

DRAFT

PUBLIC MEETING THEMATIC SUMMARY

Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP)

California Water Commission (Commission)

April 28, 2015

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS

Introduction

The California Water Commission (Commission), in an effort to be open and transparent, has embarked on a robust community outreach and engagement process to help develop the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP). This process includes holding workshops to allow for public testimony at Commission meetings; a Stakeholder Advisory Committee; and holding public meetings across the State. This summary provides a general overview of the three public meetings held by the Commission during April 2015 to educate the public about Proposition 1, the WSIP and to obtain feedback on developing the WSIP. In addition, this document includes a summary of the major themes from these meetings.

Public meetings were held in Chico (April 13, 2015), Fresno (April 15, 2015) and Pleasant Hill (April 21, 2015). Over 300 members of the public attended the meeting in Chico, 45 in Fresno and 25 in Pleasant Hill. At least two Commissioners attended each meeting, with seven Commissioners attending the Fresno event. In Chico and Pleasant Hill, local politicians attended and made opening remarks. Attendees in each location welcomed the opportunity to learn about Proposition 1, the WSIP and provide feedback to the Commission.

Juliana Birkhoff, senior mediator/facilitator from the Sacramento State, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP), facilitated each meeting. Acting Executive Officer Rachel Ballanti and Project Manager Jennifer Marr presented an overview of Proposition 1, the Commission's role as defined in legislation and the WSIP. Following these presentations, attendees were able to ask questions and make comments.

Major Themes

The public meetings resulted in several key themes: the importance of water storage; the need for continuing public education about Proposition 1 and the WSIP; the impact of the drought on local communities; and concerns over water allocation. Below is a summary of the comments and questions on these themes.

Importance of water storage

Regardless of location, attendees at each public meeting expressed the importance of water storage for the future; however, there are clear regional differences on importance. For example, in Chico, attendees frequently cited a need for water storage to prevent draining the local aquifers or lowering groundwater levels. In Fresno, attendees highlighted the need for water storage to help sustain local communities during the drought. Pleasant Hill residents

highlighted water storage in the Delta and the San Francisco Bay to help with local water supply reliability and flood control.

Need for more education on Proposition 1 and the WSIP

Several attendees at both the Chico and Fresno meetings indicated they believed that in voting for Proposition 1 they were voting to construct reservoirs in their area (Sites and Temperance Flat, respectively). The presentations by Ms. Ballanti and Ms. Marr clarified the intent of Proposition 1. Attendees indicated they were disappointed that funding could potentially go to other projects.

At each public meeting, there were many questions about project eligibility. In particular, attendees consistently provided examples of projects and asked whether such projects would be eligible. In Chico, this included asking about small projects, fire prevention projects, groundwater storage projects, and recycled water projects. Fresno attendees asked specific questions about how projects south of the Delta can be eligible. Consistently, Commissioners and project staff advised that project integration could improve project eligibility.

Several attendees in Chico and Fresno also indicated that potentially eligible projects might not be able start formulating plans now without the criteria that the Commission will use to evaluate projects. Relative to criteria, many residents expressed concern over the requirement of projects to have ecosystem benefits and provide measurable benefits to the Delta or its tributaries. Residents in Pleasant Hill did not express this view. Rather, they commended the program for conserving the ecosystem and providing benefits to the Delta.

The impact of the drought on local communities

In Chico and Fresno, attendees expressed concern about the impact of the drought on their local communities. Chico attendees voiced concerns about draining their local basins and aquifers, diverting local water to other regions of California, and not having the ability to pump from private wells. Fresno attendees voiced concerns about small towns that have no access to water, and high unemployment rates due to reduction in agricultural work.

Concerns about water allocation

While both Chico and Fresno attendees commented on allocations and diversions of water, their advocacy came from very different perspectives. In Fresno, many attendees spoke of the need for increased and continued water allocation to the Central Valley. In contrast, Chico attendees advocated for the discontinuing water allocations to other regions. Pleasant Hill attendees did not address water allocation in their questions or comments.

Conclusion

From the themes above, it appears that more education is needed about Proposition 1 and the WSIP program. In addition, these themes reflect regional differences in perspectives on water storage and allocation. Finally, these meetings brought to the surface the very real consequences of the drought for local communities.