

# Water plan delivers hope to this region

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PALMDALE - Authors of the Antelope Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Plan unveiled a two-inch-thick, more than 500-page draft report for public review in Palmdale on July 10 and in Rosamond on Wednesday night.

IRWMP, as officials nicknamed the plan, is a document aimed at procuring grant funds from the state. Planners have targeted Proposition 50, Round 2 money, and they believe the Antelope Valley stands a chance of receiving a windfall of up to \$25 million from that till to use on a variety of projects needed to secure a reliable water supply for residents and businesses.

Ken Kirby, owner of Kirby Consulting Group Inc. in Davis served as facilitator at the Palmdale session, and Melinda Barrett, water conservation program manager for Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts, presented the plan at the Rosamond meeting.

"Clearly, there's a lot of information in this plan," Kirby told the 30 or so people gathered in Palmdale. "I'm guessing most of you won't read this entire thing," he said, holding up the draft report that weighs nearly five pounds. "So we provided a condensed version, the take-home version," a 15-page report that highlights key points.

He explained the plan developed after roughly one year of meetings involving collaboration among Los Angeles and Kern counties; AV water purveyors, retailers, a wholesaler and mutuals; the cities of Palmdale, Lancaster and California City; Edwards Air Force Base; unincorporated towns; the Building Industry Association-Antelope Valley chapter; and the Los Angeles County and Kern County farm bureaus.

Some of the priority projects identified by plan developers include the Upper Amargosa Creek Recharge, Flood Control and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project extending from the California Aqueduct to east of 20th Street West; an aquifer storage and recovery project, an Antelope Valley

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Water Bank; a Littlerock Dam sediment removal project; Phase 2 of the Antelope Valley recycled water project; and a comprehensive water conservation and efficient use program.

"Why plan?" Kirby asked the crowd.

"I focused on three things," he said, answering his own question. "People, information (and) action."

As far as the people factor, Kirby said, "This region faces significant challenges related to water." That said, he added, information about water use and its effects "can help address the challenges." Finally, he emphasized, "action must be taken" or the problems will grow worse.

"As we set out (developing) this plan, we wanted to create a balanced approach." Kirby said the plan rests within the framework of a state-sponsored initiative - a statewide Integrated Regional Water Management Plan. "It follows the requirements of the state to qualify for grant money. We identified issues and needs. We put together a clear set of objectives. We discussed water management strategies - a list of all the things people have been able to think of to help manage the water supply."

Kirby pointed out that water is an issue in the Valley because "supplies are uncertain (and) demand is greater than supply." Furthermore, he added, "you can't take water quality for granted."

"Historically, land use planning has been done independently from water use management. You can't do that anymore." The mismatch between supply and demand must be balanced, and the projects listed in IRWMP attempt to do that.

The plan addresses how to provide water for urban use and how to provide water for agricultural use in the future. Without taking appropriate action now, Kirby said, the Valley will have half its current amount of water in 20 years, yet the population is projected to double.

"This is not a new problem," according to Jim Dodson, president of the Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District. "It's been faced in a lot of other communities. They have practices required by ordinance. Voluntary (water cutbacks) just doesn't happen."

"No one who uses water in the region can (conserve) in isolation," Kirby

said. "Everyone who uses water affects everyone else. No one can afford to ignore this problem anymore. This is a generational problem. It didn't happen overnight."

Several folks at the meeting blamed the problem on rapid, continued and uncontrolled development in Palmdale and Lancaster, despite an inadequate infrastructure. "It sounds to me like people in the Valley will pay for the developers to make money," said a man named John, who declined to give his last name. He described himself as a Palmdale resident and an engineer.

Barrett said her presentation before 20 people in Rosamond was similar with people asking many of the same questions.

"They didn't talk so much about development," she said. Instead, they were concerned about being excluded.

Although they took a positive approach, Barrett said "They wanted to make sure that they would continue to be included - to make sure it's truly a regional plan.

"They asked whether we are taking environmentally sensitive areas into consideration as well as community concerns when we plan projects." Barrett said the issue of a proposed water bank on land east of Rosamond, purchased by the Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency came up. That plan has faced opposition by residents in the vicinity of Avenue A and Gaskell Road.

Overall, the people who attended the meetings appeared supportive of the Water Management Plan.

"This Integrated Regional Water Plan is the first time we have a definitive and quantifiable analysis of water needs for today and into the future," said Norm Hickling, field representative for Los Angeles County 5th District Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich.

"Supervisor Antonovich commends the work all the different agencies and organizations put into forming this water management plan," Hickling said.

Kirby and Barrett reminded folks that public comments on the draft report are needed by Aug. 1. Written comments can be submitted online by visiting the Web site [www.AVWaterPlan.org](http://www.AVWaterPlan.org), then clicking on the Contact Us link. Also, letters can be mailed to the attention of Barrett at the

Regional Water Management Group, care of L.A. County Department of Public Works, Waterworks Division, P.O. Box 1460, Alhambra, CA 91802-1460.

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