

# Valley Water's Blue Ribbon Forum: Executive Summary

*Prepared on April 15, 2020*

---

## Main Session input

### Questions at a high level:

- **Collaboration:** Are you actively soliciting feedback from cities and their public works?
- **Homelessness:** Is Valley Water interested in expanding the scope to address homelessness at a systemic level?
- **Financials:** Why are you renewing the parcel tax only halfway through program, and how long was it last time?
- **Pollution:** Are there point source reductions or enhancements for filtering out pesticides? If not, are there plans for future?
- **Maintenance:** Does the district have long term financial plans to maintain these new projects, beyond the parcel tax? Will grants be available for maintenance work on restoration sites?
- **Flood protection:** Will Valley Water consider redesigning Sunnyvale East and West project to eliminate flood wall and asphalt trails? Are we moving in a direction that incorporates more natural design (meandering path, vegetation) to help protect against flooding?
- **Resiliency:** Is there an innovation incubator created by Valley Water to help foster the creation of desalination technology here in the Valley?
- **Public access:** Is public access another aspect of the plan in flood protection projects? Would it be more helpful to incorporate trails and public access earlier on in planning?

### Comments:

- **Financials:** Participants want more transparency in how much Valley Water is funding in the priorities, what's already been invested, and what the costs are of damage that can be avoided through the plan.
- **Collaboration:** Please consider incorporating a forestry element (back country and urban) to better collaborate with all agencies that have impact on water conservation and flood protection.

Recorded video available at: [https://zoom.us/rec/share/9eFbDo2oy2FibLOQ6Wvfv\\_EqPLq7aaa8hHAc\\_fUPz05tFUIWq7VRxe1bpxORnBnF](https://zoom.us/rec/share/9eFbDo2oy2FibLOQ6Wvfv_EqPLq7aaa8hHAc_fUPz05tFUIWq7VRxe1bpxORnBnF)

---

## Breakout Room 1 Moderated by Rachael Gibson

### Takeaways:

- **Top 3 Priorities:** Homelessness, resiliency, pollution prevention were top priorities identified
- **Expanded Funding:** High level of support for expanded grant funding
  - o Interest in stormwater infrastructure, creek restoration, desalination research specifically
- **Climate Change:** Very supportive of adding climate change criteria to the priorities
- **Pacheco:** cautiously optimistic, people want options other than more dams like recycling and desalination, need more information before supporting
- **Public Health and Safety:** Major support for encampment clean ups, creek clean ups, and emergency response. Emergency response should be collaborative with neighboring cities.
- **Infrastructure:** Absolute support for maintaining infrastructure
- **Flood Protection Projects:** Potential for support, but more information is needed on rationale and understanding of collaboration with cities
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Absolute support that we need to restore environment and undo damage done
- **What is missing?:** Overall, it's comprehensive; could also add recreational opportunities like exhibits and demonstrations
- **Support the plan as is?:** With the understanding that this is a working document, yes.
- **Anything not liked?:** No, all is good, would only add more.

### Summary:

- Support for environmental stewardship, climate change, and support for homelessness issues.
- Main suggestion is to keep the plan flexible. To be able to react to situations that arise, but still respond to the long-term goals and looking at technology for desalination and recycled water. A lot of appreciation for and support of multi-benefit projects. The need to incorporate community involvement and benefit, to provide flood protection but also habitat and recreation opportunities.

## Breakout Room 2 Moderated by Alissa Evans

### Takeaways:

- **Top 3 Priorities:** Homelessness, pollution prevention, habitat restoration, flood protection, Anderson Dam, drinking water
- **Expanded Funding:** Absolutely yes
  - o Want to see more opportunities for smaller agencies to access funding
  - o Especially support Priorities B and D
- **Climate Change:** Yes, support.
- **Pacheco:** Want more information about project, project seems drastic/large scale. Want to understand why it's included in this plan, specifically. Could potentially support but need to know more.
- **Flood Protection Projects:** Yes, resident safety is top priority for cities.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Emphatically, yes. Habitat restoration can garner community engagement and state-matched funds. Riparian work also needs to address homelessness

- **What is missing?:** Not sure what's missing in the priorities, but the current plan leaves little room for maintenance work. Also should look into doing more of this work on District land.
- **Support the plan as is?:** Yes, still learning about it, but would support. Especially Priority F.

#### **Summary:**

- Group is largely in favor of addressing home homelessness and creek clean up. The environmental benefits can't be fully realized without addressing homelessness at the same time – lots of interest in Priority F.
- Discussed the need for more grant opportunities. Hoping for additional funding for Priorities B and D (B is oversubscribed, and grantees can't get full funding); smaller nonprofits should be in the mix for funding.
- Wanted more information about Pacheco and its environmental benefits.
- Anderson Dam was important as well.

### **Breakout Room 3** Moderated by Leslee Guardino

#### **Takeaways:**

- **Top 3 Priorities:** Anderson Dam, habitat restoration, flood protection
  - o Recommend looking at streamlining opportunities for collaboration for different funding streams
- **Expanded Funding:** Need more water conservation research grants, more grants available to local private companies and startups
- **Climate Change:** Support adding because of the potential impacts like flooding, impact on local water supply, extreme heat, urban heat effects, etc. We need to be prepared.
- **Public Health and Safety:** Support for addressing homeless encampments was not strong – question if homelessness appropriate for VW to take on – should be cities' responsibility. If creeks were made to be more of a destination, there would be less homeless congregation there.
- **Infrastructure:** Drinking water is important, as communities are always running out
- **Flood Protection Projects:** One of the top priorities for the group
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Supportive, recommend having educational opportunities on stewardship projects; want to allow for master planning grants – less money on CEQA and more on habitat restoration
- **Support the plan as is?:** Yes, it's important we have a sustainable funding source and don't slip on our progress. Funding needs to be at-scale with the commitment

#### **Summary:**

- Group focused on flood protection, disaster mitigation, climate change, and water supply. There is support for plan as is and interest in building upon it with collaboration from local governments. Want to make sure there are fewer encampments by rivers and streams. Climate change was important as well – especially with increased weather events. Pacheco is of interest but participants want more information. We're looking to expand funding opportunities through different grant programs, want to increase flexibility in categories of funding.

## Breakout Room 4 Moderated by Jennifer Johnson

### Takeaways:

- **Top 3 Priorities:** Anderson Dam for earthquake preparedness, reducing plastics with hydration stations, trash and homeless encampment clean ups, pollution
- **Expanded Funding:** Really want to see the expansion of hydration stations
- **Climate Change:** Acknowledgement of sea-level rise and adaptation, impact to water supplies. The need for massive funding for climate change is real, but unsure if a climate change emphasis on this measure would be worth it, since it wouldn't make a significant financial impact.
  - o Want more state and federal funding (and good leadership is what we need)
- **Pacheco:** Support ranges from opposition to full support. Need diversification of water supply, would like to see investment in desalination and innovation in types of water that can be supplied (opposition based on belief that funding for water supply should come from rates)
- **Infrastructure:** Support ranges from lukewarm (acknowledgement that is important, but not eager), to enthusiastic (suggestion to maintain improve); suggestion that rate payers should pay, not public
- **Flood Protection Projects:** Emphatic support, especially downtown San Jose and Coyote Creek; Anderson Dam would hopefully address this
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Want to see fish return to natural habitat; acknowledgement that waterways are not treasured by community
- **Support the plan as is?:** Yes, especially because of Anderson Dam and hydro stations. Understand this is a broad measure to appeal to all, if narrowed, should focus on maintenance around watersheds.

### **Report Out:**

Some consensus around messaging: protect creeks and promote safe/respectful clean-up of homeless encampments, great praise and support for grant funding especially for the hydration stations, also protecting safety with the Anderson Dam project. Other issues may be lower priority, because you can't do everything - some things could be funded through other mechanisms.

## Breakout Room 5 Moderated by Kathy Duong

### Takeaways:

- **Top 3 Priorities:** A, C, D, E, F
  - o Concerns with conflict between access and habitat; consider criteria for biologically sensitive trails; concerns with extensive clean ups – need more permanent solutions
  - o Support for justice and equity through nature-based solutions
- **Expanded Funding:** Support the opportunities from these grants, especially for maintaining restoration
- **Climate Change:** Climate should be a part of everything we do
- **Pacheco:** Unsure of Pacheco – environmental groups may not support
- **Infrastructure:** Support maintenance of infrastructure; should be covered by rate payers (maybe not SCW)
- **Support the plan as is?:** Possibly, want more stakeholder input and need more information like specific dollar amounts; constituents may not support

### **Report Out:**

Keep the plan flexible; support for multi-benefit projects; support additional grant funding for B and D; support expansion of hydration stations.

---

## **General Feedback on Priorities:**

### **Priority A: Drinking Water Reliability**

- This had broad support across participant groups; hydration stations are of particular interest.

### **Priority B: Pollution and Toxins**

- This was identified as a top concern for participants but largely not discussed in depth.
- Identified as an area where more grant funding is needed.

### **Priority C: Disaster Protection for Dams**

- By and large participants were highly supportive of this priority and expressed concern over impending disasters.

### **Priority D: Habitat and Wildlife Restoration**

- Participants were generally supportive, with support ranging from moderate to emphatic.
- This was especially critical to environmental groups.
- Identified as an area where more grant funding is needed.

### **Priority E: Flood Protection**

- Overall, participants supported the priority.
- This was especially critical to government representatives and those located near Coyote Creek.

### **Potential Priority F: Public Health and Safety**

- Support ranged from opposition to emphatic response. Groups saw this priority either as critically integrated into all the other issues, or as a separate issue outside of Valley Water's purview.
- Overwhelmingly participants wanted more information.

# APPENDIX

- Confirmed attendee list
- Main session public chat
- Full breakout room notes

---

## Confirmed attendee list

### Breakout Room 1:

#### Attended breakout:

- Rachael Gibson
- Heather Hamp
- Ryan McCarter
- Jennifer Codianne
- Zooey Diggory
- Matthew Gloria-Dalton
- Jennifer De Souza
- Paola Reyes
- Helen Chapman
- Naresh Duggal
- Julianna Martin
- John McKay
- Kirsten Struve
- Mark Gomez
- Amy Fonseca
- Colleen Valles

#### Attended Main only:

- Katja Irvin
- Cassandra McClinton
- Stan Williams

### Breakout Room 2:

#### Attended breakout:

- Alissa Evans
- Beckie Zisser
- Joel Jenkins
- Clayton Leal
- Sue Tippets
- Merna Leal
- Joy Lim
- Tony Mercado
- Sara Duckler
- Metra Richert
- Alexandra Von Feldt
- Michael Pearce
- Lakeisha Bryant
- Stephanie Koo

#### Attended Main only:

- Sunshine Julian-Ventura
- Albert Gonzalez
- Yves Zsutty

### Breakout Room 3:

#### Attended breakout:

- Leslee Guardino
- Marta Lugo
- Don Eagleston
- Christophe LaBelle
- Ngoc Nguyen
- Kristen Yasukawa
- Linh Hoang
- Peggy Lam
- Ricardo Barajas
- Jonathan Perez
- Jay Lee
- Darin Taylor
- Kathy Nguyen
- Kerry Duncan
- Chris Ghione
- Christopher Hoem

#### Attended Main only:

- (CALL IN NUMBER)
- Margaret Bruce
- Warner Chabot

**Breakout Room 4:**Attended breakout:

- Jennifer Johnson
- Domingo Candelas
- Steven Wu
- Devin Mody
- Meenakshi Ganjoo
- Vincent Gin
- Aaron Baker
- Albert Le
- Sherilyn Tran
- Jose Villarreal
- Barry Barnes
- Jerry De La Piedra
- Anthony Eulo
- Jethroe Moore
- Sarah Ortiz
- Lisa Flores

Attended Main only:

- Cheryl Togami
- Jessica Collins
- Omar Figuera
- Jasneet Sharma

**Breakout Room 5:**Attended breakout:

- Kathy Duong
- Brian Mendenhall
- Melanie Richardson
- Benjamin Apolo
- TaShon Thomas
- Toni Vye
- Michael Ritchie
- Rechelle Blank
- Chris Hakes
- Lucas Ramirez
- Hope Cahan
- Kit Gordon
- Shani Kleinhaus
- Lena Eyan
- Orrin Mahoney

Attended Main only:

- Stephanie Moreno
- Jimin Oh Lee
- Liz Lawler
- Don Rocha
- Mindy Nguyen

**RSVP'd "Yes", did not attend**

Frank Cancilla  
Yvonne Martinez Beltran  
Amy McElroy  
Deanna Santana  
Cole Jower  
David Bini  
James Eggers  
Anurag Pal  
Shay Franco-Clausen  
Richard Santos  
Steven Wesolowski  
Caitlin Armstrong  
Gary Jahns  
Victoria Lam  
Javaneh Nikbakht  
Ben Reaves  
Janet Hedley  
Stacie Shih