

DRAFT

INTERIM REPORT WISE Outreach and Public input process

I INTRODUCTION

Jones and Stokes is pleased to provide this Interim Report on the public outreach efforts as described in the approved contract with the Talent Irrigation District. This work is a continuation of our initial efforts when the WISE Project first started. We at J&S expect to continue our outreach efforts through to the end of the contract period which ends June 30, 2010. As such this is an interim report of our efforts and reflects some key public input findings which will be valuable as the WISE project moves ahead.

II GOAL

The overall goal of the outreach effort was and continues to be to regain and enhance public awareness and interest in the WISE Project which was lost due to lack of timely funding to continue the WISE Feasibility Study and the draft Environmental Impact Statement (FS?EIS).

III SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work approved by the WISE Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and administered by the Talent Irrigation District (TID) included the following tasks:

1. update all pertinent written materials to reflect the current status of the project including any new information as it became available
2. update and revised the Wise Project web site
3. assist in updating the informational Power Point presentation
4. hold project briefings with key representatives of such organizations as local conservation groups, grower's markets, selected irrigation district customers, agency and elected officials participate in meetings where appropriate such as those presenting detailed project technical findings and information sharing
5. host site visits as appropriate

6. participate in key project meetings such as technical presentations where approaches and processes of project development are described
7. other supporting activities, such as assist in preparing handout materials for funding requests by WISE PAC members going to Washington, D.C.

III COMPLETED OUTREACH TASKS

The J&S staff completed each of the above tasks except for the planned site visits which have been postponed due to the delay in analyzing modeling data. All updated informational material can be found on the WISE Project Web Site:

www.wiseproject.org

IV SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH AND INPUT

While all of the tasks listed above are important in achieving the project goals, the input received from the initial set of target audiences provide critical insight to the issues that will have to be addressed in both the feasibility study and the EIS. Three briefings were held, from June 23 to 25. Target audiences included but were not limited to: representatives of cities (especially public works), conservation groups, key irrigation district staff and customers, stakeholder agencies, state and federal legislators, grower's markets and technical resource experts.

Copies of attendance sheets are attached and copies a video of one of the briefings in DVD format done by Catalyst Video Productions is available.

While the turn-out was relatively small, the expertise and interest of those attending was very high; and, therefore, their contributions are worth listing in this report. Of critical value as the list of the questions asked at the briefings:

- Will the EIS address the impacts on ground water and the wetlands now receiving water from leaking canals? (Note: one person, an experienced hydrogeologist, was very concerned that the conversion to pipes would have a significant impact on ground water levels beyond the immediate area of the canals and that vegetation might change as well).
- How much pressure will I have at my farm gate?
- Will the irrigation water be cleaner so I can use modern sprinkler technology?
- Will I have water on demand or will I still have a rotation?

- Will irrigation district customers be metered?
- How much will this new benefit cost me? Is there cost-sharing available?
- Will I be required to make improvements on my farm?
- How much additional rights-of-way will be needed?
- Who pays for piped extensions beyond district laterals?
- What is the proposed pipe alignment?
- How will the conserved water be reallocated – instream? farm?
- Will the project help preserve the viability of agriculture in the project area?
- Will you be consulting with irrigation district customers in the future?
- Do you have an estimate of the overall project cost?
- Where will the money come from?
- What is the timeline?
- What is the next step?

V FINDINGS

The findings to date can be summarized in noting the following key issues:

- The project benefits are many and relatively easily understood. There is general support of the project based on this set of briefings. (Note: One major irrigation district customer expressed appreciation for this outreach meeting and said he will be happy to share the information with others).
- The FS/EIS needs to be able to adequately describe the impacts of the project on ground water, artificial wetlands, land use and recreation.
- More of the public needs to be involved and engaged in this important project. (Note: there was a suggestion that the broader public outreach Power Point should have more visuals).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the preliminary results of this phase of the outreach effort, Jones and Stokes staff recommends the following:

- Report these findings to all irrigation districts and to the WISE PAC
- Once the WISE PAC and the irrigation districts are comfortable with the modeling information and refined project component alternatives, then broaden the public outreach to target:
 - irrigation district customers
 - local elected officials (including RVCOG)
 - local media
 - key supporting agencies
 - funding sources

- reschedule site visits relating to refined project alternatives
- develop a funding outreach strategy
- consider participation and/or sponsoring in a large, regional water related forum such as “Global Climate Change and the Future of Agriculture in the Rogue Valley”

VI ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the WISE Pac members for supporting the outreach effort to this point. Special thanks go to Steve Mason for his input and expertise in this effort.