

Agricultural Advisory Group MeetingEDCWA 2019 WRDMP / 184031088

Date/Time: February 20, 2019 / 1:30 PM
Place: EDCWA; 4330 Golden Center Dr, Suite C, Placerville, CA 95667
Next Meeting: TBD
Attendees: Agricultural Advisory Group Member-
El Dorado County Water Agency: Ken Payne
El Dorado County Department of Agriculture: LeeAnne Mila (Alternate)
Boeger Winery; El Dorado Wine Grape Growers Association: Greg Boeger
Walker Vineyard; El Dorado Wine Grape Growers Association: Lloyd Walker
El Dorado Irrigation District: Brian Mueller
Citizens for Water; El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce: Doug Leisz

Other Attendees-
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors: Brian Veerkamp
Stantec: Yung-Hsin Sun, Raymond Hoang, Maritza Flores Marquez
ERA: Duncan MacEwan
Davids Engineering: Grant Davids, Brandon Ertis

Not Present: El Dorado Agricultural Water Quality Management Corporation: Dedrian Kobervig
El Dorado Irrigation District: Jim Abercrombie
Grizzly Flats Community Services District: Jodi Lauther
Rainbow Orchards; El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce: Christa Campbell
El Dorado County Farm Bureau: Dave Pratt
Georgetown Divide Public Utility District: Steve Palmer

The purpose of the meeting was to review the data collected thus far for the agricultural economic development study (Study) for El Dorado County with a focus on the West Slope and to review the plan for the grower interviews.

Notes:

- Historical cropping
 - Reviewed the sources and data collected to describe the historical cropping in the West Slope.
 - Provided an overview of the 5 crops that will be used in the Study. The following crops were chosen because they represent the bulk of what is produced in El Dorado County (93% of the total existing West Slope irrigated area) and account for the bulk of the water used. These crops were also selected as they hold the greatest potential for West Slope agriculture expansion.
 - Vineyards
 - Apples
 - Miscellaneous deciduous (walnuts as proxy)
 - Irrigated pasture

- Christmas trees
- The miscellaneous deciduous crops have a small footprint in the West Slope and represent a variety of crops such as nectarines and peaches. For the Study, the miscellaneous deciduous crops will be represented by walnuts because nut market has grown in California, so walnuts are the best crop to reference for this classification in the economic analysis. Walnuts will serve as a surrogate for all miscellaneous deciduous crops in the Study.
- Historical cropping data on the West Slope was determined mainly from the Annual Agriculture Commissioner Reports and National Agricultural Statistics Services data and the Land IQ Crop Surveys. In viewing data from 1980-2018, the Study will begin its analysis in 1998 since that is when the acreage of agriculture began to stabilize.
- Davids Engineering described how the cropping data collected was reconciled for each of the 5 crops selected for the Study for the years 1998-2018.
- Crop “Factors”
 - Crop factors describe the physical conditions under which existing agriculture is developed. This data will help determine where future agriculture production may occur in El Dorado County. The crop factors that were considered are: field size, land slope, elevation and soil. The cumulative curves for each crop factor was reviewed. For the Study the following thresholds will be used to help determine where future agriculture expansion may occur in El Dorado County:
 - Field Size: Tentative threshold for future agriculture development is 1 acre or greater
 - Elevation: Tentative threshold for future agriculture development will occur at elevations less than 4,000 ft. The Agricultural Advisory Group (AAG) suggested that 3,500 ft be analyzed as well and included in the report.
 - Land Slope: Tentative threshold for future agriculture development is at land slopes less than 15 degrees. There maybe a factor in the analysis that accounts for the variability of slope in the field.
 - Soil Quality: Tentative threshold for future agriculture development is greater than 10 and “loam” soil classification. Through this analysis will see if there is a correlation between soil quality and elevation because Christmas trees and apples occur in high elevations with the best soils.
 - The cumulative curves for each crop factor were understood by the AAG and the characteristics presented by the data collected were accepted by the AAG. However, it was mentioned that it would be difficult to verify historical pasture production because it has not been well represented in mapping data.
 - The General Plan Agricultural lands for suitable agriculture expansion was reviewed. Based on the crop factors, the Study will look at all areas in El Dorado County where agriculture expansion may occur. Once there is a consensus on where agriculture expansion is expected to occur in El Dorado County, those areas will be considered to produce the final results for the Study. There was discussion that a combination of the AL (Agriculture land use), RL (zone classified as rural land) and the agriculture districts could create the cookie cutter that describes where future agriculture expansion will occur in El Dorado County. Ultimately, there needs to be collective agreement on the land use designations that will be used to describe the anticipated agriculture expansion for the water demand analysis.

- Crop Review
 - After lands are identified for expanded agriculture, the next step is to determine what is economically feasible to develop. Assumptions will be made on the cost thresholds in the analysis unless additional information is provided from the AAG.
 - The market conditions and production costs and returns were reviewed. It was stated that this information would be refined with the grower interviews.
 - For each of the five crops selected for the Study the trends, UC Cooperative Extension crop budgets, and key refinements was reviewed.
 - For apples it was stated that some apples are imported into El Dorado County to meet a local demand. This occurs in Apple Hill.
 - To refine pasture data, it was suggested that cattle ranchers be interviewed.
 - To refine miscellaneous deciduous crop data, it was suggested that nectarine and peach farmers be interviewed.
- Grower Interviews
 - An overview of the topics that will be covered in the grower interviews was provided.
 - 15 growers will be interviewed for production practices, cost, revenues, and markets for El Dorado County Crops.
 - Meetings will be one on one.
 - Davids Engineering and ERA will identify the type of information they will need from growers. Once data needs have been identified, Agriculture Commissioner's office may be able to help identify people to interview. This effort would ensure that the interviewees have adequate context prior to the interviews.
 - A question to be asked to the growers interviewed is why some land has not been developed; the AAG indicated that it would be pertinent to interview growers whose operations have been limited by water resources.

Action Items:

- Davids Engineering and ERA will complete the following:
 - Schedule and conduct grower interviews
 - Incorporate data and feedback from grower interviews into the feasibility analysis.
 - Meet with the AAG to review preliminary findings from the interviews and solicit feedback.
- Stantec to complete the following:
 - Complete the meeting notes.
 - Provide a shapefile of the agricultural lands suitable for agriculture expansion in El Dorado County to Davids Engineering and ERA.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM