

**Yuba County IRWMP | 2015 UPDATE**

**APPENDIX 2-1**

**Environmental Justice/Disadvantaged Communities  
Outreach**

## **Yuba Integrated Water Management Group Environmental Justice / Disadvantaged Communities Outreach**

Yuba County has a fast-growing Latino community. As of the 2010 census, Latinos make up 25% of the county's population, up from 17.4% the previous census. 18% of the population in the county speaks Spanish and more than a third of those (37.3%), have limited or no English proficiency.

Due in part to this language isolation, the Latino community is not very engaged in water planning processes and a lot of the information and engagement opportunities being generated are not effectively reaching this audience. It is therefore imperative for any comprehensive water planning to proactively engage this community.

To better understand the water needs of the Latino community in Yuba County, we reached out to members of the Alliance for Hispanic Advancement (AHA) for one-on-one in-depth interviews. We also conducted man-on-the-street interviews with Latino residents in Olivehurst, Linda and Marysville, which are the three communities in Yuba County with the largest Latino populations: 36.6%, 32.5% and 24.2% respectively.

Below are some of the main findings:

### **Water Quality**

- The Latino community is overwhelmingly unaware of water issues, the watershed or where their water comes from.
- None of the man-on-the-street interviewees could confidently identify their water purveyor. The vast majority didn't know and a few tentatively answered that the city provided their water. Most of the interviewees live in apartment complexes, so utilities may be included in their rent, thus eliminating direct interaction with their water purveyor.
- None of the people we spoke with trust the quality of the water that comes into their homes. Several people reported a foul smell in their water, identifying it as perhaps chlorine or another chemical. One of the in-depth interviewees claimed that the smell was caused by sewer water being recycled and used as potable water. There's a dearth of trust.
- Because they mistrust the quality of the water, many instead purchase bottled water. Every man-on-the-street interviewee volunteered that they purchase bottled water rather than drink the water that comes out of their faucets, even as some lamented the high cost of doing so. One in-depth interviewee estimated that about 80% of the Latino community in Yuba County purchases bottled water.
- Changing perceptions about the quality of the water will be a difficult proposition. When asked whether information showing the quality of their water would improve their trust and confidence in the water, responses

were evenly split. About half of the respondents said information would help them trust the water. Close to the same number of people stated that it would not affect them and that they would continue purchasing bottled water.

#### Recreational Use

- Recreational use of water was touched upon briefly. It was noted that Latinos have not typically used the rivers in the area for recreational purposes, but that they are beginning to do so more and more. As this trend continues, the County needs to prepare for higher utilization of these resources.

#### Environmental/Climate Change

- In-depth interview respondents stressed that the community needs education about how their actions affect water quality.
- Most man-on-the-street interviewees were unaware of whether or not they lived in a designate flood plain. One respondent said he believed that he did, because he had heard that years ago snowmelt flooded the area where he lives.
- None of the man-on-the-street respondents were aware of any city- or county-led efforts or plans to alleviate the impacts of heat waves. Respondents were not aware of any cooling centers or places they could go to in order to escape the effects of the heat.

While the number of interview participants is not large enough to constitute a statistically significant sample whose findings may be applied across Yuba County's Latino population, it does provide meaningful information that can be used as the foundation for future outreach and engagement efforts.

#### **Potential Next Steps**

There are several potential next steps that can be taken to further learn the needs of the Latino community and better engage this important stakeholder group.

During the initial outreach phase, it was identified that the Latino community needs more education about the impact their actions have on the environment. Additional man-on-the-street interviews could be conducted, focusing specifically on identifying areas where environmental education would be beneficial. From experience in other regions, we could make an educated guess that some of these issues may be related to improper disposal of motor oil and cooking fats, oils and grease; proper cleanup and stewardship of rivers, lakes and other waterways; and the negative environmental impact of the large number of water bottles used by stakeholders. These are guesses, albeit based on experience in other Latino communities. However, it is imperative that we reach out to the community to clearly identify these topics, rather than assuming that they are the

same from community to community. This information would help identify education needs and develop education models to enhance the community's awareness of the impact their actions have on the watershed.

During the initial outreach, one of the organizations that was identified and engaged was the Alliance for Hispanic Advancement (AHA). Further engagement of this organization could be beneficial. Yuba Integrated Water Management Group representatives could attend one of AHA's scheduled meetings and present on water issues and specific projects that are being considered, especially those of potential significance to the Latino community. Input from AHA could be helpful in better understanding the priorities of this community and identifying additional issues or projects not currently being considered. It would also further strengthen the link between both organizations, potentially forging stronger involvement from Latino leaders in water issues.

A third potential next step would be identifying stakeholders or organizations within Yuba county who are already working on water education and outreach efforts and collaborate with them to implement efforts specifically targeting Latino communities. Existing or proposed water projects could also be identified, that would benefit from incorporating Latino outreach and education elements.

Finally, the Yuba Integrated Water Management Group could take steps to help educate the Latino community about the quality and safety of their water, and try to help curtail the high use of bottled water. A targeted "stop drinking bottled water" campaign could include development of educational materials, including flyers, brochures, public service announcements and more, as well as public relations efforts, such as engaging Spanish media and development of Spanish news releases to increase coverage of the issue.

Additional efforts on this issue are needed. Whether it is one of the suggestions listed above, a comprehensive combination of some or all of the suggestions or different ideas altogether, the Latino community is growing fast and needs to be effectively engaged. Any water projects or issues must include the Latino community as a focus for it to be successful and relevant. As time passes, this becomes more critical and harder to accomplish.

This document and the efforts that led to its development are the first step in this process. Additional work is needed and the Yuba Integrated Water Management Group is in a position to make it happen.

## **Yuba Regional Water Management Group Environmental Justice / Disadvantaged Communities Outreach**

Yuba County has a substantial and fast-growing Latino community. As of the 2010 census, Latinos make up 25% of the county's population, up from 17.4% the previous census. 18% of the population in the county speaks Spanish and more than a third of those (37.3%), have limited or no English proficiency.

Due in part to this language isolation, the Latino community is not very engaged in water planning processes and a lot of the information and engagement opportunities being generated are not effectively reaching this audience. It is therefore imperative for any comprehensive water planning to proactively engage this community.

To better understand the water needs of the Latino community in Yuba County, we reached out to members of the Alliance for Hispanic Advancement (AHA) for one-on-one in-depth interviews. We also conducted person-on-the-street interviews with 17 Latino residents in Olivehurst, Linda and Marysville, which are the three communities in Yuba County with the largest Latino populations: 36.6%, 32.5% and 24.2% respectively.

Below are some of the main findings:

### **Water Quality**

- The Latino community is overwhelmingly unaware of water issues, the watershed or where their water comes from.
- None of the person-on-the-street interviewees could confidently identify their water purveyor. The vast majority didn't know and a few tentatively answered that the city provided their water. Most of the interviewees live in apartment complexes, so utilities may be included in their rent, thus eliminating direct interaction with their water purveyor.
- None of the people we spoke with trust the quality of the water that comes into their homes. Several people reported a foul smell in their water, identifying it as perhaps chlorine or another chemical. One of the in-depth

- interviewees claimed that the smell was caused by sewer water being recycled and used as potable water. There's a dearth of trust.
- Because they mistrust the quality of the water, many instead purchase bottled water. Every person-on-the-street interviewee volunteered that they purchase bottled water rather than drink the water that comes out of their faucets, even as some lamented the high cost of doing so. One in-depth interviewee estimated that about 80% of the Latino community in Yuba County purchases bottled water.
  - Changing perceptions about the quality of the water will be a difficult proposition. When asked whether information showing the quality of their water would improve their trust and confidence in the water, responses were evenly split. About half of the respondents said information would help them trust the water. Close to the same number of people stated that it would not affect them and that they would continue purchasing bottled water.

#### Recreational Use

- Recreational use of water was touched upon briefly. It was noted that Latinos have not typically used the rivers in the area for recreational purposes, but that they are beginning to do so more and more. As this trend continues, the County needs to prepare for higher utilization of these resources. Issues of consumption of local fish with associated health risks may also arise as a result of this increased use. Lastly, signage for local recreation areas in Spanish (or using the universal symbols) should be considered.

#### Environmental/Climate Change

- In-depth interview respondents stressed that the community needs education about how their actions affect water quality.
- Most person-on-the-street interviewees were unaware of whether or not they lived in a designated flood plain. One respondent said he believed that he did, because he had heard that years ago snowmelt flooded the area where he lives.
- None of the person-on-the-street respondents were aware of any city- or county-led efforts or plans to alleviate the impacts of heat waves.

Respondents were not aware of any cooling centers or places they could go to in order to escape the effects of the heat.

While the number of interview participants is not large enough to constitute a statistically significant sample whose findings may be applied across Yuba County's Latino population, it does provide meaningful information that can be used as the foundation for future outreach and engagement efforts.

## Recommended Actions

There are several short-term and long-term next steps that can be taken to further learn the needs of the Latino community and better engage this important stakeholder group.

### Short-Term Activities

Recommendation	Description
1 Presentations to Latino community-based organizations	During the initial outreach, one of the organizations that was identified and engaged was the Alliance for Hispanic Advancement (AHA). Further engagement of this organization and other similar ones would be beneficial. Yuba Regional Water Management Group representatives should attend one of AHA's scheduled meetings and present on water issues and specific projects that are being considered, especially those of potential significance to the Latino community. Input from AHA would be helpful in better understanding the priorities of this community and identifying additional issues or projects not currently being considered. Working with AHA to identify the Top 3 water-related issues, for instance, would serve to narrow the focus of subsequent outreach. It would also further strengthen the link between both organizations, potentially forging stronger involvement from Latino leaders in water issues and therefore finding more effective ways to leverage the education opportunities by coordinating with Leadership outreach.
2 Additional person-on-the-street interviews	During the initial outreach phase, it was identified that the Latino community needs more education about the impact their actions have on the environment. Additional person-on-the-street interviews should focus specifically on identifying areas where environmental education would be



beneficial and on finding out what individuals or organizations locals would trust as purveyors of the information.

From experience in other regions, we could make an educated guess that some of these issues may be related to improper disposal of motor oil and cooking fats, oils and grease; proper cleanup and stewardship of rivers, lakes and other waterways; and the negative environmental impact of the large number of water bottles used by stakeholders. These are guesses, albeit based on experience in other Latino communities. However, it is imperative that we reach out to the community to clearly identify these topics, rather than assuming that they are the same from community to community. This information would help identify education needs and develop education models to enhance the community's awareness of the impact their actions have on the watershed.

3 Develop bottled water and drought brochures

Create and distribute a brochure, in Spanish, educating consumers about the quality and cost of tap water versus bottled water and the benefits of changing their current reliance on bottled water, as well as the environmental consequences of using bottled water. Copy for a similar brochure has already been developed for another water region, so it would only require minor revisions (e.g. quotes by local leaders, pictures and diagrams that are locally relevant) to localize the materials for the Yuba community. Sponsorship of the brochure by organizations such as AHA and promotion in local Spanish-language media should be considered to ensure that the source of the information is trusted by the larger community. Another option would be to create a bilingual flyer with the same information and distribute it as a bill insert to all water agency customers. Further, education on the impacts of drought could also be included in this brochure or in a separate publication.

Strategies will need to be developed to ensure that renters also receive these brochures.

**Long-Term Activities**

**Recommendation**

**Description**

- 1 Work with existing water groups to incorporate focus on Latino issues  
Identify stakeholders or organizations within Yuba county who are already working on water education and outreach efforts and collaborate with them to implement efforts specifically targeting Latino communities. Existing or proposed water projects could also be identified, that would benefit from incorporating Latino outreach and education elements.
  
- 2 Develop Spanish water quality education effort  
The Yuba Regional Water Management Group could take steps to help educate the Latino community about the quality and safety of their water, and try to help curtail the high use of bottled water. A targeted campaign designed to reduce use of bottled water could include development of educational materials (for use in schools, as well as with adults), such as flyers, brochures, public service announcements (radio and television) and more, as well as public relations efforts, such as engaging Spanish media and development of Spanish news releases to increase coverage of the issue.
  
- 3 Outreach to Latino leaders and key community members  
Engage additional Latino leaders and key community members to have an ongoing feedback loop into the Latino community. By doing so, the Yuba Regional Water Management Group can stay atop the changing needs of the Latino community and adapt as those needs change. Furthermore, engaging Latino leaders and other community members enhances the opportunity to have that

community represented at the table as decisions on water issues and water planning are being made.

Additional efforts on this issue are needed. Whether it is one of the suggestions listed above, a comprehensive combination of some or all of the suggestions or different ideas altogether, the Latino community is substantial in number and growing fast, and needs to be effectively engaged. Any water projects or issues must include the Latino community as a focus for it to be successful and relevant. As time passes, this becomes more critical and harder to accomplish.

This document and the efforts that led to its development are the first step in this process. Additional work is needed and the Yuba Regional Water Management Group is in a position to make it happen.