

From: Michael Winn  
To: Berg, Carolyn  
Cc: Luft, Sue, LeBrun, Michael S, Harrison, Jim, Vierheilig, Larry  
Date: 09/28/2013 11:17 AM  
Subject: Re: WRAC Agenda - October 2, 2013 at 1:30- 3:30 PM

Item #6 this coming Wednesday looks like an opportunity to eliminate significant projects from the purview of the WRAC; and if that happens, the WRAC's effectiveness will diminish seriously and the Board will not receive the kind of advice it needs.

Small projects, and even larger projects in areas with adequate long-term water, do not need much attention. A good glance to make sure they are not a threat is usually enough. If the WRAC took on all the small projects that pop up countywide, there would never be time or staff enough for the task.

The list of projects at the top of the Agenda page 10 about the WRAC's past efforts is incomplete, but it can be completed with little effort:

One reason it is incomplete is the hidden assumption that WRAC involvement means only EIRs, and that is not the case. The WRAC does indeed opine on some EIRs, but it also opines on annexation proposals, General Plan Amendments, and other steps in the process about which the Board needs to be informed and will vote.

The WRAC has always had regular reports on the Nacimiento pipeline, for example, and has chimed in from time to time; though it is true that, since it had plenty of advice being given in the North County, the WRAC did not need to opine as often as it might have. The Board was fully informed at all times.

A note might be appended to the Laetitia Ag Cluster proposal to say that this proposal has come to the WRAC in several different configurations, and each time the WRAC has formed a subcommittee to look at it...again. No distinction should be made between what is listed here as two projects for Laetitia. Such an effort to "piecemeal" the analysis is specifically forbidden in CEQA. And apparently there is no "end date" for this yet.

The WRAC was involved with the Los Osos project longer than the two months listed. We even held a public meeting in the Supervisors' Boardroom that lasted most of a day. There again, like Nacimiento, the Board had a wealth of information coming from its own Technical Group, so the WRAC did not need to spearhead the analyses; but its progress was reported often to the WRAC over the years. Members of the public - but no WRAC member - tried hard to get the WRAC more involved, and in my view we were wise to avoid it.

The Nipomo Supplemental Water Project ("Waterline Intertie Project" has not been the label for several years and was changed before it went to a public vote) had lots of WRAC review, which included both reports on design and capacity to the WRAC on several occasions by proponents and opponents, reports on ongoing litigation (and the final success of the efforts to defend the Basin), and reports that were incorporated into the Planning Department's COSE and then annual RCSs, and Public Work's Water Master Plan. Saying "No WRAC Review" gives entirely the wrong impression.

The Shandon Community Plan may seem to have ended before it even began, but of course the reality is that the dates listed are wrong. (Easy fix!) And much of the work we did on it was folded into the larger County effort for the entire Basin.

Excelaron's proposal may have been "informational only", but members of the WRAC looked at it very closely, in public meetings organized by Planning and by Oasis (who were working for Excelaron). It was only after most folks concluded that it would not have a regional effect that the WRAC decided not to take it up for further official review and comment.

Price Canyon and Spanish Springs both had lots of WRAC attention, with reports to the WRAC about many aspects of the proposals. It was indeed within the Board's purview, in that two Supervisors from the Board serve on LAFCO and would be voting on the annexation proposal. Also, one WRAC member (Ed Eby) served on LAFCO, and the WRAC was kept informed throughout the process.

The WRAC discussed and opined on the EIR for the Diani expansion of their gravel mining in the Santa Maria River, and the work we did on it helped the WRAC when it evaluated the Oster/Las Pilitas quarry proposal.

The WRAC also discussed at some length the effort of Santa Barbara County (being pushed by the City of Santa Maria) to move the county line, jump the Santa Maria River, and annex many hundreds of acres in SLO County for development purposes. WRAC members organized countywide to oppose this, and we were successful. (There was never an EIR for this.)

Sorry, Carolyn. I have gone on longer than I expected to, but I'll conclude by commenting simply that Item #6 is highly significant; and I hope the WRAC does not back away from giving the Board the same level of expert advice and comments that it has over the last dozen years or so.

Cordially,

Mike