

On March 5th over 80 people attended a Borrego Springs Groundwater Sustainability Plan Community Meeting to provide input to the water board regarding Borrego's overdrawn aquifer situation. The water board heard three major themes they should take very seriously:

1. No more water rate hikes.
2. Adequate allocations for domestic water use (Borrego Water District).
3. Shorten timelines to reach sustainability.

1. Rate increases disproportionately affect Borrego's Hispanic community and fixed income seniors. Domestic use of water accounts for only ten percent of the total water used. Irrigators, who use 70 percent of our water, pay nothing for it. Yet BWD's water rates have doubled in the last few years. This is not fair and we agree...no more water rate increases.

2. Two members of the Borrego Water Board, Beth Hart and Lyle Brecht, agreed to give the irrigators 70 percent of our water in the Borrego Water Coalition process. Now the farmers want the water board to support what those two members agreed to. We agree that this is unacceptable.

The water district delivers 1,600 acre feet of water to the ratepayers. It needs at least that amount to maintain basic services. If the water board agrees to give the irrigators 70 percent of the 5,700 acre feet available then the water district would need to purchase expensive water from the irrigators just to supply what ratepayers already use. That's why the water board in November revealed a plan to double your water rates. We agree that ratepayers, who only use 10 percent of the water and are not the cause of our severely overdrafted aquifer, should not have to bear the brunt of the water reductions.

3. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act allows until 2040 to reach sustainability. That is the outside date. The uncertainty over how much water Borrego will have for future development cannot be allowed to continue for that long. We agree that the timeline must be shortened so we are not drawing down our aquifer for another 22 years.

On behalf of our independent ratepayer group that has been monitoring water issues in Borrego for so many years we were very pleased to see the turnout at the recent water meeting. Borregans are paying attention and are making their voices heard. It is time the water board take heed of those voices. Please take time to attend the annual water board meeting on March 28 at the Performing Arts Center and the next negotiation meeting on March 29. Let the water board hear from you.

Sincerely,

Three Who Agree:

Dick Walker

Ray Shindler

Dennis Dickinson