

Governor's Water Augmentation Council: Recycled Water Committee

December 5, 2016

Time: 10am – 12pm

Location: Arizona Department of Water Resources

Meeting Summary

The inaugural meeting of the Governor's Water Augmentation Council (GWAC) Recycled Water Committee was held on December 5, 2016. The Recycled Water Committee was formed at the October 28, 2016 GWAC meeting. During that meeting, Chairman Buschatzke requested that the Committee look at the progress made on the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Water Sustainability recommendations for reclaimed water, and to consider statewide opportunities for future recycled water projects.

Chairman John Kmiec called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. The Committee members seated at the table introduced themselves. From the GWAC, Mr. Kmiec and Bob Lotts were present. Brian Payne of the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association represented Council Member Warren Tenney and Philip Richards of the Salt River Project represented Council Member Dave Roberts. Other committee members were Susan Craig of the Arizona Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA), Jeff Biggs of Tucson Water, and Brad Hill from City of Flagstaff. There were eighteen members of the public in attendance. Chuck Graf of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality joined by phone.

Presentations on Blue Ribbon Panel on Water Sustainability Report

Mr. Kmiec gave an overview on the status of the recommendations that came out of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustainability (BRP). Of the 18 recommendations for reclaimed water made by the BRP: 50% have some degree of progress made toward completion; 39% have not advanced; 11% have an unknown status. There were no questions concerning this presentation.

Current Statewide Reclaimed Water Projects

Susan Craig of WIFA presented on the background and capabilities of WIFA to fund reclaimed water projects for both small and large communities. She listed example projects which have recently taken place in the City of Buckeye, City of Prescott and City of Surprise. During the time for questions, Brian Payne of AMWUA asked if there is a difference in preference of awards funding for small versus large communities. Sara Konrad (WIFA Environmental Program Supervisor) answered that larger cities consider going out to the bond market, on their own. Medium and smaller cities often go to WIFA, where securing a loan is less expensive for them. Mr. Kmiec asked if the loans can be for administrative aspects of a reclaimed water project. Ms. Craig Responded that the loans must have a water quality improvement component to them.

Presentations by Large Reclaimed Water Projects

Jeff Biggs, the Strategic Initiatives Administrator for Tucson Water presented on the history and future of Tucson's recycled water use. His presentation included discussion on an upcoming project to revive surface flows in the Santa Cruz River with excess reclaimed system water. Tucson Water has conducted annual surveys since 2012 to gauge public perception on using reclaimed water for direct potable reuse. The City has also recommended advanced water treatment concepts for a possible expanded opportunity to do indirect potable reuse.

Bob Lotts, Water Resources Director for APS provided a presentation on Palo Verde Nuclear Plant's use of reclaimed water. Mr. Lotts covered several topics, including the history and current status of water sourcing for Palo Verde. The plant uses reclaimed water for cooling. The presentation looked at the wastewater treatment plants in the Phoenix Metro Area that contribute reclaimed water to Palo Verde, via a 28.5 mile pipeline. When asked about future challenges with securing reclaimed water for purchasing, Mr. Lotts acknowledged the uncertainty of available future water sources. He is working on a plan moving forward for working towards securing long-term effluent deliveries from the cities to the plant, even under future supply uncertainties. Mr. Kmiec asked if there are groundwater backups for Palo Verde. Mr. Lotts said that they use a couple thousand acre-feet a year of groundwater that goes through reverse-osmosis for onsite potable water.

Brad Hill, Utilities Director at City of Flagstaff, presented on the importance of a robust reclaimed water system for the City. Twenty percent of Flagstaff's water deliveries come from direct delivered reclaimed water. The City has two A+ wastewater treatment plants that help to provide affordable reclaimed water to customers. The City will be holding rate increase meetings in 2017. The City is currently evaluating Indirect and Direct Potable Reuse options. Mr. Biggs asked about wastewater treatment costs, and which users should bare the financial burden of rate increases. Mr. Hill said this is still being discussed. The City recently purchased a water ranch to augment water supplies, this may also play into changing water rates. Charles Mosely from City of Sedona asked about contaminants of emerging concern as part of solid waste disposal protocol. Mr. Hill replied that the City is updating their policies on this matter. Mr. Lotts asked if future rising water rates will make reclaimed water facility operation unviable; will customers just look for a different source if the cost is too high? Mr. Hill replied that reclaimed water rate changes are very divisive and that some entities have stated that rate changes were not high enough. Rate changes aid in developing better system projects, like advanced treatment facilities. Ms. Craig stated that WIFA has a statewide reclaimed water rates survey (and survey results) available on their website.

Conclusion

Mr. Kmiec closed the meeting by thanking the presenters and stated that while there are many successful recycled water projects that are active throughout the state, there are many areas that have not yet been developed to make the most of their reclaimed water. The Committee may address this topic in the future. The next Committee meeting will include updates from the Advisory Panel for Emerging Contaminants and the Arizona Potable Reuse Rules Committee. Chuck Graf from ADEQ will be present next steps to open up reuse rules for the state of Arizona. The next meeting will be scheduled for the end of January.