

Ag-to-Urban Water Transfers: Finding Common Ground and the Process for Developing Best Management Practices

MaryLou Smith
Aqua Engineering, Inc.



Western States Water Council Legal Committee
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WSWC Direction

- Find innovative ways for states to allow agriculture to urban water transfers without damaging agricultural economies and environmental values or infringing on property rights.

(Rub your head, pat your stomach and don't use your hands)

Seed Planted

- July 2008
- WSWC— Craig Bell
- Family Farm Alliance—Dan Keppen, Pat O'Toole
- City of Aurora Water—Mark Pifher
- Western Urban Water Coalition—Mark Pifher
- Agreement to work together to explore potential mechanisms in light of state laws

Arkansas Basin Roundtable

- Agricultural and Urban Stakeholders
- Two year effort
- Guidelines for Transfer of Water from Agriculture to Urban
- Report September 2008
- Copy from facilitator MaryLou Smith to WSWC and to FFA October 2008

Considerations for Agriculture to Urban Water Transfers



September 10, 2008

Presented to the Arkansas Basin Roundtable
by the Arkansas Basin Roundtable Water Transfer Guidelines Committee

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Compiled and Edited by MeriLou Smith, Aqua Engineering, Inc.
Graphic Production by Kendal Perez, Aqua Engineering, Inc.



Framework for Evaluating Water Transfers: A Template

Prepared by Arkansas Basin Roundtable Water Transfer Guidelines Committee

A. Size of Transfer Relative to Affected Areas

Questions—No Particular Order

QA-1. What are the affected areas?

QA-2. What percentage of the affected areas' water supply does this transfer represent?

QA-3. Will there be sufficient remaining water for viable **agricultural** operations/economy in the affected areas?

QA-4. Will there be sufficient remaining water for other **non-agricultural** economic undertakings in the affected areas?

QA-5. Will there be sufficient remaining water for anticipated growth, drought, or emergencies in the affected areas?

Potential Mitigation Examples—No Particular Order

MA-3.1 Assist in transition to alternate crops or irrigation methods requiring less water

MA-3.2 Leaseback Arrangements

MA-3.3 Infrastructure investments, e.g. rehabilitation, efficiency measures, etc.

MA-3.4 Compensate for loss via other mitigation, e.g. financial payment, job-relocation to community, assistance with economic development efforts, provision of alternate water supply, etc.

MA-4.1 Modify transfer timing

MA-4.2 Develop alternate transfer mechanisms, i.e. leaseback arrangements

MA-4.3 Assist in planning/assessment efforts for local government/communities to determine alternative visions, i.e. provide land use planning expertise

MA-4.4 Infrastructure Investments

MA-5.1 Develop alternate transfer mechanisms

MA-5.2 Modify quantity of water transferred

MA-5.3 Locate alternate water supply

MA-5.4 Assist with water conservation

MA-5.5 Infrastructure Investments

Others Added

- Facilitator—MaryLou Smith (Aqua Engineering)
- Colorado Water Institute—Colorado State University—Reagan Waskom
- Environmental Defense Fund—Jennifer Pitts
- The Nature Conservancy—Taylor Hawes

Finding Common Ground

- Questionnaire prepared and tallied by facilitator
- Lots of common ground
- View of storage different

Transfers to minimize need for storage

Storage to minimize need for transfers

What is our Work?

- March Family Farm Alliance Annual Convention Las Vegas
- April email idea generation
- Meeting with potential funder who is looking for partners for similar initiative
- MaryLou volunteering as coach/facilitator/organizer until funding found

Group Thinking

- Identify guidelines or best management practices for governors to adopt?
- What happens to guidelines? How put them into practice? Regulated? Voluntary? How resolve private property rights vs. public good debate?

Group Thinking

- Ag has to see something different in terms of financial stability to have luxury of not selling out to the highest bidder. What economic incentives could be created?
- How water rights are held in different parts of the West is critical. What's allowable? What's feasible?
- We need to tease out the “sticking points” in current policy.

Group Thinking

- Desire to do something that could lead to action not just more study
- A set of policy templates based on alternative scenarios?
- Business plans outlining how alternative economic incentives might work?
- Start with an actual situation and generate a case study?

Group Thinking

- State level incentives for transfers that avoid environmental harm and address third party economic impacts?
- Basin wide Approach—cooperative effort to target areas where we could get the most good for the least damage, devise transfer mechanisms with built in mitigation?
- Establish a template for interruptible supply arrangements?

Your Ideas?

Ag to Urban Panel

- Members of our group and others, moderated by Rick Brown (CWCB, now CDM)
- Should/how should non-market factors be included in transfers?
- How should public values be identified and paid for?
- What do when seller benefits but community suffers? How balance right to sell and desire to preserve?

Ag to Urban Panel

- How balance right to sell and desire to preserve?
- If preserving agriculture is a goal, how increase its viability?
- How value open space, wildlife habitat agriculture provides but we all enjoy?
- How might compensation for this be structured?

Ag to Urban Panel

- Are states doing enough to promote locally based production? Can more be done to develop other market opportunities?
- What implementation issues regarding alternative agricultural transfer methods as opposed to buy and dry?
- Identify agricultural land high value versus high impact?