

Upper San Dieguito Watershed Field Trip
Notes
Technical Advisory Committee
May 19th, 2005

Attendees: Mike Gonzales, Lillian Busse, Maeve Hanley, Jeff Pasek, Jason Jackson, Ted Griswold, Cathy Cibit, Bob Collins, and Richard Wright.

Stop 1: Sutherland Reservoir

Jeff Pasek spoke about the history of the reservoir. It is currently the second least full of all the City's reservoirs [Morena is lower] and is important for storage of local rainwater. It is a secondary reservoir . Water is periodically transferred by pipeline and creek to the San Vicente Reservoir which results in the loss of this water to the San Dieguito Watershed but adds to the San Diego River Watershed except in times of heavy overflow from heavy rains and minimal leakage from the dam. In other words Sutherland Reservoir is hydrologically separated from the San Dieguito Watershed. There is an agreement with the Ramona Water District to use some of Sutherland's water for municipal uses. The prime recipient is the San Diego Country Estates.

Recreational uses were discussed which overall are light. State law prohibits direct recreational use of drinking water reservoirs but there is an exemption of this law in San Diego due, in part, to recreation at Otay Reservoir which was allowed before State law came into existence. There is primarily fishing and waterfowl hunting and a limited amount of turkey hunting. 4-Stroke engines are used in the reservoir.

The water quality is good with clear visibility and low TDS. The pathogen load is not high. This reservoir is on the Regional Water Quality Control Board's "watch list" for potentially impaired water bodies for color. Stream monitoring is conducted in the tributaries.

Are there any discharges upstream? There is a small wastewater treatment plant in Julian; septic tanks are permitted by the County Health Department. The greatest impact is from commercial and residential development.

The land uses in this area include National Forest, tribal lands (Mesa Grande and Santa Ysabel Reservations), and the majority is privately owned. Downstream there is public lands and open space bought by the Nature Conservancy. There is a proposal to purchase land around the reservoir via Prop 50 monies called "Sutherland East".

Water rights were also discussed. The City Water Department has water rights below the dam and most likely has surface water rights above the reservoir. This needs more research.

As a bit of background, the City purchased the Pueblo Lands and therefore has water rights downstream of the dam and most likely has surface water rights upstream of the reservoir. This needs more research.

An arrangement was made with the Helix Water District and then the San Vicente Reservoir was built. Water was acquired from Los Angeles to supply a growing San Diego.

Ted Griswold said he would look into water rights upstream or in the tributaries. Ted discussed riparian rights and residential development (if a stream flows through it, property owner can use it temporarily such as impoundments). This is subject to state requirements.

A trail is proposed from “coast to crest” with a trail along the north and east sides of Sutherland Reservoir. Fencing is also proposed on the east side but no funding to build it. Groundwater monitoring is done in San Pasqual Valley and records show it has changed somewhat since monitoring started in 1953.

Stop 2: Dudley’s Bakery

Jason Jackson discussed the Tulloch Ranch in this area. The ranch is a good steward of the land; used to grow vetch for hay. He grazes cattle alternatively in different pastures. There is a cultural debate between cattle ranching and stewardship in general. Sustaining cattle ranching may be a way to preserve open space.

The land to the west of Dudley’s has been purchased by the Nature Conservancy and range management plan needs to be done. To the north, there used to be a dairy but now is a staging area for logs from dead trees that are being logged from the Cedar Fire. These trees will be taken to northern California to be milled. The NRCS has a contract with the State to remove the dead trees; the County is the sponsor. The FAST (Forest Area Safety Troop) is the main organizer of this effort. There are new access routes being created; major cutting is occurring on Mt. Palomar, Los Coyotes, Pine Valley and in Julian. A little of everything is being used from these trees such as composting and mulching by a co-generation plant in Imperial County. The County of San Diego has a grant to determine what needs to be done with this biomass. The main goal is fire hazard reduction through this thinning effort. The funding for future forest health is a problem.

Overall, the biggest challenge to this watershed is in the middle part ..trying to achieve a balance with urbanization and open space. A major development is proposed for the middle watershed: Rancho Guejito. The land use discussion also focused on the interface between the County’s 2020 Plan and SANDAG’S 2030 Plan. The County’s 2020 Plan is behind schedule but the Board of Supervisor’s has passed the industrial and commercial components. The residential density map is done; next traffic and circulation. The 2020 Plan does not have to correspond to the 2030 Plan. We also discussed the Source Water Protection Guidelines.

Stop 3: Volcan Mountain

James Stowers, County Ranger, discussed County park plans since a part of this area was purchased in 1989 from the Rutherfords for park use. Ironside Springs is the source of year round water flows which eventually becomes Santa Ysabel Creek. The County is negotiating with the Rutherford family for the remaining parcels of land and is targeted for preservation (there is no existing Master Plan). There was a groundwater study done by the County but was not detailed yet provides for some general and broad conditions. Groundwater recharge is via precipitation. This area has a low density land use.

Jason Jackson discussed the logging operations in this area. There was some discussion about how management plans for this area will be integrated with preservation efforts.

Stop 4: Ramona Grasslands Preserve

This stop was hosted by Maeve Hanley. There is about 1000 acres of land that has been set aside for the Preserve. This Preserve has a diversity of habitats and wildlife such as vernal pools, grasslands, burrowing owls, Stephen's kangaroo rat, and numerous raptors. A prime wildlife corridor also exists here. Some of the priority-core areas are around the Ramona Airport. The County is doing surveys on all habitats and wildlife as part of managing the future rangeland and management plans for this Preserve. There are three water monitoring pits which are monitored by the City of San Diego (Rick Fox and Dan Delft). Surface water from this area eventually drains into Hodges Reservoir via Santa Maria Creek. There is a non-native weed removal program for artichoke thistle and the goal is to expand this program into other areas.

There are several development projects proposed such as the Eagle Ranch (2,000 acres) and the County would like to acquire it. The Ramona Wastewater Treatment Plant is nearby and treated waste is sprayed onto nearby fields. The Wildlife Research Institute serves as an "interpretive" center for the Ramona Grasslands Preserve.