



# Water Resources Research Center

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, The University of Arizona

## The Santa Cruz Valley Water District: A Retrospective Statewide Water Advisory Group Meeting June 16, 2006

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# Formation of the SCVWD

- Established in June, 1991 as the Tucson Active Management Area Water Augmentation Authority, pursuant to legislation approved in 1990.
- Formed with an Initial Board of Directors, representing different sectors, who were given a 30-month period to determine if the district would be made permanent. Governor appointed the board members.
- Sectors Represented:
  - Pima County, City of Tucson, Mines, Private Water Companies, Agriculture, Public, Santa Cruz County,
  - A Plan of Permanent Operation and Administration had to be developed and approved prior to the district being made permanent
  - Pima County member and City of Tucson member of the board each given veto authority over permanent formation of the entity.



# The Tucson AMA, 1980-1994



**The Tucson  
AMA included  
the Santa Cruz  
AMA until 1994**



# From an Authority to a District

- Changes to the authorizing legislation converted the Tucson Augmentation Authority to a District. Moved away from having Tucson in the title to ensure that the regional nature of the entity was reflected
- In this presentation, I will refer to the entity as the District or the SCVWD.
- Statutory language is still on the books, Title 48, Chapter 28, Arizona Revised Statutes



# What the District Could and Could not Do

- Mission: To facilitate water resource management in the Tucson Active Management Area
- To be's
  - Voluntary, develop contracts
  - Cooperative
  - Regional
- Not to be's
  - Regulatory
  - A retail water provider



# Primary Activities of the District

- Regional Recharge and Replenishment
- Coordination of Water Conservation
- Provision of Misc Water Management Services
- Forum for Regional Issues Discussion
- Policy Coordination with Governmental Entities
- Facilitation of collaborative Studies
- Other



# Fundamental Issues

- Finance
  - Funding from a portion of the Tucson AMA Augmentation fees (funding now going to the Arizona Water Banking Authority)
  - Authority to Issue Revenue Bonds
  - No taxation authority in original authorization
- Governance
  - Would depend on revenue capabilities
- Authorities (powers)
  - Ad valorem taxing authority, subject to a public vote



# What the District Did and Did not Do

- Developed an Augmentation Plan and Plan of Operation
- Changed its authorizing statutes
  - Possible ad valorem taxing (similar to Phoenix AMA Groundwater Replenishment District, which was never formed)
  - Permanent Board would be elected
  - Replenishment authority added in 1993, when Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District was formed. SCVWD was an alternative to the CAGRDR for the Tucson AMA
- Developed a Groundwater Savings Project with Cortaro Marana Irrigation District
- But did not allay concerns of the City of Tucson. With five in favor of permanent formation, the Tucson Board member was instructed by the Mayor and Council (4-3 vote) to vote against permanent formation of the District



# The Augmentation Plan (CH2M Hill)

- Overview of District Services and Potential Customers notes that the District could help with water resource diversification and policy coordination
- Actual Groundwater Savings Project – first project to deliver CAP water to Pima County agriculture. The SCVWD got the ball rolling. Another (BKW Farms) was developed simultaneously with the CMID project.
- Proposed projects
  - Four projects involving recharge throughout the AMA. Among them...
    - CAP use in the northwest area of Tucson
    - In-channel recharge of Mexican generated effluent
- Water Conservation



# Replenishment Role

- SCVWD was active at the time of formulation of the AWS Rules
- CAGRDR legislation was being developed
  - SCVWD was established by statute as another option for the Tucson AMA
  - Some of the concern about the SCVWD was that it was seen as another layer of government, whereas the CAGRDR was seen as a more efficient option because the CAWCD Board and organization already existed
- Any potential conflict between the two was eliminated when the SCVWD was not made permanent



# The Regional “Water Environment” at the time was not conducive to collaboration

- There were tensions in the Tucson AMA.
- Tucson’s delivery of CAP failed.
- Conflict among some of the jurisdictions
- An institution before its time?

Multi-jurisdictional water infrastructure finance

Drought plans

Conservation plans

Regional organization to coordinate water acquisition



# Lessons Learned/Implications of non-formation

- Recognition that you cannot force collaboration and cooperation before the players are ready
- On-the-ground project was not sufficient to show the value of the district to agriculture (Reflection of concern about augmentation fees?)
- Concerns about control and authorities are real and need to be recognized
- A sufficient level of trust is necessary
- Need is a driver of action and there may not have been enough need at the time
- Easy to point out negatives (another layer of government)
- Santa Cruz AMA was formed in 1994



# Concluding Comments

- Personal Recommendations/reflections on what we could have done differently
  - Be clear about the purpose of the organization, recognizing, however, that “agendas” may vary (What was the SCVWD going to do in the long run?)
  - Try to have stability in the membership of the oversight board (Three changes in the person representing Tucson in a short period of time.)
  - Develop a fair voting system and avoid giving veto power to any board member (The implied threat of a veto made things difficult.)
  - Include lots of opportunity for people to participate through advisory councils/committees (This is a way to involve people not on the governing board in a meaningful way.)
  - Recognize that there is a cost to doing business (There is no free lunch.)
  - Try not to change things too much too fast (Changes to the SCVWD’s legislative authorities.)
  - Develop a good communication system (easier now than in the early 1990s)
  - Be patient and persistent
  - Note: Supreme Court decision on Special Purpose Legislation



# Questions/Discussion

