

Scientific Solution to the Barona Conflict

Bob Bowling is the elected President and spokesperson of the members of the Old Barona Road Association.

Neighbors seek water relief, the informative August 20, 2006 article by Chet Barfield, once again brought to the light the unfortunate origins of the loss of a domestic rural water supply. This loss has negatively affected the tribal and non-tribal community's quality of life and economic futures. Overtime, this loss of water has affected all who travel Old Barona Road and face the delays and increased traffic by slow moving and expensive water trucks delivering their life sustaining fluid. The loss of water has reduced the taxable revenue of the county due to the decrease in property values.

Old Barona Road Association has long advocated a common-sense first step. A collaborative approach by the Barona Band and the County of San Diego initiating a "scientific hydrological study" of the ground water in the affected area. It presents an opportunity to share data, monitor groundwater production rates, locations and pumping times of wells in order to establish a record and determine where to begin to develop a comprehensive solution.

A decade ago, Ninyo and Moore claimed in their secret groundwater studies that there were billions of gallons of water lying beneath the reservation that would never be used up by the Barona. These claims were contrary to the decades of practical experience of former County Hydrologist John Peterson. Three years time from the initial pumping of the deep new well not only the residents of the Old Barona Road Association experienced a drastic impact to their water supplies but the Barona Tribe itself began to experience the drying up some of their own wells.

The leadership of Old Barona Road Association has been working towards a mutually beneficial solution. The Association hired a consultant, produced a white paper and provided prior Congressional legislation to Congressman Hunter's office identifying all affected parties and a basic roadmap on how to achieve the wheeling of water to the Tribes proposed pipeline.

To the credit of the new Barona Chairwoman Rhonda Welch-Scalco, she has recognized that the wheeling of water from the Colorado River is a long-term project. The original proposed pipeline by the former leadership of the Barona may simply be a pipe-dream.

The Old Barona Road Association has suggested and continues to seek other potential options for a dependable water supply that will provide comprehensive relief to both tribal and non-tribal communities. The Association has continued to correspond with the Lakeside Water District, Metropolitan Water District, and San Diego Water Authority. The Association has even requested a hearing before the Water, Parks and Wildlife Standing Committee at the California State Capitol.

The Old Barona Road Association now prepares for an upcoming meeting before the Local Agency Formation Commission in September at the County Administration Center. Hopeful residences of Old Barona Road recognize that water district annexation

projects in the backcountry of San Diego County may be viewed as controversial. This creates new challenges in an attempt to resolve the need for a dependable water supply. Nevertheless, the Association remains open and committed to finding a mutually beneficial solution.

After all, Tribes, citizens and local government in San Diego County share common resources that include community character, water, air and roads. It is in the best interest of all parties to work co-operatively to protect and share these resources.

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