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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Water Resources Development Commission (HB 2661) Environmental Committee – Notes: October 20, 2010 Meeting

IN ATTENDANCE:

Brenda Burman (TNC co-chair)
Warren Tenney (Metro Water co-chair)
Linda Stitzer (ADWR)
Chris Udall (ABC)
Christine Dawe (USFS)
Dave Weedman (AZGF)
Dee Korich (Tucson Water)
Dennis Rule (CAWCD)
Doug Kupel (City of Phoenix)
Jason Baran (AMWUA)
Mike Taylor (BLM)
Rebecca Davidson (SRP)
Ron Solomon (Town of Taylor)
Rob Marshall (TNC)
Jocelyn Gibbon (SSD)
Joanna Nadeau (WRRC)
Brad Martin
Cliff Cauthen
Christine Nunez (City of Surprise)
Philip Bashaw (AZFB)
Doug Kupel (City of Phoenix)
Sharon Masek Lopez (NAU)
Jean Calhoun (USFWS)
Danny Seiden

OVERVIEW OF WATER RESOURCES WORKGROUP AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE:

Co-chairs Warren Tenney (Metro Water) and Brenda Burman (TNC) welcomed the committee members and introductions were conducted. The co-chairs provided background information on the Water Resources Development Commission (WRDC) (see overview handout).

DISCUSSION OF TASKS FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKGROUP:

The Environmental Committee will focus on Task 1.3 of Objective 1, "Evaluate environmental considerations" from the draft Workplan, consisting of the identification of current environmental resources and the conditions necessary to support them. The working group is tasked with preparing a summary of findings and recommendations by February 28, 2011. The workgroup is also tasked (along with the Water Supply/Demand Workgroup) to compare current and future water supplies and demand to identify unmet demand (Objective 3). The draft Workplan can be modified by the working group. Objective 1 tasks were expanded in a handout and discussed. Cataloging resources and how to compile the information are key considerations for the workgroup as well as how to address environmental needs in volumetric terms.

Suggestions and comments included:

- Focus on the final product; how will the information be compiled?
- The Water Supply/Demand Working Group expects environmental needs to be quantified
- Final product could include a table of environmental resources with supply and demand identified and basin/county location
- Legal, technical and financial aspects of environmental resources needs to be included
- Need to know what information is available

A presentation on the environmental considerations section of the Arizona Water Atlas was provided by Linda Stitzer to show available information through that source. Data include: vegetation, wildfire, Arizona Water Protection Fund Program grants, instream flow claims, location of riparian vegetation, lists of threatened and endangered species, location of protected Lands (parks, monuments, refuges), perennial/intermittent streams, springs and unique and managed waters.

Questions and comments included:

- Does BLM have a cover of water-dependent management areas?
- Are the recent 70+ instream flow applications filed by the USFS included in the Atlas? Response was that data are only through 2008.
- Suggestion that the information associated with the more mature instream flow claims would be most useful
- Need to identify the legal calls on water, prioritize them and identify hot spots. It was suggested that just showing the numbers of claims and whether they were federal, state or private claims would be informative

Dave Weedman, AZGF gave a presentation on the State Wildlife Action Plan with a focus on the part of the plan dealing with threats and information needs. Threats include various degrees of urban sprawl, dams and impoundments, contaminants, change in agricultural use, rural development, etc. Threats that exist statewide were not included. The location of these potential threats have been mapped and modeled and a geospatial planning tool is under development to assess risks to individual species.

Questions and comments included:

- Did AZGF incorporate USFWS critical habitat? Response was affirmative.
- Has USFWS quantified water requirements for critical habitat? Response was that volumes have not been quantified but necessary flows are.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ACCOMPLISH TASKS:

Following the presentations there was further discussion about available sources of information on environmental water needs, the scope of work and work products. Comments included:

- Both existing and future needs must be addressed and could include identifying target areas for restoration and identifying environmental "hot spots".
- Both the BLM and USFWS have species recovery plans that could help identify these areas. It was noted that existing environmental conditions reflect a long history of degradation.
- Joanna Nadeau's work on the WRRRC Environmental Water Demand Study has identified 97 studies in Arizona. Seventy of these studies identify water needs and some identify what might happen if flows are interrupted. The study will be complete in a few months.
- Warren pointed out that even without quantifying needs, it could still be difficult to catalogue environmental resources and associated water resources. What other categories (in addition to those included in the Atlas) and associated data sources should be considered?

- Concern was expressed about the short time frame to do the work and how the data would be geographically organized (e.g. basin v. county). Given the time frame, minimizing the scope and prioritizing the environmental needs with a focus on how the Commission will use the information is important.
- Concern was also expressed about the need for the workgroups to communicate with each other and how this would be done as well as representation on the environmental workgroup; particularly the need to engage rural counties/communities.
- There is an important opportunity to meaningfully incorporate environmental needs in the Commission findings that should not be missed.
- The workgroup agreed that one of the primary work products would be maps. Identifying water sources would capture 80% of the state's wildlife.
- A significant amount of the state's water supplies originate on federal lands and the importance of watershed restoration to the state's water supplies should not be overlooked
- Any inventory of environmental resources should consider inclusion of SE Arizona cienegas
- TNC has extensive information on threatened and endangered species
- Shallow groundwater was mapped by Anderson (1992). This or a more recent map could be included in the environmental inventory
- Aquatic based recreation and "recreational species" should be considered. Sources of information include AZGF, BLM and USFWS.
- There was concern about how tribal lands would be included
- There was a comment on inclusion of effluent dependent waters and it was noted that these waters may be the most susceptible to change as the water supply becomes more valuable for municipal purposes.
- Climate change must also be considered in future needs projections. It was mentioned that climate change must be incorporated into USFS forest plans, that SRP has historic climate data and that vulnerability of water supplies to drought and supply shortage would be evaluated in Volume 9 of the Atlas.

The workgroup thought that the environmental resources listed in the meeting handout was a good starting point and comments were compiled into the following summary of resources and where the data were available:

- Perennial and intermittent streams - ADWR, AZGF
- Lakes, springs, streams, etc. – ADWR, BOR, NAU, NFS, TNC
- Riparian areas (including vegetation) – AZGF, TNC, ADWR
- Wildlife
 - Fish/Birds – Aquatic and riparian association
 - Threatened and endangered species – TNC, USFWS, ADWR
 - Other – e.g. critical habitat
- Protected areas
 - Federal and state
- Shallow Groundwater
- Recreation – AZGF, BLM, USFS
 - Boating
- Effluent Dependent Streams – ADEQ, Julie Stromberg

The meeting concluded with a discussion on how the environmental information would be pulled together and what resources from the Department and elsewhere might be available. Warren agreed to bring this up at the next Commission meeting.