

Fellow Borregans,

I'm writing this letter to introduce myself as your Ratepayer Representative for the GSA (Groundwater Sustainability Agency), the agency responsible for the GSP (Groundwater Sustainability Plan) required under SGMA (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act,) legislation that became effective in 2016.

My hope is to represent all of us, the ratepayers, during the final crafting and implementation phases of the Plan.

The object of this plan is to regulate the consumption of water so that it will become a sustainable resource that will benefit all users.

The best available science informs us that we are removing more water from our aquifer than what is being restored. We know this has been going on for decades. We now also have a pretty clear idea that at this point in time, municipal use (residential, commercial and ABDSP) amounts to just over 10% (1,700 Acre Feet per Year [AFY]), recreational use is slightly less than 20%, and agriculture uses and has used the lion's share of just under 70%.

Under the law (SGMA,) as described in our Plan (GSP,) we must achieve a target pumping rate of 5,700 AFY, which translates to a 76% reduction in water use throughout the valley. But SGMA allows the GSA, through the Plan (GSP,) to assign the reductions as this Agency deems appropriate.

Allow me to make a few points about how the ratepayer, agriculture and other users have been consuming water over time in Borrego Springs:

- We, the ratepayers, at no point in history have been the cause of the overdraft
- We, by definition, pay for the resource
- BWD has increased its rates significantly in recent years
- Many of us struggle to pay for the ever-increasing cost of water
- We do not profit from the use of this common resource
- Agriculture makes a profit from a resource that we have to pay for
- Agriculture employs few people; most farm owners (if not all) do not live in Borrego Springs;
- both profits and crops leave the valley
- Agriculture does not pay for water
- Agricultural plantings have steadily increased over the years (we've all seen the two new ever-spreading herb farms)
- We have reduced our water consumption significantly in recent years

So, my plan is to hold a series of gatherings, not meetings, maybe open houses is a better term, at various locations around town and, with your help, coffees at your homes where you would invite some of your friends to learn about the issues, contribute their ideas and, I hope, to fine-tune a plan I've come up with after speaking to many of you already.

Under this plan, the ratepayer (all of us,) through BWD will be assigned a "**Minimum Water Allocation**" of 1,700 AFY (the amount we currently use, more than 30% less than what we were using just a few years ago, a good-faith reduction not undertaken by any other stakeholder.)

We would ask BWD to immediately begin searching for funding to purchase enough additional water to ensure the modest growth we hope for and expect of our town.

Agriculture is not a sustainable pursuit in our valley. It has never been. If agriculture had been undertaken sustainably, we would have no water issues now.

This is our time. We all want a viable community that continues to thrive, develop and grow. We want businesses and jobs that can succeed with our existing water resources. We want sustainable and affordable water and we want businesses in town to support our community.

We can do this together. Please look for these gatherings, bring your friends; let's put our heads and our hearts together to accomplish this fair, reasonable and straightforward goal.

Gary Haldeman
Rate Payer Representative for GSA