

Public Outreach

7.1 BACKGROUND

The original public outreach component of the Plan was prepared by Lucy & Company. The scope of public outreach included outreach during the plan development stage (Phase I) and outreach for the draft plan stage (Phase II). The adoption of the plan was originally anticipated in 2003; however, it was delayed as a result of the uncertainties that surrounded the County's General Plan. With the adoption of the 2004 General Plan in 2005, and the availability of reliable land use data, this plan has been updated with current demand, supply and other relevant information. As a result, a third phase of public outreach was developed to reengage the purveyors and other stakeholders prior to finalizing the plan and adoption by the Water Agency Board.

The Phase I public outreach included a public workshop, among a variety of other outreach strategies necessary to announce and attract people to the workshop. The project team and coordinating committee met at the conclusion of Phase I to address the results and determine the appropriate outreach efforts to continue in Phase II.

With input from the project Coordinating Committee, a public outreach goal and objectives for both Phase I and Phase II were developed. The Phase III (plan finalization) outreach strategy was developed by Water Agency staff and the ECOLOGIC project management team.

7.1.1 PUBLIC OUTREACH GOAL

The goal of the public outreach was to gain a consensus among county water purveyors and interested stakeholders on a county-wide water plan that the Water Agency board would find appropriate to adopt and implement.

7.1.2 PUBLIC OUTREACH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the original public outreach program were to:

- Increase awareness about the water plan and its development among interested agencies, stakeholders and residents of the communities of the five water purveyors as measured by the results of outreach efforts;
- Enhance the image of the El Dorado County Water Agency as a proactive collaborator, interested in identifying county-wide solutions for water resources and land use planning as measured by positive media stories; and
- Gain support for the adoption of the plan by the Water Agency board as measured by addressing applicable comments on water supply and demand projections gathered during the public outreach process.

The following public outreach activities were proposed and performed to accomplish the objectives and the overall goal.

7.2 PUBLIC OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

7.2.1 STAKEHOLDER DATABASE

An outreach questionnaire was distributed to water purveyors to help identify key stakeholders to be included in the database and determine outreach sensitivities. From this information and other research efforts, a comprehensive stakeholder database was developed.

A database from the water agency was customized to include all county water purveyors, local community representatives, elected officials, development community representatives, environmental groups, local, state and federal agencies and other pertinent stakeholders.

The following steps were taken to refine the database for the mailing of the flyer:

- Received additional mailing lists from the members of the coordinating committee and entered the contacts the database;
- Contacted the water purveyors and asked them for more information. When that information was received, it was immediately entered into the database;
- Distributed the database to all committee and project team members for final revisions and incorporated additions or corrections into the database;

- Conducted additional research to add community groups, neighborhood associations, media contacts, elected and government officials, etc. that were not previously included on the list; and
- Conducted extensive internal review of the database and made appropriate revisions.

7.2.2 MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations were conducted to reach the community at large and notify them about the public workshop and the county water planning effort. The approach – will El Dorado County have enough water for the future? – was intended to inspire the news media to either promote the workshop in advance or generate coverage of the event for a story following the meeting. A news release was developed and was distributed the week of January 27, 2003 to the following local media of each water purveyor community and the Sacramento print media:

- The Georgetown Gazette
- The Mountain Democrat
- The Sacramento Bee
- Sacramento Business Journal
- The Tahoe Daily Tribune

Follow-up calls were conducted and several media ran the story both in advance of the meeting and as a recap. Some reporters included interviews with the water agency and water purveyors.

The following newspapers, with their respective circulation indicated, ran the story. Considering the success in media relations, the story reached thousands of Sacramento area residents as well as the residents of the El Dorado communities involved in the plan.

A subsequent news release was distributed to the same media for the 2007 Water Agency Board/Public Workshop where the final plan was considered by the Board.

Media Coverage

Four of the five media outlets contacted in 2003 ran stories about the plan on the following dates:

- The Sacramento Bee/Sacbee.com, March 2, 2003, circulation: 300,000
- The Tahoe Daily Tribune, February 10, 2003, circulation: 19,500
- The Mountain Democrat, February 6, 2003, circulation: 12,790
- The Georgetown Gazette, February 6, 2003 circulation: 1,525

The coverage was generally positive. Excerpts of the coverage include the following quotes:

- “A workshop was held on February 12, 2003 to comment on the county’s water needs, Curtis said. Although no single issue dominated, he said, people were concerned about water supply and drought protection and how water purveyors would meet demand with the county surface water sources.” (Cathy Locke, *Bee Staff Writer, Sacbee.com*); and
- “The purpose of the committee is to provide countywide input to the plan. Having local knowledge in water issues, members of the coordinating committee provide a valuable resource to result in the most accurate and comprehensive plan possible.” (Georgetown Gazette).

A complete copy of the clips of print coverage is included in Appendix I of this report.

7.2.3 FLYER

Lucy & Company wrote, designed, and printed 500 flyers, which were distributed to the stakeholder database prior to the public workshop. The flyer provided the project background, meeting information, and a graph illustrating current demand versus projected demand for water in the county. The key message – will El Dorado County have enough water for the future? – was intended to inspire the public to come out and learn how the Water Agency is preparing for the future. A copy of the flyer appears in the Appendix I.

The flyers were mailed to the database Wednesday, January 26, 2003.

7.2.4 ADVERTISEMENTS

Quarter-page newspaper ads were designed to announce the meeting. The ads announcing the 2003 workshop ran in the following El Dorado County newspapers between February 5 and February 11, 2003:

- The Tahoe Daily Tribune, February 10, 2003, circulation 19,500

- The Mountain Democrat, February 6, 2003, circulation 12,790

Subsequent board/public workshop notices were run in the following newspapers for the 2007 workshop:

- The Mountain Democrat
- The Tahoe Daily Tribune
- Georgetown Gazette

As in the case of media relations, the newspaper ads reached several thousand El Dorado County residents prior to the workshops. A copy of the ads appears in Appendix I.

7.3 PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

The February 12, 2003 public workshop was held at the El Dorado County Supervisors Meeting Room, from 6 to 8 PM and consisted of a brief overview presentation on the purpose of the plan along with a summary of the data gathered and proposed alternatives to date. “Work stations” were also available in the lobby where the public could speak one-on-one with a representative from any of the water purveyors including Grizzly Flats, Georgetown Divide, South Tahoe, El Dorado Irrigation District, the Water Agency and the Agricultural Commission.

Sign-in sheets, nametags, agendas, and other pertinent materials were also provided. A project fact sheet of the proposed alternatives for each water purveyor was prepared and distributed.

Additionally, maps of each water district were displayed at each workstation.

The 2007 public workshop was held at the El Dorado County Water Agency Board of Directors Meeting Room and consisted of a review of the updated supply and demand information and a discussion of the long range outlook and recommendations for the county.

7.3.1 ATTENDEES

Despite the significant media coverage of and newspaper ad placement for the February 12, 2003 public workshop, only eight members of the public in addition to participating staff, attended the public workshop. The 2007 workshop had a similar number of the public attending. Extensive comments were received either at the workshop or during the public review period from eight individuals.

7.3.2 FORMAT/PUBLIC WORKSHOP

At the 2003 workshop, the EDCWA and the Agricultural Commission managed workstation one. Representatives from the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) met with residents at workstation two. Grizzly Flats Community Services District and Georgetown Public Utility District (GDPUD) officials fielded residents' comments at workstation three, and South Tahoe Public Utility (STPUD) District representatives staffed workstation four. Tahoe City Public Utility District (TCPUD) data were represented through handouts and a map for the interested public.

The 2007 workshop was held at a regularly scheduled Water Agency Board meeting, where the Board and public received an overview of the final draft of the plan.

7.3.3 PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

A summary of written comments, questions and suggestions received at the workshops via discussions held with coordinating committee members at the 2003 workshop are included in Appendix I. Extensive comments were received either at the 2007 workshop or during the public review period from eight individuals. Responses to the 2003 and 2007 comments are also included in Appendix I.

A post-meeting recap and Phase II public outreach plan are included in Appendix I.