

MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2019

Watermaster Alto Subarea Advisory Committee

A regular meeting of the Alto Subarea Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, February 27, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. at the Mojave Water Agency, 13846 Conference Center Drive, Apple Valley, California.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Steve Ashton.

2. Roll Call

Board Members Present

Steve Ashton, Chairman/Secretary
Tina Souza, Vice Chairman
Bobby Boytor, Board Member
Craig Carlson, Board Member
Steve Samaras, Board Member

Board Members Absent

Becky Jones, Board Member

Other Attendants

Perry Dahlstrom
Arnold Villarreal
Tony Winkel
Doug Mathews

Tom McCarthy
Valerie Wiegenstein
Lance Eckhart

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by board member Bobby Boytor, seconded by Vice Chairman Tina Souza. **(Motion passed 5-0)**

4. Approval of Minutes

Approval of the November 28, 2018 meeting minutes. It was moved by Vice Chairman Tina Souza, seconded by board member Craig Carlson. **(Motion passed 5-0)**

5. R³ Update

Tony Winkel begins by saying that he will be covering agenda items # 5, 6 and 9 in the presentation. The first part is the same presentation he has done in previous meetings. The first thing he starts with is State Water Project deliveries and R3 pumping extraction. For 2018, there was not much recharge, only 12 acre feet and for 2019, there has been 2 acre feet so far. R3 extractions for the West conveyance in 2018 were just under 4,300 acre feet delivered and for well 6, which is located on the East side of the river, it was 87 acre feet. This year, it has been 328 acre feet for the West and Well 6 is currently not operating because of a chlorinator replacement issue. The total deliveries and extractions since inception in 2013 are 46,000 acre feet of recharged water brought into the basin and 25,000 acre feet has been extracted through the R3 wells. The total banked water in Alto is a little over 115,000 acre feet. He pulls up a graph on the projector and shows water deliveries into the Alto Subarea by year and it shows how it increases over time. Before continuing, he asks if there are

any other questions. There are no questions and he moves on to the Aquifer update. He gives a quick review on the recorded dynamic range and explains the half full glass of water example he uses. The dynamic range is very different than being empty. He explains that Alto has its three wells, Deep Creek, Rocksprings and Jess Ranch. He shows Deep Creek well and explains that there was a little bit of rain in 2017 and it has been on the decline ever since. There was rain recently but it is still too soon for it to be recorded into the data. The graph shown does show that the water levels are starting to increase. Based on the provisional data, the recorded dynamic range is at about 25% which is twice what it was last time he gave an update. Rocksprings well is at 20% and Jess Ranch is at 30%. He asks if there are any questions before he moves on. Chairman Steve Ashton asks if these slides are available on the website, Tony says that they are not on the website but he can provide a copy for him. Tony wants to emphasize on the provisional data aspect because the storms are very recent and this data is not exact. The total inflow the basin has had is approximately 42,000 acre feet and 20,000 of that has recharged in Alto. Those are losses between incoming gauge and narrows gauge. 22,000 acre feet is on its way to Centro. The river is still flowing and Indian Trail Rd still has a healthy flow.

He moves on to item #8, Transition Zone Water Levels. There was a request to talk about TZ water levels, he shows the annual hydrograph map that goes to Watermaster and becomes court record. This map is available on the website and it is part of the annual report as well. Over the last several years, the transition zone has shown either flat or increasing water levels in the transition zone. Recently, in the Northern part of the transition zone around Silverlakes, they have started to see a slight declining trend. Several wells in the area are starting to show just a slight decline in trend. He moves on to talk about the Amethyst basin, which is located West of the 15 freeway, and shows pictures of its progress. He asks if there are any questions and Steve Ashton asks Tony what he thinks the overall health of the transition zone is. Tony says the overall health is pretty good.

6. Upper Mojave Regional Update

Item was covered on item #5.

7. R3 Administrative/Operations Controls

Valerie W does not have anything to report. This is something that was resolved during the last few meetings. The numbers are in the annual report.

8. Industrial Storm Water Capture

Agenda item was removed.

9. Transition Zone Water Levels

Item was covered on item #5.

10. Discussion of Potential Baja Solutions

Steve Ashton asks Tom McCarthy to please give Alto an update on court proceedings concerning Baja. Tom takes the podium and starts by saying he reached out to Steve as Chair of this committee and asked if they were interested in any potential solutions on what would/would not work for those in Alto in regards to Baja. Last year in April, the case got a new judge and when that happens, the judge takes some time to educate him/herself in the case. Their first hearing in front of the judge was in July and that is when any ramp down recommendations were approved by the court. The judge had a lot of questions that he decided to schedule a status hearing for October 18, 2018. During that hearing, the judge submitted about six pages of questions and Watermaster's Engineers and legal counsels addressed those questions. At that time, Fish and Wildlife asked for an additional status conference to

get an idea on how Watermaster was doing, which included an evaluation of production safe field and consumptive use. That status conference was scheduled for January 31st and Watermaster reached out and let people know about it and if they would like to attend they can. Throughout this hearing, the judge has been hearing from different parties in Baja, no other parties have been speaking out and that is why Watermaster let the other subareas know about it. What other solutions could there be that does not involve ramp down for Baja? Should MWA buy water and move it down the Baja? Should discounted water be available? Would changes to the judgment help? There are many things that could be done and the judge is very clear on letting people know what he can and cannot do. He also reminds everyone that the judgement is an agreement with all the subareas and even though he would like to make a solution for Baja, there are other parties involved that need to agree as well. If the judgment is reopened, are all parties going to agree? Watermaster is having a meeting tonight at 4:30p.m. and they would like feedback from all parties to say what type of solutions may or may not work for their subarea. Tom takes his seat and Steve Ashton mentions that the transition zone is in good health, per Tony's update and 80% of the water used in Baja is for farming, 10% is for Newberry lakes and the last 10% is residential. He says that Alto is abiding by the adjudication and the water that is pumped is being replaced, if there is makeup water in the transition zone, Alto handles it. He asks the board members what their thought on this is and if they could get an agreement/recommendation. Board member Bobby Boytor wants to know what Baja is proposing before making any comments. Tom replies by saying that he anticipates that tonight, during the Watermaster meeting, they will receive a lot of proposals. They will listen to them and provide information to the board next month on what could and could not be done within the judgment. Board member Steve Samaras comments and agrees with Bobby saying that Alto needs to know what Baja is proposing before making any comments. Tom will be characterizing the problem at hand so the committee can have something to comment on. He starts by saying that the verified production is significantly higher and more than 5% of the production safe yield.

The production safe yield is what they think the basin can handle in annual production. The verified production is above that. Baja is at a non-sustainable condition. If this continues then Baja will remove storage from the system. This is also the same condition that Alto was in, in the beginning of the judgment, and Alto was ramped down so they are now in a state that is very close to balance. There are other basins, like Este, whose verified production is very close to 5% of the production safe yield, which does not require a ramp down. Steve Ashton mentions that during the January 31st status conference hearing, one of the attorneys for Baja mentions that upper producers are affecting their water levels. He brings up that the transition zone is in good health and Alto's responsibility is to the transition zone. It seems like Baja wants all the data to be looked at again. Valerie W goes to the podium and wants to clarify that the work that the Watermaster Engineer is doing, which he will be presenting tonight, is looking at production safe yield and the item of consumptive use within the basin, he felt that this is something that needed to be done, he's been tracking it for over 7 years and he has narrated that in his declaration to the court. Doug Mathews from the City of Victorville, who is in the audience, has a question for the committee. The conduit from Alto and Baja is Centro, if the transition zone is healthy and Centro is not being ramped down, he is not understanding how Alto is causing the Baja problem. Valerie responds by saying that is Baja's argument that they have presented to the court. Steve Ashton asks if the committee can agree with not wanting the judgment reopened? He says that the definite solution is more ramp down on Baja so they can get to their safe yield. Steve Samaras says that if Alto is indeed not having an impact on Baja, then is changing anything will not fix their problems. Since the judgment, about 400,000 acre feet have been taken out of storage. Since 1950, closer to 1 million acre feet has been taken out of storage. Valerie adds that they are only cutting back on free production allowance in order to get to production safe yield. Steve Ashton adds that it's basically a ramp down to get Baja into safe yield. This committee agrees that they do not want the judgment reopened. Baja also wants a study done throughout the entire basins to get more information. Valerie says that there already was a study in 2013 and it was presented to the public in Baja but there will always be suggestions that there needs to be more studies done.

11. Public Comments

None.

12. Items for Next Agenda

Update on Baja.

13. Adjournment

Steve Ashton called for adjournment of the meeting at 10:43 a.m.

Reviewed by , Chairman