

PLENARY DISCUSSION ON THE FOUR SCENARIOS:

Lucy Moore, facilitator

Where we are today: Many suggested that the fourth scenario – “Energized but Thirsty” is “what is happening now” and “the path we are on.”

Is this a game? Some were uncomfortable with the scenario exercise -- a linear model in a non-linear world, said one. Others felt that the “Miracle Occurs” scenario with abundant water and cheap energy was so unrealistic as to be unimaginable. It is not sustainable. “It is the world we live in and it cannot go on.”

Efficiency: The group discussed some of the dilemmas and unintended consequences of greater efficiencies in the use of water and energy. The more efficiencies, for instance, the less elasticity there is in the system to deal with the unforeseen. The more water is saved and re-used the less is recharged and available for stream flows. There were questions about how to measure efficiency, given the complexity.

Conflict and cooperation: There was a discussion about the likelihood of both increased conflict and increased cooperation. Communities could come together and share resources in times of shortage, as the *acequias* did traditionally; or conflicts, lawsuits, animosity could increase; or both. Cooperation could happen locally, for instance, and litigation on the larger scale.

Hidden costs: Some reminded the group that there are significant hidden costs in all the options. To evaluate “expensive” is a complex process, going beyond simply the cost of a gallon of gasoline, for instance. There are environmental, health, social costs and many more.

Management of water resources: The scenarios could drive management of resources in different directions – centralized basin-wide management or more citizen-based management.

Affecting the course we are on: The group spoke of ways to change course. Many felt it would require a major paradigm shift, probably resulting from a major crisis situation. Political will is fundamental, said a participant if significant change is to be made. Some felt that changing values and cultures is the biggest challenge. The group considered the role of values in decisions we make about the future. “We are a country of immigrants,” said one, “who saw limitless opportunities and boundless resources.” That world view exists today and will be hard to change. Water rights are private property rights; it is hard to imagine being in a situation where those rights would be extinguished, but it is possible. There was discussion about the potential for radical changes in the future that we are unable to predict, like pandemics and mass migrations of the past.

Suggestions: A participant asked the group to look around them. “How many watts of electricity is this building using right now?” he asked. Solar panels have great potential; they are being used extensively even in New Jersey, said another. There was a suggestion to ban bio-fuels.

Moving the axes through space and time: A participant suggested that the center of the two axes represents the status quo, the balance of today, and that the water/energy axes could be “moved

through space and time” to focus on different parts of the state and different times, past, present and future. This would give different future scenarios. Looking farther out, beyond 2025, “is a much scarier scenario,” suggested a participant. Looking back and revisiting decisions, it is important to realize that they made sense at the time. A participant suggested that an inventory of historical predictions, trends, etc. and how they played out would be valuable.

Importance of this conversation: Several felt that this discussion about the future paths was important and should happen regularly, perhaps every year, to track our progress toward different futures. Reaching out the full range of users will make the conversation more valuable. The next few years will be critical for understanding the physical and legal systems that we are dealing with and the filters that each of us uses to interpret what we are seeing.

Different axes: A participant suggested that it would be possible to use different axes for scenario planning, for instance, ones that encompassed world views – male to female, and indigenous to western/commercial.