

EBMUD/LAC subcommittee Education & Outreach
Regular meeting 9-12-2016

Attendees:

Jerri McNair
Georgia Madden
Kristin Bowman

Guests: Nelsy Rodriguez, Lisa Cuellar

1. Demonstration Gardens project

Kristin has recommended that the subcommittee begin working on a specific proposal format to be used to formalize renovation requests to the Water Conservation Department. She has offered to provide a format template developed by the Technology subcommittee for use in developing our own template.

Since the City of Richmond is very interested on improving the Richmond Demo Garden and has already taken a very big step in cleanup of the site, this garden would seem to be the first candidate for a formal renovation proposal.

2. EBMUD Public Information Office

Nelsy Rodriguez gave us an extensive update on the agency's current public outreach work and on the internal evaluation of the efforts. Although the service area is "officially" out of a drought emergency, effort will continue to be made to encourage conservation.

What the agency has been working on:

- Evaluation of water uses as it relates to longer-term public conservation efforts. For example, examine the value gained simply through removal of lawns compared to more long term advantages of accepting higher initial water use to establish sustainable climate-friendly landscapes.
- Better management and/or expansion of the Waterwaste Hotline. This program was a huge success but was not handled very effectively by the agency.
- Development of a community network that encourages larger neighborhoods to work together to conserve.
- Working with the state and other districts on broader groundwater management.
- Expansion of recycled water use and the technologies that are needed to do so. The agency is considering what will be more palatable to the public in the long run – desalinization or recycled water.
- Major program of pipe replacement to prevent main line breaks. 2015 was the worst year ever for the service area with more than 1100 major pipe breaks.

3. Lisa Cuellar from the California Urban Water Conservation Council explained the general goals of the CUWCC and plans for the future. Originally, the CUWCC was a clearinghouse for information on water use and conservation. The organization is working to develop a "WIKI" based web platform that could possibly include information on sustainable landscape, have a statewide list of demonstration gardens, and provide information on best-practices design and maintenance. Lisa mentioned that Los Angeles has a program to allow offsets for rainwater collections.

She also mentioned the "SITES" certification and awards program for sustainable landscapes, similar to the LEED certification for architecture. At some point the subcommittee could nominate demonstration gardens that could be included on the CUWCC website based on SITES criteria.

Other business:

Jerri brought up another major and continuing issue in the Bay Area – cities allowing their urban tree forests to die to save water. She is hoping that EBMUD could reach out in some way to cities and provide them with immediate recommendations on preserving their public trees. Lisa knows several websites that provide excellent information on tree care but the weak link is the communication with the correct city offices that handle tree maintenance.