



San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program

Prospectus



July 2021

Background

Today, the San Joaquin Valley (Valley) is facing a perfect storm in managing its water resources for the future. Climate change, population growth, groundwater contamination, unsustainable groundwater pumping, ongoing degradation of the Valley's ecosystems, and other factors threaten the Valley's ability to maintain a vibrant economy and robust environment while achieving social justice goals. For decades, water policy in the Valley has been characterized by conflict, as various interest groups battle each other in the courts, legislatures, and regulatory agencies. This conflict has not solved the serious water policy challenges faced by Valley interests. Thousands of Valley residents, principally in disadvantaged communities, do not have access to safe and affordable drinking water. Thousands of domestic wells have gone dry, and many more will continue to go dry as groundwater levels decline. The Valley's economy is in peril due to the lack of sustainable water supplies. The Valley's ecosystems and species are also suffering due to years of comparative neglect.



In recent years, various interest groups in the Valley have been reaching out to each other to identify common problems and solutions. In fact, leaders from many interest groups have begun to come together to engage in water management issues in the Valley – leaders who are more interested in working with each other than in fighting each other, and developing durable solutions as opposed to ones that are short-term and unsustainable. Rather than individual interest groups seeking to solve the Valley's numerous water challenges separately without regard for the problems faced by others, these groups have

tentatively agreed to collaborate and seek comprehensive, sustainable, equitable, and integrated solutions supported by all.



On September 21, 2020, Stanford University sponsored an "Uncommon Dialogue" via Zoom, which was attended by more than 50 participants representing diverse Valley interest groups. Most participants engaged and shared their views. It was unanimously agreed that the parties would attempt to craft a vision statement, a common problem statement, and ultimately a solution set. The participants also agreed that retaining a facilitation team would help make the process successful. This collaborative effort, now called the San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (SJVWCAP) is unprecedented. The collaborative has now selected a third-party facilitator. More interest groups engaged in Valley water issues are "at the table" than ever before. The participating interest groups include safe drinking water and disadvantaged community (DAC) advocates; local city and county governments; environmental NGOs; growers and the agricultural industry; and water agencies from throughout the Valley. The SJVWCAP is ambitious in scope and seeks to develop solutions to achieve safe and reliable drinking water, environmental restoration, water supply reliability (including SGMA compliance), floodplain management, and other water and land use solutions. These solutions will be pursued not separately, but in an integrated, collaborative, comprehensive action plan to create a more equitable, economically resilient, and sustainable future for the Valley.

Objectives

Inclusiveness. The collaborative is unique in establishing a “big tent” for making joint strategic and policy decisions. A key objective is to include previously marginalized groups, such as safe drinking water and DAC advocates and environmental NGOs and make them full partners in decision-making. In some cases, this will require funding to provide these interests adequate resources and capacity to be equal participants in the process.

Vision Statement. The general policy objectives of the collaborative are laid out in a Vision Statement developed with unanimous approval of SJVWCAP participants. The Vision Statement describes the desired outcomes for this effort and how those should be achieved. Put simply, the collaborative seeks to implement policies that ensure a better and more resilient future for all interest groups. Decisions will be arrived at in a way that listens to all groups’ needs. No interest group will attempt to achieve their ends by throwing other interests “under the bus.” The Vision Statement recognizes that to accomplish this goal will require building relationships of trust; that trust will allow creative collaboration; and that a broad partnership makes feasible what is otherwise infeasible.

Vision Statement

Ensuring a sustainable and resilient water supply for the San Joaquin Valley for multiple benefits by securing safe, reliable, and affordable access to water for drinking; sustainable and productive farms and ranches; healthy communities; and thriving terrestrial and fresh-water ecosystems.

To implement this vision for the Valley, interests from all perspectives must build trust through greater shared understanding of the problems and opportunities we face. Establishing trust gives us an opportunity to collaborate on creative solutions to multiple integrated challenges of water and land management in the San Joaquin Valley. A broad partnership supporting creative solutions makes feasible what is otherwise infeasible.

Phase I. Over the next six months, Phase I activities will lead to a facilitated Problem Statement and an Initial Solution Set. The Problem Statement will require each caucus to recognize the legitimacy of the challenges faced by the other caucuses. The Initial Solution Set will commit all interests to work together on a multi-benefit, integrated and comprehensive solution set that resolves the problems faced by all. Deepening relationships and increasing trust amongst the participants is a critical element for Phase 1 and will create the foundation for on-going success.

Phase II. We expect to launch Phase II in Fall 2021. During Phase II, the collaborative will build on the Initial Solution Set to forge detailed, integrated, and comprehensive solutions to the problems identified in the Problem Statement. When completed, the final integrated solution set will have a very broad support base to assure that it is implementable and durable.

Accomplishments To Date



Since that initial meeting in September 2020, the SJVWCAP has made steady progress.

Initial Governance. In December 2020, the collaborative unanimously approved an initial governance structure, which may be modified in the future, as necessary. At the center of the governance model is a “big tent” Plenary Group, currently with more than 60 members. The Plenary is chaired by Barton “Buzz” Thompson, a prominent water expert and Robert E. Paradise Professor of Natural Resources Law at the Stanford University School of Law,

and Ashley Swearingin, a Valley thought leader and CEO of the Central Valley Community Foundation. Both co-chairs serve in a voluntary capacity. The Plenary Group is a consensus-oriented decision-making body. By “consensus-oriented,” the collaborative recognizes that it may not fully achieve unanimous consent but wants to get as close to that ideal as possible. The Planning Group has 20 members who are willing to devote more time to the effort and set the stage for the Plenary to make decisions. The Planning Group is convened by Dr. Timothy Quinn, retired Executive Director of the Association of California Water Agencies and past William C. Landreth Visiting Fellow at Stanford. The Planning Group is well balanced among the various interest groups and is where most of the work will get done. The 10-member Steering Group is also chaired by Ashley and Buzz. Its primary purpose is to prepare agendas and materials for the Plenary Group to make sure meetings are balanced, well-organized and productive.

The Facilitator Team. At the outset, the leadership of the SJVWCAP realized that a collaborative of this scope

San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Initial Governance Structure



would require a world-class team of facilitators to assist in achieving its goals. Accordingly, the Co-Chairs led an 8-member Facilitator Selection Committee, with representatives of all interest groups, to search for the right team. The committee received 8 proposals in response to an RFP and ultimately chose a highly experienced team from Washington State. The team includes James Waldo, Partner at Gordon, Thomas & Honeywell Consulting Group; James Kramer, President of Kramer Consulting; and Monica Marchetti, owner of Marchetti Custom Communications. One of the main assets of the WKM team is their experience building trust amongst leaders of

diverse interests and accomplishing actions that make a meaningful difference for the affected communities.

Momentum. Since launching in September 2020, the SJVWCAP has gained strong momentum. The Plenary Group has grown from around 50 to 64 members, at least in part because this enterprise has captured the imagination of many in the San Joaquin Valley. There is strong support for the effort in both the state and federal governments. To keep this momentum building will require funding, which has become a top priority for the leaders of the process.

Funding

To build on the momentum already created and continue moving this effort forward, the SJVWCAP is seeking funds for Phase I. The Phase II budget will be developed towards the end of Phase I.

Funds are required for:

- The facilitation team;
- Support for Safe Drinking Water and DAC advocates to assure that they have the resources and capacity to be effective in the process;
- A management team for the SJVWCAP, including an executive officer, deputy executive officer, and senior governance consultant,
- Administrative and legal costs; and
- Fiscal services by Fresno State Foundation.

Our strategy is to raise Phase 1 funds from foundations, local water supply agencies, and state and federal agencies, whose missions will benefit from a successful collaborative. If necessary, individual potential beneficiaries will also be asked to contribute.

Phase 1 Budget		
Expenditure	Monthly Expense	6-month Expense
Facilitators	\$ 30,000	\$ 180,000
SDW Support	\$ 7,000	\$ 42,000
Management	\$ 16,250	\$ 97,500
Fiscal Services	\$ 8,275	\$ 49,650
Misc Administration	\$ 2,000	\$ 12,000
Total	\$ 63,525	\$ 381,150

Conclusion

The San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program is a bold attempt to bring former adversaries under the same big tent to collaboratively solve complex water management problems. The collaborative has substantial momentum and enjoys support from diverse interest groups that help shape water policy in California's sometimes contentious San Joaquin Valley. Currently, securing adequate funding for Phase I is an essential key step to allow a collaborative process to resolve problems that have eluded solutions for decades.



Benefits

The participants in the SJVWCAP have no illusions that the road before them will make for an easy journey. A collaborative of the size and scope they are engaged in takes a lot of hard work. They will have to confront enormous challenges and face seeming impasses more than a few times. But a well-managed collaborative process can be an engine for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. This process holds the promise of a resilient future for all the interests involved. It can result in a Valley where ALL residents have affordable access to safe drinking water; where tens of thousands of acres of flourishing terrestrial and freshwater habitat are created to benefit species and the ecosystem; where multi-benefit land use planning provides for replenishment basins, wildlife habitat, improved drinking water quality, and other public benefits; and where integrated resources management provides reliable water supplies to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and sustain the future of a vigorous agricultural and urban economy.



Current Plenary Group Members

NAME	ORGANIZATION	NAME	ORGANIZATION
Administration (4)		Water Agencies (10)	
Barton Thompson	Co-Chair, Stanford University	Federico Barajas	San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority
Ashley Swearengin	Co-Chair, Central Valley Community Foundation	Kassy Chauhan	Fresno Irrigation District
Tim Quinn	Executive Officer, Stanford University	Austin Ewell	Ewell Group
Laura Ramos	Executive Deputy Officer, California State University, Fresno	Aaron Fukuda	Mid-Kaweah GSA
Safe Drinking Water (6)		Dale Melville	Dudley Ridge Water District
Paul Boyer	City of Farnersville	Jeevan Muhar	Arvin Edison Water Storage District
Jennifer Clary	Clean Water Action	Ric Ortega	Grasslands Water & Resources Conservation Districts
Justine Massey	Community Water Center	Eric Osterling	Greater Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Amanda Monaco	Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability	Jason Phillips	Friant Water Authority
Eddie Ocampo	Self-Help Enterprises	Michelle Reimers	Turlock Irrigation District
Sue Ruiz	Easton Community Services District	Other Participants (16)	
Environmental NGOs (10)		Bill Blomquest	Indiana University
Ashley Boren	Sustainable Conservation	Dave Eggerton	Association of California Water Agencies
Ann Hayden	Environmental Defense Fund	Michael George	State Water Resources Control Board
Kara Heckert	California Regional Director for the American Farmland Trust	Scott Hamilton	Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley
Rene Henery	Trout Unlimited	Ellen Hanak	Public Policy Institute of California
Meghan Hertel	Audubon Society	Rosemary Knight	Stanford University
Rodd Kelsey	The Nature Conservancy	Jay Lund	UC Davis Watershed Science
Catherine Hickey	Point Blue Conservation	Richard Luthy	Stanford University
Amy Merrill	American Rivers	Felecia Marcus	Stanford University
Soapy Mulholland	Sequoia Riverlands Trust	Jan Martinez	Stanford University
Julie Rentner	River Partners	Josue Medellin-Azuara	University of California, Merced
Local Government (6)		Jeff Payne	United States Bureau of Reclamation
Stephanie Anagnoson	Madera County	Steve Rothert	Department of Water Resources
Raul Baraza	Arvin Community Services District	Paul Souza	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Michael Carbajal	City of Fresno, Public Utilities	Joshua Viers	University of California, Merced
Thomas Esqueda	City of Fresno, City Manager	Richard Welsh	United States Bureau of Reclamation
Lacey McBride	Merced County		
Augustine Ramirez	Fresno County		
Agriculture (19)			
Eric Averett	Renewable Resources Group		
Tom Barcellos	Barcellos Farms		
Kimberly Brown	Wonderful Company		
Emmy Cattani	Cattani Farms		
Sarah Clark-Woolf	Water Wise		
John Corkins	Research for Hire		
Steve Etchegaray	Etchegaray Farms		
Carl Evers III	Hancock Farmland Services		
Mike Faria	Vetter Ranches		
Randy Fiorini	Fiorini Farms		
Justin Gioletti	Robert Gioletti and Sons Dairy		
David Mas Masumoto	Masumoto Family Farm		
Cannon Michael	Bowles Farming Company		
John Moore III	Moore Farms, Inc		
Jon Reiter	Cavalrei		
Jack Rice	Madera County White Area		
Jesse Roseman	California Almond Board		
Kole Upton	FM Upton & Sons		
Mike Wade	California Farm Water Coalition		

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