access for public trust and adding hunting.

At local resident recommended that the plan support or enhance the lives of local residents as the lakebed is a resource in the area.

Water resource scarcity and constraints is tied to many issues, not just climate change. The committee agreed not to restrict this statement to just climate change.

After discussion, Committee members agreed that highlighting climate change in the vision was essential. Highlighting climate change and identifying adaptive management associated with climate change could affect the committee's ability to be competitive in funding applications. Some felt that the plan would be subject to criticism if climate change was not addressed. The environmental document will have to address climate. The revised vision statement will reflect the suggested modifications.

The committee agreed to remove the language that the lakebed should "not appear industrial in the future." The committee would like the opportunity to place solar on the lakebed. The conclusion was to develop language to reflect the goal of balancing public trust values with future uses, including renewable energy projects.

## Planning Zones

The primary goal of the meeting was to designate the zones on the lakebed map and then reconcile any conflicting zones. Habitat, Solar, Mining, Grazing and Dust Control zones shaped the Owens Lakebed map.

### Habitat

The first group to present its zones was the **Habitat Work Group**. This group has been working to identify features that attract wildlife and to create diverse habitat features to enhance areas for wildlife. The group identified features that attract wildlife, then went site-by-site to identify areas that have now or potentially in the future those features. The group estimates that less than one-third of water applied to the lake creates viable habitat. Salinity and land contour were important factors. The group also integrated lakebed water operations into its analysis. The group presented zones that they would recommend as a preserve or refuge. The refuge or preserve would provide dust control and habitat. The goal of the existing proposal is to sustain and enhance habitat.

### Steps to Define Planning Zones for the Owens Lakebed

1. Identify Zone Categories (habitat, dust mitigation, solar, mining, grazing)
2. Develop Criteria to Define Zones (e.g. soil, dust emission, water: ability to deliver and efficiency, salinity, invertebrates, connectivity, existing habitat, operations, feasibility to implement)
3. Assign Pieces of Land to Zones
4. Conduct Analyses to Validate Choices (how much dust control, how much habitat, how much water, etc.)
5. Return to Step 2 and 3 depending on outcomes

Management, tilling, islands, edges and design topography are some of the considerations to maximize wildlife. Areas would be managed to maximize wildlife value, not just value incidental to dust control. The group is also advocating salt cedar eradication to help habitat. The group also tried to cluster areas around Dirty Socks and seeps and springs.

The group is interested in integrating the delta into the preserve, allowing the delta to meander. One member noted that he sees lots of wildlife around the delta. Including the delta would require integrating the Master Plan with the Lower Owens River Plan.

Some advocated that the work group consider shifting operations over time to better accommodate habitat. This would be considered. However, DWP expressed concern that it would prefer limits on habitat so it can understand the long-term commitment in the plan. This is necessary for DWP to be able to support the plan and its implementation, both politically and financially.

Habitat value needs measurement. Also, habitat areas would remain dust control compliant. Some habitat enhancement management actions may require testing to ensure dust control compliance.

Next, the work group will move outside of dust control areas to examine the whole lake and identify what it would like to accomplish with seeps and springs.

## **Solar**

The second group to present was the **Solar Work Group**. The solar group concentrated on existing dust control areas and soil conditions to identify zones with solar potential. The zones were primarily in the northwest area (overlapping with habitat zones), northeast areas, and in the far south. As clarified in the criteria, proximity to transmission lines also factored into assignments.

## **Grazing and Mining**

State Lands Commission representative Colin Connor outlined grazing leases on the map and mining leases. Paul Lamos identified existing mining leases as well as the brine pool that extends slightly beyond existing leases. The total area is about 50,000 acres. Mining could occur in those brine areas outside of leases; however, there are no plans for that now. The area is eligible for mining did not conflict with solar or habitat zones.

## **Dust Control**

Great Basin Air Pollution Control District officer Ted Schade outlined areas that are becoming emissive and might require dust control in the future. One such area was called "lizard tail" in the northwest area of the lake adjacent to the delta. Scott Kemp reported that Hunter Ranch grazes cattle in this area. Participants discussed that a spring exists up in that area, and that it is likely a good place for wildlife. After small group discussion, participants identified an area in the south, designated for habitat that might be exchanged for the lizard tail to promote habitat connectivity and consider water efficiency. One participant suggested that an exchange process could continue into the future, ensuring dust control and habitat and no net increase in water use.

The challenge that the PC hasn't fully resolved is how much specificity should be designated outside of the preserve. DWP is hoping to have the preserve designated and be able to use waterless dust control in areas outside of the preserve. Another person suggested that marginal habitat be transitioned to waterless dust control and water resources be designated to more opportune areas.

Managed vegetation areas would likely not be removed because of the substantial investment in them. Also, they are effectively controlling dust and use less water than approved dust control measure shallow flood.

The facilitator reminded everyone that they must keep exploring these options. The plan should use the criteria, now and in the future, to determine if an area is appropriate to a particular zone designation. The plan should also identify new or hybrid dust control measures for validation and approval process. This ultimately will create flexibility into the future.

The groundwater evaluation is another element that must be examined to understand opportunities. Because groundwater is generally quite shallow, members are interested in exploring groundwater application in some areas to promote habitat. In theory the groundwater would likely recharge the same area. The groundwater monitoring lease application is at State Lands.

Lastly, the group discussed that financing in the plan will be very important to consider. Grants will likely be necessary. DWP also has a maintenance and operations group that thinks about these issues and will incorporate the Master Plan into its work. The Master Plan will have a financing component.

### **Next Steps for Zones**

1. Develop map and conduct technical analysis (is this meeting goals for water efficiency, habitat enhancement, public trust values, etc.)
2. Work groups revisit zones considering mapping. Habitat work group to explore if there are other areas in the lakebed
3. Public access and economic development zones to be identified
4. Cultural resources need to be addressed
5. Implementation and monitoring: develop elements and include seeps and springs identification work.
6. The Plan equals a process—a process to explore additional solar and a process to move a proposal forward.
7. Identify and address “holes” in the map

### **Legal Framework**

The Planning Committee is considering a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) as the legal framework under guidance from the California Department of Fish & Game. The other option is to do a Master Plan with a master lake/streambed alteration agreement. The NCCP would require two additional steps: a formal “planning agreement” and a science panel. Planning Committee members are vetting these options with their organizations before reaching a decision.

Brad Henderson, California Department of Fish & Game (DFG), provided an overview of the options. An NCCP is voluntary and develops a preserve. The concept of “take” is important. “Take” is a term that references harm to a covered species. Although state law prevents a “take” of sensitive species, under the NCCP this is allowed. Mitigation for these takes is achieved through the preserve. Currently, Owens Lakebed has no “listed” species. In the implementing agreement, there can be more than one applicant and funding is shared. The NCCP would cover the whole planning area. The key is developing the reserve because it serves as the mitigation for all other activities.

In this case, the County or State Lands would likely be the permit holder.

Brad Henderson, DFG, recommends an NCCP for this master plan. He thinks it would best serve DWP and cover the species that everyone wants to consider. Public trust could also be addressed in the NCCP. Private land holders can chose to participate in the NCCP.

Everyone agreed to send in the names of scientists who might be able to participate on the science advisory panel. Many expressed concern that they would want the scientists to add value to existing efforts and not derail or set back efforts made to date.

# COLLABORATION

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## **Charter**

The Planning Committee finalized the charter.

## **Briefings**

Planning Committee (PC) members are conducting briefings with constituent organizations and other interested parties this fall. The goal of the briefings is to inform about the planning process and solicit input on the vision and objectives. The PC received a briefing packet with all the materials necessary to conduct a briefing. Several errors were identified on the fact sheet. Gina will make sure these corrections are made and then send and post. All [briefing materials](#) are posted in a folder on the web site.

### Recent Briefings

- Eastern Sierra Audubon board meeting—Pete Pumphrey reporting
- State Lands Commission—Marty Adams briefs the commission at each meeting.
- Richard Cervantes met with business leaders in Lone Pine