

FINAL

To: Imperial Irrigation District
Imperial County Farm Bureau
Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association
Water Conservation Advisory Board
On-Farm Technical Advisors

From: Definite Plan Team

Date: April 17, 2006

Re: Key Outcomes – April 12 Grower Workshops

The Definite Plan Team held two grower workshops on Wednesday, April 12. One workshop was held in Brawley; the second in El Centro. Both workshops were jointly sponsored by the Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association, the Imperial County Farm Bureau, the Water Conservation Advisory Board and the Imperial Irrigation District.

Attached is a brief document that summarizes the key comments and suggestions offered during the workshops. It is not intended to serve as a meeting transcript.

At a later date, the Definite Plan team intends to develop a written tool to track comments from growers and others. This tool will indicate how the Team's analysis has responded to comments. It also will indicate which comments are considered beyond the scope of the Work Team's effort or not within its purview.

**Definite Plan Grower Workshops
Brawley and El Centro
April 12, 2006**

Primary Themes/Comments

The Definite Plan Team held two grower workshops on Wednesday, April 12. One workshop was held in Brawley; the second in El Centro. Both workshops were jointly sponsored by the Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association, the Imperial County Farm Bureau, the Water Conservation Advisory Board and the Imperial Irrigation District.

Approximately 25 people attended the workshops. Of that total, approximately 10 attendees were growers who have not been previously engaged in these discussions. Several On-Farm Technical Advisors attended the workshops, as did one IID Board member (Rudy Maldonado) and several IID staff.

The workshops generated lively discussion, with participants particularly interested in discussing some of the underlying parameters that bound and shape the analytic approach. Below is a quick summary of these primary discussion points. We've also captured the more targeted comments offered during the discussion.

Primary Themes Raised During Discussions

- **Past Conservation Investments.** There was extensive discussion regarding the perceived inherent inequity associated with a program that will pay for conservation activities under the Definite Plan, but not compensate growers who have made past conservation efforts that will continue to yield savings to the District. (This was also said to be in conflict with past Board policy.) Commentors strongly recommended that the Program be structured to provide benefits to these cutting-edge growers. The Team, they said, also needs to consider this issue when setting a baseline.
- **Data Transparency.** One participant strongly requested that the Team make available all data underlying its analysis so that others can more fully assess and critique the Team's conclusions and recommendations. He suggested that the results of the analysis will not be considered credible if all underlying data – including field-specific water use – is not made public.
- **Savings Verification.** Several speakers commented on the difficulties the District faces in accurately characterizing “wet water.” To that end, these speakers questioned the accuracy of ongoing transfers to the Metropolitan Water District and called on the Team to define what it means by “verifiable” before moving forward. Another speaker also urged the District to limit costs tied to verification.
- **Definite Plan Design Constraints.** Several speakers were interested in better understanding the nature of constraints shaping the approach to the Definite Plan planning process – for

example, QSA stipulations v. Board policy v. state laws – and which of those constraints were subject to revision.

- **Pre-1914 Rights.** One participant wanted to know if the Team was considering pre-1914 water rights in its analysis.

Targeted Comments

- **On-Farm Systems and Practices.** Speakers had several comments related to on-farm systems and practices, including the ongoing demonstration projects. These included:
 - Given that the Team is working with growers with a proven track record of effective conservation activities, speakers cautioned that demonstration project results are unlikely to yield similar results when attempted on more marginal land or by less skilled growers. They recommended that the analysis – both in terms of costs and results – account for this limitation.
 - Cascading between fields should be considered compatible with a basin irrigation method.
 - Ensure on-farm savings enabled though delivery flexibility are credited to the growers/landowners.
 - Recommendation that the Team talk with Steve Birch of the IMMU to learn of his field salinity analysis (using the District’s “Salty Dog”) regarding improved leaching resulting from reducing the main fall of the field served from Mulberry 5.
- **Economic Incentives.** When developing the economic incentives program, consider the following:
 - Structure program to allocate set amount to all growers and then provide funding for reductions below allocated amount.
 - Ensure incentive program provides for short-term as well as long-term conservation actions.
 - Consider non-payment incentives, such as: lower water rates, timing/categorization of payments to yield more favorable tax implications, etc.
 - Ensure growers are only getting paid for actions they are actually doing; some questioned whether this is happening with MWD transfer.
 - Put in place safeguards that prevent growers from gaming incentives (e.g., growers pick up fields with extraordinary conservation activities in place yet claim credit since it is “new to them.”)

- What happens if conservation farming practices now considered “extraordinary” are deemed “normal” in the future? How will that impact the Plan and, specifically, payments to growers?
- Consider requiring both landowner and grower to sign on to any agreement with the District. If this does not happen, landowner has no incentive to share economic upside with the grower and will just provide less water.
- **Program Start Timing.** One speaker recommended that the District begin paying for on-farm savings immediately and not wait for 2008. If San Diego is not interested in the water, the speaker said, find another buyer.
- **Prevailing Wages.** One grower sought to better understand the extent to which participation in a District-run loan program might impose “prevailing wage” requirements on a grower or landowner.
- **Grower Engagement.** Noting the limited turnout at the workshops, one speaker urged the Team to identify new strategies for getting growers involved and engaging the different options under consideration.
- **Strong Board Outreach.** Several speakers commented on the need for the IID Board to better understand grower concerns. John Eckhardt informed attendees that staff is not tasked with providing Board members general feedback and, therefore, recommended growers take steps to contact Board members directly with their concerns. It also was recommended that the Board initiate a practice of inviting a grower each month to present recent conservation activities. Such an approach would reward conscientious growers, keep the Board informed of the latest activities and raise the profile of water conservation activities.

Future grower workshops are expected in late June/early July, September and November.