

**INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVISED MEETING SUMMARY**

September 12, 2012, 4:00 p.m.

Colorado River Conference Rooms, Southern Nevada Water Authority  
100 City Parkway, Seventh Floor, Las Vegas, Nevada

Members Present	Tom Burns Thalia Dondero Bob Ferraro Mike Forman Warren Hardy Bob Kasner Jennifer Lewis Otto Merida	Bobbi Miracle Phil Ralston John Restrepo Scot Rutledge David Scherer Danny Thompson Virginia Valentine
Members Absent	Kirk Clausen Garry Goett Katherine Jacobi	Carol Jefferies Dwight Jones D. Taylor
Staff Present:	Pat Mulroy John Entsminger Rick Holmes Phil Speight Ron Zegers Greg Walch	Ken Albright Marc Jensen Scott Krantz Zane Marshall Julie Wilcox Andy Belanger Katie Horn

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

The Southern Nevada Water Authority's (SNWA's) Integrated Resource Planning Advisory Committee (IRPAC) met on Wednesday, September 12, 2012. The meeting began at approximately 4:10 p.m. A list of attendees is provided in Attachment A.

*Discuss ground rules:* Facilitator, Dave Ebersold, summarized the committee's ground rules: attend and participate; be prepared; be willing to explore goals, constraints and multiple options; listen attentively and with an open mind; respect the ideas of others; avoid side discussions; maintain focus on the topic under discussion; and achieve consensus.

*Receive the June 27, 2012 meeting summary:* There being no comments or questions, the meeting summary was considered received by the committee.

*Receive a presentation on the history of Southern Nevada's water use:* John Entsminger, Senior Deputy General Manager, SNWA, explained today's presentation constitutes the first half of a two-part presentation on the history of water in Southern Nevada. Part two is intended for the October 3, 2012 meeting.

Before he began, Mr. Entsminger took the opportunity to discuss some water-related terms he would use throughout the presentation. An acre-foot is defined as a unit of volume in reference to large-scale water resources, and is equal to 325,851 gallons or one acre of surface area by a depth of one foot. On average, one acre-foot serves two single-family homes in Southern Nevada annually.

The presentation highlighted the following key activities that shaped Southern Nevada:

- 1910 Las Vegas had 3,000 residents and artesian water was plentiful.
- 1920 Population increased to 5,000 residents, and spring and groundwater met water demands.
- 1920's: The State of Nevada issued permits for groundwater and surface water to meet growing demands.
- 1922: The Colorado River Compact was signed, which allocated 300,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water per year to Nevada—the smallest Colorado River allocation among the river's seven basin states.
- 1930: Las Vegas' population was 8,500 residents. Groundwater continued to meet the community's needs.
- 1931: Hoover Dam construction began. Hoover Dam was a federal project, managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Its purpose was to control floods, provide irrigation water and produce hydroelectric power.
- 1935: The Nevada State Legislature created the Colorado River Commission of Nevada (CRC) to manage and protect Nevada's Colorado River water and power resources.

Phil Ralston asked if the CRC was a part of Nevada's government. Mr. Entsminger replied that the CRC is a department within the State of Nevada's Executive Branch and is responsible for Nevada's 300,000 acre-foot allocation. Mr. Ralston then asked if there was a controlling body over the Colorado River Compact. Pat Mulroy, General Manager, SNWA, explained that the Compact acts as a contract among the seven basin states and the federal government. Therefore, any changes to the Compact would have to be approved by each of the participating legislatures, approved by each state's governor, ratified by Congress and signed by the President.

- 1940: 16,000 residents. Water managers assumed an unlimited groundwater supply.
- 1940's: Basic Management, Inc. (BMI) established a major factory in Henderson. To meet its water demands, BMI constructed a water line from Hoover Dam. Groundwater continued to meet all other demands.
- 1947 The Nevada Legislature created the Las Vegas Valley Water District (LVVWD) to coordinate and manage regional water supplies.

1950 Southern Nevada’s population grew to 48,000 residents. Local groundwater met demands even though the basin was over allocated and over pumped. The community’s reliance on local groundwater, however, was proving insufficient and adversely impacted the environment.

Bob Ferraro asked if the use of springs was gone at this point. Ms. Mulroy confirmed the springs were gone and the community was relying solely on groundwater.

1955 The State Engineer suspended the issuance of permanent groundwater permits and began issuing temporary permits. It was anticipated that the temporary permits would be rescinded when the facilities to provide Colorado River water became available.

Mr. Ralston asked if any permanent water rights remain today. Mr. Entsminger advised that both permanent and temporary water rights remain in Southern Nevada. Ms. Mulroy noted that the LVVWD owned most of the region’s temporary rights, but surrendered them once Colorado River water was available. She then explained that the State Engineer cannot force a private party to hook into a municipal system until that system is a specific distance from the municipal supply. As the system grows and gets closer to those wells with temporary rights, the State Engineer can revoke those rights if the well has failed, becomes contaminated or the water is not being put to beneficial use.

Thalia Dondero asked if the owner of a permanent right can be forced to relinquish it. Ms. Mulroy responded no—the permanent right would have to be purchased. She then went on to explain that the Groundwater Management Program (GMP) was implemented as an insurance policy to well owners. If a well should go bad, the GMP would pay 85 percent of the costs to hook the well owner into the system. She indicated that there will be more detailed discussions about groundwater at a future meeting.

1960 127,000 residents

1968 Construction began on the Southern Nevada Water System in order to access a water supply separate from depleting groundwater supplies.

1971 The Southern Nevada Water System became operational. Colorado River water was regarded as almost limitless.

1980: Southern Nevada’s population grew to 463,000 residents.

1980’s: Southern Nevada began to artificially recharge the groundwater basin, which is used as a “savings account” for the community.

Mr. Ralston asked what the annual equilibrium of groundwater is in the Las Vegas Basin. Mr. Entsminger replied the estimate is 30,000-40,000 acre-feet of perennial yield. Ms. Mulroy added that around 1985, local water agencies began to artificially recharge the groundwater basin to end subsidence. To date, the SNWA has injected 330,000 gallons into the aquifer. Mr. Ralston asked if today’s groundwater use exceeds the perennial yield. Mr. Entsminger replied that the permitted amount exceeds perennial yield; however, the valley’s well users do not pump all of their permitted amounts.

- 1982: The second phase of the Southern Nevada Water System became operational.
- 1990: Southern Nevada's population more than doubled to 750,000 residents and growth continued. It was projected that Southern Nevada's population would be at 1 million by the year 2000. Colorado River water was only expected to meet the community's needs through the early 2000s.
- 1991: The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) was formed to manage water supplies; implement conservation programs; develop new supplies; manage long-term water resource planning efforts; and meet state and federal water-quality standards. SNWA member agencies include: Big Bend Water District, City of Boulder City, City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Water Reclamation District and the Las Vegas Valley Water District.
- 1993: The LVVWD became the SNWA's operating agent.
- 1994: The first Integrated Resource Planning Advisory Committee (IRPAC) was convened to address critical water issues.
- 1995: SNWA Board adopts IRPAC recommendations.
- 1995: The Southern Nevada Water System was transferred from the Colorado River Commission to the SNWA.
- 1996: A subsequent IRPAC planning process was initiated to study different approaches to financing and rate setting. This committee adopted the "growth pays for growth" model; incorporated sales tax as a revenue source; assumed that water rates should contribute to new facilities; and assumed that increased revenues should fund conservation programs.

Mr. Entsminger noted that the IRPAC's recommendations became the cornerstone of SNWA's policies.

- 1997 The SNWA began purchasing water on the Muddy and Virgin rivers.
- 2001 The BOR's Interim Surplus Guidelines were finalized. The guidelines allow the SNWA to use additional Colorado River supplies when available.
- 2004 Arizona water bank agreement finalized.

Mr. Ralston asked if the recommendations of the 2004 IWPAC committee will be addressed. Mr. Entsminger replied that those recommendations will be discussed at the next meeting.

Referring to the land use map slides shown in the History of Water presentation, Scot Rutledge asked what the yellow line depicts. Mr. Entsminger indicated the yellow line represents the hydrographic basin boundary of Basin 212—the Las Vegas Valley hydrographic basin, as determined by the State Engineer based on surface water hydrology.

Mr. Kasner asked about water schedules and drought-resistant grass seeds. Ms. Mulroy noted that the SNWA is experimenting with the use of water sensors in a Las Vegas neighborhood. As for drought-resistant seeds, there are some grass types that are more water efficient than others. The SNWA is

working with DRI and Mekorot (Israel's national water company) to develop the most drought-resistant plants as possible. She advised that the committee will discuss conservation at length a future meetings.

Regarding Arizona water banking, Bob Ferraro asked if the SNWA knows how much has been banked to date. Mr. Entsminger explained the SNWA has banked 70,000 acre-feet with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California; 600,000 acre-feet with Arizona with the guarantee of 600,000 more in the future; and 330,000 acre-feet banked in the Las Vegas aquifer. Mr. Ferraro then asked if the quality of the water in the aquifer has deteriorated. John Entsminger said no.

There being no more questions from the committee, Mr. Ebersold asked if the committee had any comments or observations about the presentation. Mike Forman indicated that he felt Southern Nevadans generally understand that drought is permanent, but he doesn't think that sentiment is shared by the other basin states. He thanked the SNWA for educating Southern Nevada on that issue. Ms. Mulroy added that the Colorado River Basin Study, which evaluates the flows under various hydrology assumptions, will be a template for other national basins. Mr. Ralston asked if the study is almost complete; Ms. Mulroy advised that it will likely be released by the end of the year.

Mr. Ebersold commented that he overheard committee members say "that will never happen" when Ms. Mulroy was describing what it would take to change the Colorado River Compact. Ms. Mulroy noted the Compact protects each state's allocation.

Mr. Ralston asked if the Colorado River Basin Study could affect the management of the Compact. Ms. Mulroy responded that the study could affect the management of water within the Compact, but not necessarily the Compact itself.

Ms. Dondero asked if desalination is a part of the Colorado River Basin Study. Pat Mulroy confirmed it was. Mr. Ebersold advised that the committee will discuss desalination at a future meeting.

*Develop a mission statement for the committee:* Mr. Ebersold reported that he met individually with 19 of the 21 committee members and asked everyone the same set of questions. He went on to summarize the committee's answers to those questions. From highest to least, the most important issues are: supply, groundwater development project, conservation, few resource options, water quality, the Colorado River, cost, desalination, beneficial use, reliability and Intake No. 3.

Mr. Ebersold noted that the committee was also asked to identify any key concerns facing the committee. These included the recent rate increase; a transparent process; an unclear purpose and mission; the protection of Southern Nevada's resources; and that the committee wants to come to its own conclusions regarding water issues.

When asked to define a successful process, the committed noted a revised rate setting, direction for future supplies, consensus, accurate information, responsibility, regional Colorado River coordination and an improved CIP process would be key components to success.

Ms. Dondero asked how the committee knows that the information provided is accurate. Dave Ebersold asked the committee if they felt the information provided at this meeting was accurate/adequate. Committee members nodded in the affirmative.

Ms. Dondero asked where the information provided to committee members originated. Dave Ebersold explained that the technical information is supplied by SNWA experts. Scot Rutledge observed that assumptions change over time, and Danny Thompson reiterated that assumptions and projections are just a best guess based on the information available at the time.

Following this discussion, the committee approved the following mission statement:

The Integrated Resource Planning Advisory Committee will evaluate current and near-term (2016) water charges, future resources, conservation, and facility needs in a way that supports adaptation to changing conditions, and develop recommendations on all these areas for the Southern Nevada Water Authority's Board of Directors.

*Discuss the committee process:* In May 2012, the SNWA Board of Directors appointed 21 members to IRPAC. Subsequently, the Las Vegas Valley Water District Board of Directors asked that a rates subcommittee be formed to evaluate the recently-imposed surcharge and make recommendations to the LVVWD Board on related water rates and charges. On October 2, it is anticipated that the LVVWD Board will appoint at least five individuals to a financial subcommittee that will meet alongside IRPAC to evaluate SNWA revenue sources, expenditures and develop a long-term funding strategy. Following the funding discussions and related recommendations, the financial subcommittee, as appointed by SNWA member agencies, will dissolve, leaving the 21-member IRPAC to move forward in the committee process and evaluate other water-related issues.

Bob Ferraro asked how the committee will gather additional public comment. Ms. Mulroy responded that all committee meetings are public. In addition, the SNWA will conduct public outreach and committee conclusions are disseminated to the public.

Mr. Kasner noted that the history of water presentation did not touch on the Clean Water Coalition (CWC). Pat Mulroy advised that the CWC was created to build a pipeline through the Las Vegas Wash, and there was no crossover between the CWC and the SNWA. When growth disappeared, the need for the CWC's facilities disappeared. Mr. Kasner asked what happened to the funds collected by the CWC. Ms. Mulroy explained that she was of the understanding that all CWC revenues were disbursed back to its agencies, but it was up to each agency what they did with the refunded amounts.

There were no further questions from the committee or discussion.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ed Uehling, Las Vegas, stated that the recently approved infrastructure surcharge was politically targeted toward Las Vegas' weakest economic group, the IRPAC's newly adopted mission statement is designed to be meaningless and adaptable to any conclusion; and SNWA employee salaries are mathematically unsustainable.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

