



WATER ISSUES - The Antelope Valley Regional Water Management Group met Wednesday to discuss water issues and solutions for the region until 2035. Ken Kirby from Kirby Consulting Group addresses the Water Management Group, an entity formed by 11 area water agencies, at the Larry Chimbole Cultural Center in Palmdale. Kirby talked about steps to form a

collaborative plan.

KELLY LACEFIELD/Valley Press

Water group makes plans to float region to 2035

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By ALISHA SEMCHUCK
Valley Press Staff Writer

PALMDALE - Water issues and possible solutions to keep the region afloat until 2035 highlighted a meeting Wednesday morning of the Antelope Valley Regional Water Management Group - a new entity formed by 11 area water agencies.

Water purveyors, along with representatives from the county, Lancaster and Palmdale - about 50 strong - attended the 2½-hour session at the Larry Chimbole Cultural Center, where Adam Arika, assistant division chief for the Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts, greeted the crowd. They intend to develop an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, with input from government agencies at every level from municipal through federal in addition to environmental groups, business leaders and vulnerable communities.

"A week ago we learned the state was planning on diverting some funds," Arika said, adding those officials are considering awarding as much as \$163 million in proposed Proposition 50, Round 2 dollars to "unfunded applicants from Round 1." Prop. 50 is a competitive grant program for river parkway projects. Eligibility requires proposed projects to provide public access to waterways and also offer recreational opportunities like bike trails along rivers and streams. The projects also must include plans to restore riparian habitat to benefit wildlife and water quality.

The action being considered at the state level "will have a major impact on the Antelope Valley Region, by reducing the total funds we can compete for under

Prop. 50 from \$196.2 million to \$33.3 million," Ariki said. The change means seven water regions got funded "and the remaining nine did not, We do not like the approach the state is planning on taking."

He said a letter was sent to the State Water Board requesting them to "allow everybody to compete for funding under the spirit of the law."

"We felt we should go to Sacramento and meet with Director (Lester) Snow and tell him why (funds are) critical" for this area, Ariki said, referring to the head of the California Department of Water Resources.

He said \$27 million was "allocated for the Lahontan Region," to which the Valley belongs, from Prop. 84 money, an initiative voters passed that authorized upward of \$5.3 billion in general obligation bonds to ensure water quality, supply and flood control.

"There is a lot at stake," Ariki said. "We formed a subcommittee to spread the word."

Heather Gallardy, a civil engineer for L.A. County Waterworks, said the subcommittee intends to focus on public outreach - a coordinated effort in the Valley aimed at informing all stakeholders as well as the general public about the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

Ken Kirby, head of the Kirby Consulting Group Inc. in Sacramento, talked about the steps needed to form a collaborative plan.

The group must "adopt smart goals" in order for the process to work. The members also must "create a safe space for interaction, establish a clear course of action and demonstrate tangible progress."

He said their success depends on a willingness to "participate fully." They must treat others with dignity, maintain open minds that consider new ideas and "be truthful, share accurate facts" about their situation. The water situation can vary from one segment of the Valley to another based on a variety of factors.

Kirby said people should budget water the way they budget their bank accounts and finances. They have to calculate the water contained in the basin, which is closed and has no outlet to the ocean.

Valley water comes from precipitation, snow runoff, underground streams and the State Water Project. It gets consumed by municipal and industrial users plus agricultural demand. A solid water plan requires balancing supply and demand -

basic economics, he pointed out.

But a long-term plan into the year 2035 is not foolproof, Kirby. said. Forecasting the demand "is make-believe. We don't know what will happen in 2035. We don't know what's going to happen next week."

Yet, Kirby said, going 20 years out is plausible. That plan should be updated every five to 10 years with specifics. And even the best of plans won't "get us off the hook" if the water supply is interrupted for any reason, such as an earthquake or equipment malfunction.

asemchuck@avpress.com