



Facilitator's Report: Jerri Conrad

Washoe County Department of Water Resources  
Ground Mitigation Public Meeting  
Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2011, 6 p.m.

The context: The Washoe County Department of Water Resources (WCDWR) held a community meeting to discuss ground water management and domestic well mitigation issues in the Callahan Ranch area. The meeting goal was to gather input related to proposed changes to the Mt. Rose Schedule of Fees and Charges, and to present information about WCDWR's Financial Assistance Loan Program and the Galena-Mt. Rose Ground Water Management Plan. Comments will be delivered to the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners on Feb. 22.

The process: Commissioner Humke opened the 100+ resident meeting and was followed by facilitator Jerri Conrad, who reviewed the process including the meeting ground rules and parking lot. Rosemary Menard then presented information related to the three topics. At the completion of the presentation, Jerri Conrad facilitated an open discussion calling on residents for clarifying questions first and then opened the floor for individual comments. Comment cards were provided for residents who couldn't stay. Those comments are also included here. A short list of residents who needed individual follow up with WCDWR staff was collected. We also collected a short list of residents who wanted to be kept informed from WCDWR regarding these issues.

The outcome: This list of issues is provided to the WCDWR. The input is organized by subject matter:

**What happened and didn't happen "back then"**

- What are the rights of long-term homeowners – why aren't they being grandfathered in and allowed to hook-up for free?
- Not notified of construction of the water system and now can't do anything about it (i.e., deepen their well).
- Why didn't Washoe County put in sewer piping at the same time as the water lines?
  - Answer from County: not needed at the time, or even now.
- DWR' is taking of our water and then requiring that we have to hook-up and pay for it when it was ours in the first place.
- Concerned about septic systems not being installed at the same time as the water pipes – won't sewers be mandated at some point in the future due to water quality impacts?
- Not notified (or adequately notified) of well deepening moratorium associated with installation of the water system, given a chance to deepen.
- Questioning the noticing of water lines going through and not being given a chance to deepen well.
- Concern about the inadequate public noticing of the transfer of water rights from UNR and Redfield to the Tessa wells?
- Not getting whole information regarding mining of water – had their well looked at before the water lines came in and were told they had plenty – no one said that the amount of pumping was going to change dramatically and that they would be directly affected.
- Impacted well owners not notified when UNR/Arrowcreek took well water.
  - Answer from County: at the time the project did not meet the State Engineer's quantity threshold for public notification.
- When we had the choice, why weren't we told we could drill deeper before Washoe County mined our water?

**Growth/Development**

- Concerned about future growth and development in the area.
- Questions about source of and impacts of golf course irrigation.
- Believe the County is taking existing water for future development.
- County should require those causing the impact to pay for all impacted domestic well owner's costs of connecting and raise rates on new development to cover those costs.
- Many area residents are long term owners and are on fixed incomes and shouldn't be required to subsidize growth by having to pay to hook-up or for the monthly cost of water.

# goodStanding

- Concerns about how DWR's plan is sustainable if the water table keeps dropping.
- Questioning the proposed adaptive management strategy in the Mt. Rose Groundwater Management Plan – adaptive management isn't always successful.

## No cost hook-up

- How about those who paid more than the \$10k to deepen our wells – we should be able to hook up for free and the County should include that assurance in the plan.
- If residents are forced to hook-up because their well goes dry, the County should pay for them to hook up to the municipal water.
- Residents should have the option to deepen their well at their own cost or the County should pay for the hookup and residents should be allowed to pay a flat rate rather than the metered rate until the property changes hands.

## How the County is handling the process

- On behalf of area residents, the County should request that the State drop the prohibition on deepening wells.
- Pleased with the county taking a step forward.
- 2/3 reduction in fees and charges is a good first step.
- The County's estimates on the on-site costs of hooking up and abandoning a well are low, so even with the discount of the connection fees, the cost of connecting to the system is still very significant.
- Commissioners need more community input – no decision should be made yet.
- Residents should be assured that whatever agreements are reached TMWA will honor them in the event that a merger occurs.
- Residents should work to get everyone on the same page to ensure that the County is treating everyone fairly.
- Frustration that the State Engineer over-appropriates groundwater resources and creates an environment where this kind of situation can occur.
- More / better mechanisms are needed for notifying affected well owners.

## Reimbursement for deepening wells before municipal line

- Reimburse for those who deepened their wells – these residents took steps to deepen in advance of the water system's construction and should be compensated for some or all of their costs or guaranteed that they can connect for free.
- Concern of placement of County two TESSA wells – why were they placed so close to the Callahan Ranch area where there would be such a significant impact to the domestic wells that were obviously there and had been for a long time.

Estimates on hooking up and abandoning a well are low.

## Water rights

- Why is WCDWR taking away the ability of landowners to deepen their wells?
- Who can/can't deepen their wells? What are the rules and costs?
- Collecting fees twice – already paid for water when the house was built and now I'm being asked to pay again.
- Give us another chance to deepen well.
- What happens if I have water rights associated with my well – do the same rules apply to me?

## Conservation

- Regarding the suggestion that people paying a metered rate use water more efficiently, the County should be more aggressive in promoting conservation and should start by making better, more sustainable decisions about its own operations and facilities.
- People in the room are conserving – first "gray water" system in Washoe County.

## Miscellaneous

- Residents should keep in contact with each other to get through this.
- Need some viable alternatives for those who don't qualify for the Loan Program.