



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building and Environmental Services

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David Morrison
Director

MEMORANDUM

To:	WICC Members	From:	David Morrison, Director Planning, Building, and Environmental Services
Date:	January 24, 2022	Re:	Strategic Plan Discussion (Part 3)

REQUESTED ACTION:

At the previous two meetings, there has been an engaged and wide-ranging discussion by the WICC of the Mission Statement. In general, there seems to be broad agreement on the following:

- The purpose of the WICC is both informational and advisory to the Board of Supervisors.
- There is interest in the WICC participating in the new State-mandated Drought and Water Shortage Task Force.
- The WICC has a separate role than the Groundwater Sustainability Agency, Drought Contingency Plan, and other ongoing water-related efforts, but all of these programs need to communicate and coordinate.
- The definition of a watershed should be expanded, to possibly include human activity, economic and social equity impacts, and/or wildfire.

Given these areas of agreement, is there support to retain the current Mission Statement as it is written or to make revisions?

MISSION STATEMENT

Improving the health of Napa County's watersheds by informing, engaging and conducting outreach within the community.

If the majority of the WICC wishes to make revisions, based on the agreements listed above, staff offers the following suggestion as a starting point for discussion:

MISSION STATEMENT - REVISED

Watersheds are foundational to both the natural and human landscape. Among their many attributes, they replenish groundwater; support riparian habitat; supply our wells and reservoirs; filter contamination; provide recreation; influence flood plains; and play a key role in wildfire management. The WICC improves the health of Napa County's watersheds by informing and engaging the community; coordinating with other local committees and agencies; and advising the Board of Supervisors.

OCTOBER 28, 2021, DISCUSSION SUMMARY

At the October 28, 2021, meeting, staff offered the following questions to refine issues raised in the first meeting, as discussion continued regarding the Mission Statement. Staff also asked about the WICC's interest in acting as the Drought and Water Shortage Task Force, which was proposed to be created by the Board of Supervisors in December, 2021. A brief summary of the discussion is provided below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – MISSION STATEMENT

1. What is a watershed? Does it define the source area for a river or creek, or does it also include the human activity, plants and animals, and other features within the watershed?
2. Should the mission statement define watershed health? If so, what measures should be used to measure watershed health?
3. What is the role of the WICC? Is it a neutral public information forum? Is it an advocate for County watershed policy and funding? Does it make recommendations on watershed issues to the Board of Supervisors?
4. How is the WICC's role different than other watershed interests, such as the Groundwater Sustainability Agency, Bureau of Reclamation, Parks and Open Space District, Land Trust, municipal reservoirs, and other organizations?

Williams: Kellie Anderson raised the issue regarding whether the WICC is advisory or whether its purpose is to receive and disseminate information. It depends on what the Board of Supervisors wants us to be. I don't know which one is the answer for sure. I think it's an appropriate role for a diverse membership such as we have to be advisory, but the Board of Supervisors needs to agree. If we're not advisory, then we have a different organizing principle, where our main role is to take information back to our respective constituents.

Gregory: I think staff is asking whether we should update the Strategic Plan and do we need a facilitator?

Dillon: The process for the last Strategic Plan update involved separate off-site meetings. It was more informal in the beginning. No one knew at that time what the WICC was

supposed to do. In response to Mr. Williams' question, the WICC is both. My view is that the Board of Supervisors wants a group to be aware of emerging issues and discuss their impact on the watershed, and that can also provide advice to the Board. What the Board doesn't want is to let issues foment and reach a crescendo such as happened when we had two watershed task forces in the 1990s. This is a really important forum for everyone. We have representatives from the cities, the County, community groups. Our job is to disseminate the information we receive to our colleagues. We also have a robust newsletter for the public. I think it's both, dissemination and advice.

Graves: As a charter member, I believe the informal meeting regarding the last Strategic Plan update was held at Joseph Phelps winery. I completely agree that this group does a lot of good. I don't remember using a facilitator with the last update. We inform both our constituencies and the Board of Supervisors. Everyone here is ready to take on more responsibilities. We are not ready to take on more meetings. I support the idea of having the Drought and Water Shortage Task Force be an expanded form of the WICC, similar to the relationship between the Airport Land Use Commission and the Planning Commission.

Smithers: I joined the WICC in 2013. It was advisory then and I thought it would be great to be part of this effort. The Strategic Plan update occurred in 2015, but not at Joseph Phelps. It was mediated by us with the use of a white board. It was during this update that the WICC decided to focus on being an informational group only. We spent a lot of time on the title for the WICC. I came onto the Council thinking that it would be advisory. It's been disappointing that we haven't had much impact. A lot of work has gone into the website, but I don't know that many people visit it. We already know about all this. It feels to me that the Board of Supervisors already knows much of the information we're facilitating. The WICC needs to deal with substantive issues. Should we be the group that takes on non-performing or dry wells or should that be the Groundwater Sustainability Agency? The GSA would know more about what is happening. I'm all for the WICC doing more than just conveying information; we're ready to address challenging matters.

Ellsworth: Going back to the previous item, the Drought and Water Shortage Task force may help to define us better and give us more substantive issues to consider. The new responsibility will get the WICC more engaged. When there are droughts, there is a need for urgent action. The local economy is massive and depends on water. We need to be nimble and stay ahead of issues before they become problems.

Graves: The Groundwater Sustainability Agency only applies to the Napa Valley Sub-basin. Does the Drought and Water Shortage Task Force have a wider geographical reach than the sub-basin?

Morrison: Yes, the Task Force is county-wide, so the Groundwater Sustainability Agency would not be an appropriate vehicle.

Cristian: I can't imagine that the WICC is not advisory to the Board of Supervisors. We also disseminate information. The Board doesn't have to accept our recommendations. The act of disseminating information is advising. We are both informational and advisory.

Cottrell: This is a good conversation. We are all working through various ideas. Does the WICC really foster partnerships? The Flood Control District provided information that Ms. Comendant asked for, as an example of partnership and disseminating information. I like Mr. Cristian's point about the WICC being advisory to the Board of Supervisors. We should formalize that relationship with an annual report to the Board. There are two Supervisors in attendance today. We may not need another future agenda item to discuss serving as the Drought and Water Shortage Task Force. I like the goals in the existing Strategic Plan. We support watershed health, but do not forcefully advocate. I support a broader definition of watershed to include human activity.

Ellsworth: The GSPAC recognizes the connection between groundwater and surface water. That needs to be tied in with the WICC. There is frustration in the community that the Groundwater Sustainability Plan doesn't cover everything. There is connectivity between water in the sub-basin and the upper watersheds.

Gregory: Thank you for catching me up. There seem to be three main efforts: the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, the Drought and Water Shortage Plan, and the Drought Contingency Plan. The question is how we coordinate them.

Comendant: I like the back and forth. I also like Ms. Cottrell's point about broadening the definition of watershed. Do we keep whittling away at this update one piece at a time, or do we need more meetings?

Dillon: When will we be able to meet again in person?

Morrison: Maybe in January, but we may need a larger venue to accommodate social distancing to meet in person.

Dillon: We should keep addressing portions of the update at the next meeting. When we're ready to consider the update as a whole, we should schedule a 3 to 4 hour meeting in person at the end of the process.

Comendant: That makes a lot of sense. We'll spend 30 minutes on the update at the next meeting.

JULY 22, 2021, DISCUSSION SUMMARY

At the July 22, 2021 meeting, the discussion focused on the Mission Statement. A brief summary of the discussion is provided below.

Benvenuto: We should define watershed consistently with other agencies.

Comendant: Do we know what the current definition is? It should be defined by hydro-geologic unit.

Benvenuto: They are defined on the WICC website: Napa River, Suisun Creek, and Putah Creek. There is no definition on the webpage regarding the health of a watershed.

Cristian: The watershed is different than the Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

Ellsworth: We need to take a holistic view. We can't look just at natural, have to look at development including fire risk, solid waste disposal sites, etc. We need to cross reference the natural and developed environments.

Dillon: The WICC was formed due to significant events that occurred in the 1990s to create a public forum for discussing these issues. I pushed for all cities/towns to be represented on the WICC. Since then, we've seen the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act and other additional programs. We need to keep this going in the spirit in which we started. The watershed boundaries were identified very early in the process.

Cottrell: The WICC is focused more on information sharing than on forming partnerships.

Dorenbecher: I remember the 2015 Strategic Plan. We held a water symposium and sponsored an Earth Day booth. There was a lot more public outreach. We never got around to presenting the Strategic Plan to the City and Town Councils. We did a good job on part of outreach, but not all of it. We need to plan better to outreach.

Comendant: We talked about a general outreach Power Point presentation, but that didn't happen. Our website describes assisting the Supervisors in decision making. I wonder how often that happens. We do an excellent job on providing information, but miss opportunities to provide our input. The WICC could serve as a conduit for information, analysis and developing options.

Benvenuto: Instead of fostering partnership, should we conduct outreach?

Gretchen Hayes (public): The public used to receive updates on the various regulatory programs that involved watersheds. Is there a way to expand this vision to the health of all life, including ecological issues?

Benvenuto: A healthy watershed involves everything, including wildlife and fire impacts.

Hayes (public): A lot of people don't know what a watershed is.

Benvenuto: Informing and engaging the public will improve the watershed.

Ellsworth: The watershed is a water source area. To protect water at the bottom of the watershed, we have to protect it at the top of the watershed. All stakeholders share.

Hayes (public): We need a landscape level view of ecology.

Cottrell: We need a definition of watershed in the mission statement. We also need to define the WICC's role in contrast to the GSA in the mission statement.

Ellsworth: There is an equity component. Water has a financial and economic value. We can't just look at it as a natural resource, we also have to look at the economic component.

Dorenbecher: The Resource Conservation District does so much. How can we help them to enhance their efforts and get their work accomplished?

Comendant: I look at the WICC website as a venue for getting information out to the public. We could provide analytics on the website.

Hayes (public): The watershed should support both life and the economy.

Kellie Anderson (public): I appreciate the email newsletter. It has useful links that I share on social media and is a valuable tool. In the years that the WICC has existed, you inform and advise the Board of Supervisors. When will you suggest policy updates to the Board? The WICC needs to be more than informational. The Board of Supervisors needs to hear from everyone.

Comendant: There is a gap there.

FUTURE DISCUSSION

GOALS

- Coordinate and facilitate watershed planning, research, and monitoring efforts among Napa County organizations, agencies, landowners, and citizens.
- Strengthen and expand community understanding, connections and involvement to improve the health of Napa County's watersheds.
- Support informed decision-making on topics that affect the health of Napa County's watersheds.
- Improve WICC Board efficiency and effectiveness.
- Explore additional funding opportunities to support the goals of the WICC.

Discussion Questions - Goals

1. How do you describe an effective and efficient WICC Board?
2. Should the WICC initiate watershed efforts or is it limited to coordination and facilitation?
3. How has the WICC strengthened community connections to the watershed?
4. What level of decision-making does the WICC inform?

ROLES

WICC members are responsible for:

- Improving the health of Napa County's watersheds by supporting projects, partnerships and community education that maintain and improve water quality, native plant and wildlife habitat, and ecological and natural processes.
- Collecting, distilling and disseminating the best possible information, tools and education, to help the community discover and understand their watersheds, and make well-informed decisions.
- Supporting collaboration and partnership among all organizations and individuals working to improve and maintain the health of Napa County's watersheds.
- Seeking and facilitating funding for watershed projects in Napa County from foundations, individuals, organizations, and public agencies.
- Being politically neutral, unbiased and non-regulatory.
- Being well-informed about issues pertaining to local water and watersheds.
- Sharing information with their respective jurisdictions, organizations, communities and peers to further watershed awareness and informed decision-making.

Discussion Questions – Roles

1. What does politically neutral and unbiased mean?
2. How should WICC members advocate for watershed project funding?
3. What role do natural processes like fire, drought, and flooding play in the watershed?
4. How should the WICC Board be evaluated in the performance of their responsibilities?