

Long-Term Impacts of the Drought

Conversation Notes

November 30, 2015 ♦ Monterey, California



OBSERVATIONS OF ISSUES FROM COUNTIES

Small Group Discussion Charts

- * Farmers selling water and impacting other industries
- * Groundwater being used
 - ⇒ selling groundwater of county
 - ⇒ recharge
 - ⇒ subsidence
- * Water element in general plan
- * Drinking water scarce
 - ⇒ geothermal/private industry using the water
- * Changes in water rights
- * Desalination with groundwater/ocean
 - ⇒ expensive water – impacts all
- * Migratory birds/fish
- * Sewer system problems
- * Salton Sea issues
- * Prop 218 – huge obstacle with new water supply
- * Water grab for profits
- * Limiting: no growth tool block to development, agriculture
- * Domestic vs. ag water use
- * Environments uses of the water
- * Legal issues
 - ⇒ unimpaired water flows
 - ⇒ CEQA
- * Forest management
- * Dealing with Federal and State Agencies

- * New Normal? – Extremes
- * Increasing agriculture acres fallowed
- * Uneven availability of water (across state) among water users within basins
- * Storage – surface plus ground
- * Too many stems in ground
- * Illegal water diversion for marijuana production
- * Water quality decrease with increased herbicides and pesticides
- * Changing crops
- * Solutions: One size doesn't fit all (i.e. SGMA)
- * Need for recharge

PARTICIPANTS

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Documentation

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OBSERVATIONS OF ISSUES FROM COUNTIES

Small Group Discussion Charts

- * Impacts to agriculture – CA Economy and Global Economy
- * \$\$ to invest in infrastructure for both lack-of and surplus-of water (storage, groundwater management, flood control)
 - ⇒ “Self-help” concept
 - ⇒ How to make our cast to state/feds
- * Climate change necessitating new strategies
- * Governance issues
- * Public lack of understanding – long term vs. short term

- * Forest health – dead trees
 - ⇒ moving over, altitude
 - ⇒ increased fire danger and fear
 - ⇒ decreased tourist \$
 - ⇒ increased greenhouse gas and climate warming
 - ⇒ economic impacts
 - ⇒ long term effects of devastation from fires
- * Will no trees lead to more water in creeks, rivers and raise ground levels?
 - ⇒ Need new data
- * Dry Wells
 - ⇒ temporary fixes
 - ⇒ increased costs
 - ⇒ unknowns: will water in wells come back?
- * ‘Resources hit you in strange ways’
 - ⇒ what happens if we run out?
- * Unprecedented
 - ⇒ Tree mortality will not correct in our lifetime
 - ⇒ Insects killing faster than they can be grown
- * Economic Impacts
 - ⇒ Ag and tourism
 - ⇒ Resources to drill wells and maybe no water to get
 - ⇒ Underemployment
- * Disconnect between Fed/State/Local government agencies
- * Systems issues
 - ⇒ Coordination
 - ⇒ single issue interests
- * What do you do when conservation fails?

OBSERVATIONS OF ISSUES FROM COUNTIES

Small Group Discussion Charts

- * SGMA - groundwater stability plan
 - ⇒ timeline put on overdraft
 - 1. Reactivity
 - 2. Not much flexibility
 - 3. Not evidence based
 - 4. One size fits all
 - 5. Emotionally driven
 - 6. More disconnect
 - 7. 1982 data
 - 8. Local control intent
 - 9. Increased litigation
- * Economic Impacts
 - ⇒ Unknown
 - ⇒ Difficult to plan
 - ⇒ Workforce changes
 - ⇒ Threatens way of life and tax bases
 - ⇒ Increase of people in safety net programs/increasing poor
 - ⇒ Fire
 - ⇒ Environmental

EVIDENCE AND SYMPTOMS

Small Group Discussion Charts

- * Evidence
 - ⇒ Dry wells
 - ⇒ Subsidence
 - ⇒ Dead trees
 - ⇒ Fire (and smoke)
 - ⇒ Brown landscapes
 - ⇒ Dry reservoirs & lakes
 - ⇒ Dust – bad air quality
 - ⇒ No lawns
- * Symptoms
 - ⇒ High number of transfers
 - ⇒ Job loss (ag)
 - ⇒ Drought tourism (TOT increase with nice weather)
 - ⇒ Rethinking water management/governance
 - ⇒ Violence (threats of)
 - ⇒ Illegal diversions
 - ⇒ Water rights lawsuits
 - ⇒ Development limitations
 - ⇒ Discussions: bringing parties together/building consensus

EVIDENCE AND SYMPTOMS

Small Group Discussion Charts

- * Economic impacts to community
- * Socioeconomic disparity
- * Increased demand for social services
- * Changes to natural environment
- * Quality of life
- * Migration; workers moving
- * Increased fire risk
- * Regulatory environment: competition
- * Need for cooperation among communities (SGMA)
- * State vs. local control
- * Holistic management of water
- * No more lawns: drought tolerant landscaping
- * Fluctuating commitment from public agencies and electeds
 - ⇒ Permanent facet of what we do
 - ⇒ Shifting priorities

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- * Tree mortality
 - * Prices for food and fresh produce increasing
 - * New technologies/innovations
 - * Increase in letters to editor and public comment on related issues
 - * Fire threat increased
 - * Industries going away – nurseries, ag products & equipment; building/development
 - * Ordinances – landscaping, small districts going into deficit, groundwater, conservation
 - * Brown lawns/'water police'
 - * Changes in wildlife patterns
 - * Recreational changes

MOST PRESSING ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Charts from Large Group Discussion

- * Tree mortality and related public safety issues
- * Agriculture
 - ⇒ Farmers – farm workers
 - ⇒ supporting industry and the communities support
- * Drinking water
 - ⇒ economic cycle
 - ⇒ public health
- * Collaboration – cooperation at local level
 - ⇒ Balance haves and have nots

WHAT COUNTIES CAN DO RIGHT NOW

Charts from Large Group Discussion

- * Identify all the stakeholders and bring them together
- * Engage citizens – and their local knowledge – into the conversation
- * Find ways to educate community
 - ⇒ Evangelism
 - ⇒ Messaging
 - ⇒ urban providers
- * Exert influence as counties on interpretation and modification of Federal rules and state agency cooperation
- * Agree on a set of facts
- * Counties take a leadership role in building a plan thru CSAC
- * ***Next 24 months critical!***

KEY POLICY AREAS

Charts from Large Group Discussion

1. Tax and CEQA Policy – infrastructure
2. Forest management
3. Water rights
4. Agricultural, Municipal and Industrial regulation
5. Growth management

WEBSITE RESOURCES

Dr. Sandoval Slides and Related Articles available on CSAC Institute website

www.counties.org/emerging-issues-series

Tree Mortality and Bark Beetles

www.prepareforbarkbeetle.org

Sierra Conservancy (see critical issues sections)

<http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov>

USDA Report: *Climate Change, Water Scarcity, and Adaptation in the U.S. Fieldcrop Sector* (Nov. 2015)

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err201.aspx>

OBSERVATIONS AND TRENDS FROM COUNTIES

Notes from Large Group Conversations

- ♦ Public generally thinks of drought as a short-term problem rather than a long term challenge
- ♦ Trust and governance issues (i.e. ability to sell stored groundwater outside of county): *Where do state laws inhibit creative solutions and opportunities?*
- ♦ Will there be a financial battle between those with water and those without?
- ♦ Tree mortality: how will it affect tourism?
- ♦ Not really sure we know what we're doing ... need new data
- ♦ Are there conflicts within county policy and process? For example growth restrictions on where pipelines can go, yet end up getting in way of strategies to deal with water distribution.
- ♦ "Atmospheric rivers" in California typically deliver all water in 15-18 days with 5-6 events in a normal year.
- ♦ Importance of having clear numbers and data on what water is actually available ... need new and more data.
- ♦ Separate water from property consideration: need to address important questions: significant changes to property values; impacts on property tax for counties; cost of reassessments
- ♦ Who are the 'canaries' in your communities ... those people most vulnerable, closest to the problem – pickers, growers; first to exhibit symptoms of the human side of the drought. How is it impacting the community and safety nets.
- ♦ Create innovative, dynamic conversations in the community which engage all people affected.
- ♦ Words from interviews on what people are feeling about drought: terror – catastrophic – scared – unknown – favorite places are gone.
- ♦ In the end: not a fight, but about bringing people together; need to agree on the data.