

## 2.0 Public Outreach and Education

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### Water Reuse Study 2005

1.0 Introduction

### 2.0 Public Outreach and Education

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The San Diego City Council values the input and opinions of the San Diego community, especially on important policy decisions such as water supply. The findings of the 2002 California Recycled Water Task Force also noted that successful recycled water projects typically employed key public participation principles. Those principles included:

- Involving the community in all phases of project planning
- Disseminating adequate and understandable information in many forums
- Understanding the values and needs of the community
- Providing the public with a broad understanding of water supply issues so that they would have a context in which to evaluate recycled water opportunities

Based on these principles, the Water Reuse Study team proceeded with a public outreach program that focused on engaging the public as well as educating them on water issues. Stakeholders were engaged through the American Assembly process, individual interviews, speaking events and web-based tools. These outreach activities are described in detail below.

### 2.1 First American Assembly

The first American Assembly was held over the course of three days in October 2004. This first assembly focused on two key questions.

- *What water reuse opportunities should be considered?*
- *What criteria should be used in the study to evaluate the water reuse opportunities?*

The result of the assembly workshop was a 14-page statement summarizing majority and minority viewpoints. The following are four key excerpts from the 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly summary statement. The entire statement is included in Appendix B.

#### **1. American Assembly participants assert strong support for non-potable uses.**

*The Assembly strongly believes that recycled water can and must play a significantly greater role in the City of San Diego providing added water reliability and environmental benefits. As such, the Assembly is unanimous in its support for the expansion of recycled water for non-potable uses.*



**2. The majority of American Assembly participants support both non-potable and indirect potable opportunities and outline critical conditions for reuse projects.**

*The majority of the Assembly supports the aggressive and visionary expansion of recycled water for potable and non-potable uses where the opportunities exist. There are critical conditions that must be met for any alternative that will expand this supply. First and foremost, it must be safe and protect public health. While the Assembly offered strong support for indirect potable reuse, there are clearly members of the Assembly and the community who are concerned about the public health effects of indirect potable reuse. This issue will need to be thoroughly explored and the state of knowledge regarding treatment processes, reliability and risk assessed. A clear presentation of the technical information in a readily understandable manner is vital to ensure any public policy decision is well informed. The Independent Advisory Panel will be especially helpful in this regard.*

**American Assembly participants are allowed to debate and affect every aspect of the American Assembly statement. Majority and minority viewpoints are included.**

**3. American Assembly participants note the importance of information and public participation.**

*It is critically important to the success of any proposal that the Water Department aggressively pursue community outreach and public education activities to foster understanding of the alternatives and issues. A well-informed public will help ensure that any public policy decision of the City Council is sound. Lastly, the Assembly believes strong community and political leadership is necessary to advance the goals and objectives of the study.*

**4. American Assembly participants weigh in on considerations and evaluation criteria.**

*In the view of the Assembly, the evaluation criteria listed in the white paper are reasonable. The Assembly believes there are certain refinements that would improve the quality of the assessment. In particular, there is a primary concept of “sustainability” that should guide the assessment of the alternatives. Sustainability considerations include public acceptance, protection of public health, cost-effectiveness, protecting and restoring the environment, greater regional water reliability, and diversification of supply.*



*Of nearly equal importance is the cost-effectiveness of the water supply, imported and recycled. Both direct and avoided costs must be compared on a common basis. The study must be sensitive to those in the community for which water costs represent a substantial economic burden. In this respect, grants, incentives and other external funding must be pursued.*

The later part of the assembly statement above refers to evaluation criteria. The assembly was provided with draft criteria and asked to provide input on whether the criteria were appropriate for evaluating recycled water opportunities. Modifications were made such that the criteria reflected the values of the assembled stakeholders and the community they represent. The criteria, with the American Assembly revisions incorporated, are included in **Figure 2-1**.



EVALUATION CRITERIA	OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
Health and Safety	To protect human health and safety with regard to recycled water use	Meets or exceeds federal, state and local regulatory criteria for recycled water uses
Social Value	To maximize beneficial use of recycled water with regard to quality of life and equal service to all socioeconomic groups	Comparison of beneficial uses and their effect on human needs and aesthetics, as well as public perception.
Environmental Value	To enhance, develop or improve local habitat or ecosystems and avoid or minimize negative environmental impacts	Comparison of environmental impacts and/or enhancements, environmental impacts avoided, and permits required.
Local Water Reliability	To substantially increase the percentage of water supply that comes from water reuse, thereby offsetting the need for imported water	Increases percent of water recycling and improves local reliability.
Water Quality	Meets or exceeds level of quality required for the intended use and customer needs	To meet all customer quality requirements.
Operational Reliability	To maximize ability of facilities to perform under a range of future conditions	Level of demand met and opportunities for system interconnections and operational flexibility are addressed.
Cost	To minimize total cost to the community	Comparison of estimated capital improvement costs, operational costs, and revenues for each reuse opportunity, as well as comparison of estimated avoided costs such as future regional water and wastewater infrastructure costs and costs to develop alternative water supplies (e.g. desalination).
Ability to Implement	To evaluate viability or fatal flaws and assess political and public acceptability	Level of difficulty in physical, social or regulatory implementation.

Figure 2-1 – Reuse Opportunities Evaluation Criteria



## 2.2 Public Outreach Activities

As noted above, both the California Recycled Water Task Force and the American Assembly asserted that information, education and outreach is critical in addressing recycled water issues. The study team embraced the importance of public participation and incorporated additional activities to supplement the American Assembly process.

Public participation and briefing tasks began at the inception of the project. The study team developed handouts, brochures, Power Point presentations, and a website. Over the course of the study, monthly updates were sent to community members who had expressed interest in the study, and a video was produced to enhance the outreach program.

Telephone and website surveys provided valuable insight into community viewpoints. By partnering with the San Diego County Water Authority in conducting a telephone survey, the City was able to collect statistically significant information and opinions from City residents. The City's on-line informational survey allowed additional opinions and input to be submitted directly to the study team. Survey forms were also distributed at speaking engagements to collect opinions from audience members. Focus groups were also conducted to provide insight on residents' opinions on recycled water issues within a group setting.

### Telephone Survey

The June 2004 telephone survey sampled 406 City residents and found that they had considerable agreement with efforts to improve reliability and diversity of regional water supplies through utilizing recycled water. Survey respondents were asked about their support for various non-potable uses of recycled water. The non-potable uses of recycled water ranked in the order of respondent support are:

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#### ***Key Survey Findings***

- *Non-potable uses of recycled water receive broad-based public support.*
- *Indirect potable reuse projects can garner public support if an intensive information and participatory process is included.*

1. Landscaping along freeways/golf courses
2. Toilet flushing in new buildings
3. Sports fields and parks
4. Electronics manufacturing
5. Industrial processing
6. Landscape multi-family housing
7. Residential front yards
8. Agricultural irrigation
9. School playgrounds
10. Recreational parks

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Survey respondents were also asked whether they would support using highly treated recycled water to supplement potable water supply sources (referred to as indirect potable reuse). Without any conditions or further information,



twenty-six percent of City residents favored the use of highly treated recycled water to supplement drinking water sources. Those not initially in favor were then provided additional information explaining the additional treatment steps and regulatory approvals required. They were then asked if they would support this opportunity. After receiving the additional information, a majority of the survey respondents supported using highly treated recycled water to supplement potable water supply sources.

### **On-Line Survey**

An on-line opinion survey was linked to the City Water Department's Water Reuse Study website ([www.sandiego.gov/water/waterreustudy](http://www.sandiego.gov/water/waterreustudy)). Although not a scientific survey, the on-line survey provided a means for the public to provide input to the study and for the study team to gauge public opinion on specific water issues facing San Diego. Between August 2004 and April 2005, over 250 people responded to the survey; 83 percent were City residents and 63 percent had lived in the City for more than 10 years. Respondents represented residents in 53 zip codes, and the majority had at least some college education. Many had heard about the Water Reuse Study through organizations that they belonged to, local planning groups, school, the newspaper, or through the City's Speakers Bureau.

The majority of respondents indicated their concern that San Diego does not have enough water to meet our needs today or in the future. The participants were then asked to indicate their support or non-support of various proposed uses for recycled water.

More than 70 percent of the respondents supported use of recycled water for:

- Irrigation of freeway landscaping
- Irrigation of golf courses
- Industrial uses
- Irrigation of parks and playing fields
- Irrigation of common residential areas

More than 60 percent of the respondents supported use of recycled water for:

- Residential use (excluding drinking water)
- School playgrounds
- Irrigation of agriculture

More than 50 percent of the respondents supported use of recycled water for:

- Recreational lakes
- Household use, including drinking water, after undergoing advanced treatment



These results were very similar to the telephone survey conducted in June 2004.

### **Focus Groups**

Decision Research, an independent research group, was contracted to conduct two focus groups. Both groups were made up of City residents. The goal of the focus groups was to explore in detail the participants' viewpoints on recycled water. As with the telephone survey results, the focus group results substantiated the importance of providing information and dialogue to garner support for recycled water opportunities, particularly indirect potable reuse.

### **Speakers Bureau**

The Study team organized a speakers bureau presentation specific to the Water Reuse Study and promoted the availability of this program to community organizations throughout the City. Brochures and a printed version of the on-line survey were made available to all participants. From September 2004 through June 2005, more than 60 presentations have been made to organizations including:

**Over 60 Speakers  
Bureau presentations  
have been made to  
groups throughout  
the City.**

- Local community planning groups and councils
- Rotary, Kiwanis and Optimists Clubs
- American Association of Retired Persons
- League of Women Voters
- San Diego Association of Realtors
- Science and medical organizations
- College and high school science classes

A full listing of the presentations completed and planned through August 2005 can be found in Appendix C.

### **Media Coverage**

The Study team sought media coverage of the Water Reuse Study as a means of informing the public on activities and soliciting input on recycled water issues in San Diego. The Study team held interviews with mainstream media reporters, as well as editors and reporters from minority newspapers, to keep them informed on recycled water issues in general and the progress of the Study. Media outlets contacted included the San Diego Union Tribune, La Prensa, the Asia Journal of Culture and Commerce, Voice and Viewpoint, and the Filipino Press.

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

From the start of the project, there were representative community organizations identified which held a vested interest in the scope and findings of the Water Reuse Study. The Study team recognized the importance of soliciting input from these stakeholders so that their interest and concerns



could be taken into account. Small group interviews were held with a variety of groups that included planning, environmental, business and activist organizations. These organizations are listed below:

- Asian Business Association Government Affairs Committee
- San Diego County Medical Society
- Audubon Society Conservation Committee
- San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation
- Building Owners and Managers Association Government Affairs Committee
- San Diego Association of Realtors Government Affairs Committee
- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce
- South County Economic Development Council
- U.S. Green Building Council
- San Diego County Taxpayers Association
- San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council
- Urban League
- San Diego Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

### **2.3 Regulatory and Interagency Meetings**

Regulatory agencies have a major impact on developing water reuse opportunities. State and federal regulations dictate treatment needs, water quality requirements, and allowable uses of recycled water. The study team recognized that regulator participation was crucial in developing realistic opportunities that could be implemented. In addition, the required treatment processes have a major impact on costs.

The following agencies were consulted during the study process:

- California Department of Health Services
- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

The meetings were productive in evaluating the current regulatory environment and determining the level of cooperation that will be needed should the City implement any of the reuse opportunities developed in this Study.



## 2.4 Council Aide/PUAC Briefings

City leaders were kept apprised of the study progress through briefings with aides for the Mayor's office, City Council offices, and the Governmental Relations Department; and through periodic meetings with the Public Utilities Advisory Committee (PUAC). City Council members recommended representatives from their districts to participate in the American Assembly Workshops. PUAC briefings generally occurred after PUAC meetings with Mr. Joseph Panetta, the designated PUAC liaison.

The following City Council Aide briefings were held:

- August 6, 2004/September 15, 2004
- September 27, 2004
- October 22, 2004
- January 7, 2005/January 11, 2005
- January 19, 2005
- April 22, 2005

The following PUAC briefings were held or are planned to be held:

- May 7, 2004
- June 21, 2004
- August 16, 2004
- September 20, 2004
- November 15, 2004 (Group)
- January 6, 2005
- February 14, 2005
- July 18, 2005 (planned)
- August 15, 2005 (Group - planned)



