



Figure 70. Bishop, California
Photo: James Powell 2013



ACT II: COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Public participation has increasingly been recognized as a vital component of land use planning and programming (Forester 2006). Without consultation with local experts and community members, land planning and design efforts will be unable to meet the existing needs of communities or to articulate satisfying and enriching futures. Looking at tenets established by the work of Randolph Hester and Carl Steinitz (Hester 1990, Steinitz 2012), it is possible to see that designing with community participation is a mutual exchange of information, education, and growth. Engaging in this process is especially important in the Eastern Sierra, where interviews and examination of newspaper and web sources indicate a high level of frustration with the opacity of land management plans that are developed by the LADWP and Federal agencies in the area (Gervais 2012).

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Workshops

To understand the concerns of the study area residents, the team facilitated two community workshops: one in Lone Pine, California on February 16, 2013, the other one in June Lake, California on February 17, 2013. These workshops were intended to build upon the information gathered at a November 15th, 2012 workshop hosted by a group of undergraduate Aqueduct Futures Project students in Bishop, California (Lehrman 2012). The November workshop in Bishop attracted nearly 40 locals, and collected information to aid in the development of site-specific design interventions that would be placed along the course of the Aqueduct. While the community outreach performed by the undergraduate students had a much narrower planning perspective than the 606 project, information collected at the Bishop workshop provided a baseline of topics and issues that were of special concern to local residents. The February workshops presented preliminary results of the Bishop workshop to the participants, and asked that audience to expand on the information by addressing those results as well as raising further concerns.

Lone Pine and June Lake were chosen as locations in order to allow a broader portion of the study area population to make their voices heard. These two locations are near the south and north ends of the study area respectively, and the team was hopeful that residents of nearby communities would be willing to make the short commute to these workshops rather than the long drive to Bishop. To encourage broad participation, the workshops were advertised via email for several weeks prior to the events. The Mono Lake Committee, Owens Valley Committee, and the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group distributed the invitations to their contact lists. Seventeen local residents attended the Lone Pine workshop, including one participant who made the trip all the way from Ridgecrest, California. The following day, a total of eight residents from the northern reaches of the study area participated in the June Lake workshop.

The workshop format was simple: three activities allowed participants to engage in group discussion about their concerns for their local communities and the Eastern Sierra. In the first activity, participants formed groups of four to discuss responses to the question, "What should planning priorities for the Eastern Sierra be over the next 50 years?" After seven minutes of discussion and note taking, the breakout parties of four reformed into the large group and shared

select responses with the entire room. A 606 team member wrote the chosen responses from the participant groups on flip charts at the front of the room. Each participant was then asked to vote individually on the responses they thought were most important by distributing six colored stickers across the flip charts. Through this "dotmocracy" process the participants were able to place emphasis on particular priorities that had been shared with the entire group.

Rather than dividing the participants into groups, the second question allowed individuals to share their thoughts directly with the entire room. In this activity, participants took turns voicing their opinions in response to the question: "What should be changed in the Eastern Sierra?" Much like the first activity, the individual responses were written down for all to see on large paper by a 606 team member. Rather than performing another "dotmocracy," these results were saved for later analysis.

Finally, the third activity solicited individual responses to the question: "What about the Eastern Sierra should be preserved?" In this exercise all participants were asked to individually brainstorm their suggestions for specific elements of the area to preserve, and write each idea on its own post-it note. The post-it notes were then collected and categorized by the 606 team members before the results were read to the entire group.

Focus Group Results

As an introduction to each of the three activities in the February workshops, common themes were extracted from the Bishop workshop data and presented to the Lone Pine and June Lake participants in order to stimulate discussion. Planning priorities from the Bishop workshop that introduced the first activity were as follows:

- Give Eastern Sierra communities more say in local planning efforts
- Bring an environmental emphasis to grazing lands
- Address the imbalance of land ownership in towns
- Give all social groups / demographics an equal voice and encourage cooperation
- Remedy the lack of social activities and community spaces
- Revitalize towns and increase

employment opportunities

- Bring opportunities for agriculture/food production into the area

Through the process of the “dotmocracy” voting, the workshop participants essentially analyzed their own responses. At each meeting, the lists included at least 15 responses as reported by the groups, so the 606 team decided to consider the five responses that received the most votes from the participants. The top five priorities from the Lone Pine meeting, as determined by the “dotmocracy” exercise, were:

- Mitigate groundwater pumping effects, follow EIRs, enforce existing agreements (21 votes)
- Demand LADWP facilitate sustainable small-scale farming near developed towns (18 votes)
- Protect natural, cultural, and historical resources on LADWP and other lands (18 votes)
- Ensure/preserve valley floor open space: recreation value, conservation easement (16 votes)
- Accommodate climate change variability (10 votes)

The top five priorities from the June Lake meeting, as determined by the “dotmocracy” exercise, were:

- Involve Eastern Sierra representatives in planning in Los Angeles related to the Eastern Sierra and vice-versa (9 votes)
- Increase LADWP’s cooperation with communities in economic development efforts (8 votes)
- Create a work plan for aqueduct infrastructure maintenance/upgrades/improvement (7 votes)
- Undertake a comprehensive hydrologic study of June Lake area (6 votes)
- Increase transparency by making all planning information on both sides available to all who are interested (4 votes)

Areas identified from the Bishop workshop as needing change and used to introduce the second activity to the Lone Pine and June Lake workshops were as follows:

- Outsiders perceive Eastern Sierra towns as disadvantaged communities
- Doctors, medical facilities, and local access to health care are lacking
- Overpumping of groundwater is affecting the environment
- Flows within the Owens River are not maintained at levels suitable for fishing and recreation
- There are too many dust storms
- Power lines disrupt enjoyment of the scenery

After the workshops, the team analyzed the content of the responses to the second question by synthesizing them into categories. The responses recorded during the meetings were spread out on a table and the team collectively examined them all and counted the appearances of critical terms and themes. The most common themes became the dominant categories. The responses and synthesized themes from the Lone Pine workshop are shown here:

- Cooperation & Communication
 - » Use education and truth as guiding principles for communication and action
 - » Educate locals on headwater stewardship
 - » Communicate with Los Angeles to increase understanding of past ‘mistakes’ and for better planning for improvement in the future
 - » Take advantage of improving technology
 - » Create unified platform for area groups to communicate and work together
 - » Strengthen community building in each community
- Development & Economy
 - » Create/form tourism “planning committee”
 - » Encourage sustainable economic development
 - » Acquire local control of food sources
- Environment
 - » Restore Baker Creek Meadows
 - » Make decisions for ecological health rather than economic advancement

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- » Reclaim enough water locally to be sustainable
- » Restore or expand pupfish habitat
- » Use the watershed boundaries as priority for all planning processes
- Politics
 - » Re-evaluate political boundaries to relate to local cultural identity
 - » Hold elected officials to their promises
 - » Secure water rights for native communities
- Retain tourist attractions and amenities that bring visitors to the Eastern Sierra
- Maintain natural waterway health as well as water quality and quantity in private wells

The responses and synthesized categories from the June Lake workshop are shown here:

- Cooperation and Communication
 - » Stimulate cooperation among native communities
 - » Create a commitment that requires cooperation between Eastern Sierra and other agencies (LADWP)
 - » Increase communication and cooperation between social groups and interest groups
- Development & Economy
 - » Change perceptions on appropriate development
 - » Connect all communities to information technology and ensure its affordability
 - » Expand Mammoth Hospital and its ability to provide for its patients
 - » Maintain economically productive local fisheries
 - » Stop approving development where resources are lacking – eliminate over-riding considerations
- Improve regional transportation connections
- Allow tribes to use the resources available to them (water and land)
- Decrease water pumping amounts – allow groundwater to recover

Items related to preservation identified from the Bishop workshop and presented to the Lone Pine and June Lake workshops as an introduction to the third question were as follows:

- Don't expand into "natural" or protected areas; these should be preserved
- Local people appreciate recreation; it's not just for the tourists
- Preserve hiking and forest areas

Due to the high number of individual post-it note responses, the 606 team performed only a preliminary organization of the responses from the third activity during the workshop. Several days later, the team revisited the collection of post-it notes to reexamine and re-categorize them. Common terms written on the post-it notes were grouped and counted to understand the most frequently expressed preservation suggestions. Interestingly, this round of content analysis illustrated that the preservation suggestions from the two workshops were similar enough to create the same categories for both workshops. The suggestions for elements of the Eastern Sierra to be preserved focused on ten themes:

- Cultural heritage
- Historical significance
- Recreation access
- Hydrologic vitality
- Ecosystem vitality
- Agricultural sustainability / food security
- Visual quality
- Community vitality
- Public land management
- Specific places

Discussion

Both workshops were eye-opening experiences for the 606 team, as several concerns were raised that the team had not previously encountered in their research. The input from the community was invaluable as it helped to reshape the team's understanding of the current conditions and needs of the communities within the Eastern Sierra. This information structured the project issues and objectives so that the project planning could better address the critical needs of the people and the place.

In some cases results of the workshop helped to redefine the issues and objectives of this project by shedding new light on issues already considered, and in other cases by identifying concerns that had not yet been considered. For example, it was not surprising that people expressed dissatisfaction with the state of the local economy, but the approaches to rectifying the situation were unexpected. In both workshops, participants expressed a desire to bolster the local economy by refining and focusing on the recreation-based tourism in the area. Prior to the workshops, the 606 team had thought that a significant increase in tourism might be seen as an unwanted invasion of outsiders. Recreation had thus not been expressly considered in the project objectives, but was written back into the list after the community workshops.

In addition to concerns about the local economy, residents also expressed a desire for local food sovereignty. Many of the participants at the Lone Pine workshop were passionate about building a network of local agriculture production to provide more locally sourced food. Given what the team had come to understand about LADWP water rights and local allocation, this topic had not been addressed prior to the community workshops. Workshop participants made it clear that a movement had already begun and expansion of such a local food network would be well within their means. The importance of this topic to the community made agriculture a factor in planning for that possible land use.

A second broad theme that had not been considered until the community workshops was cooperation and communication. This theme was introduced through a variety of suggestions ranging from internet connectivity and information technology; to increasing participation and cooperation from LADWP in local planning efforts; to developing education

programs in the Los Angeles area to inform end users about the source of their water and the implications of extracting it from the Eastern Sierra. While the team recognizes that these are all important actions that are capable of stimulating positive change in the Eastern Sierra, they do not fall within the scope of the current project. With the identification of these topics as important, they were selected as recommendations for future action so that other groups and projects may bring them to fruition. Though as an academic, student project, this planning effort has no authority to implement policies, it is hoped that the recommendations presented within the document will influence decision makers' future actions.

Elements of the Eastern Sierra to be preserved from the third activity at both meetings displayed some interesting common themes. Participants at both meetings individually expressed the desire to see elements of cultural heritage and historical significance preserved. Concern for cultural heritage was reflected in the importance placed on the opinions, values, and traditions of local people, while the wish to preserve historic structures and places underscored the importance of the area's unique character. As a result of this data, the project objectives were rewritten to express that planning efforts would respect the area's cultural heritage. In this way, the recommendations and planning guidelines will not contradict the local residents' values as they align with preserving local history and culture.

It was also during this third activity that the visual quality of the area was significantly addressed for the first time. Many individuals at both meetings expressed that they valued the dark night skies and the unobstructed views of the mountains. While the objectives do not directly address the visual aesthetics of the area, the team carefully considered this desire when formulating planning guidelines and recommendations to ensure that they do not detract from the impressive vistas of the Eastern Sierra.

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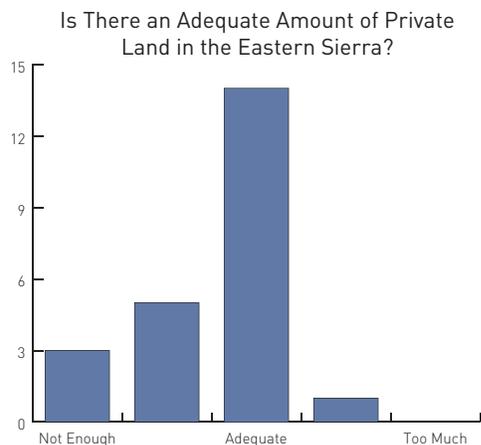


Figure 71. Land Ownership Opinion

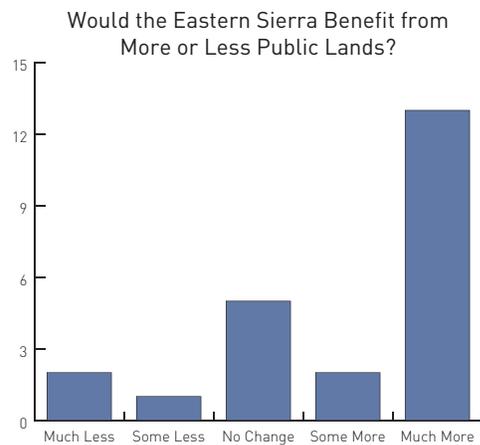


Figure 73. Public Land Management Opinion

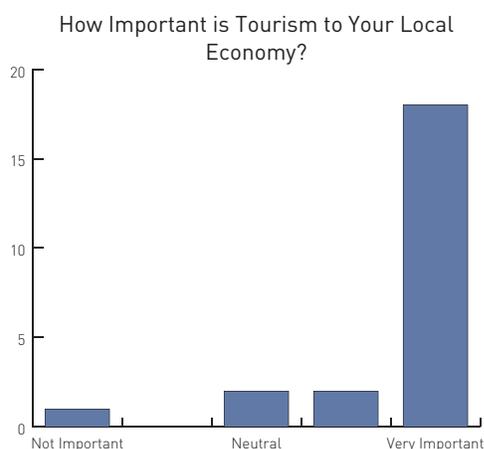


Figure 72. Tourism Opinion

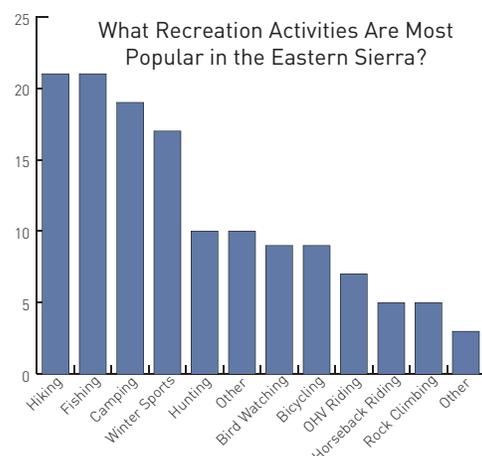


Figure 74. Recreation Activities Opinion

Survey

Description

The team posted a survey on watershedwranglers.com to obtain local opinions about various topics from political decision-making to ecological health in the Eastern Sierra. A link to the survey was emailed along with the community workshop flyer to all of the team’s contacts with various Eastern Sierra agencies and organizations. Several of those organizations then forwarded the survey link to their emailing lists. The survey was posted on January 28, 2013 and the team kept it open to responses until March 31, 2013. Overall, there were 23 respondents to the questions. Only one of those surveyed was not a resident of the study area, and while the local respondents were distributed across the study area, a majority of them were from the Bishop area. The survey was written to include both numerical ranking questions and open ended write-in questions.

To understand the responses, the quantifiable questions were graphed to illuminate trends. Since many of the questions

allowed the respondents to provide unlimited feedback, the team analyzed the content of the responses in a process similar to that performed on the data from the community workshops. All of the written responses were examined and specific common terms were identified and counted to illuminate trends in the responses. In the case of the question that addressed species of critical concern, the common responses helped the 606 team finalize the project design species. Results of some of the questions that will most significantly affect planning are presented here. The full survey and all results can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Land ownership is a frequently addressed topic within the Eastern Sierra, as there are few parcels available for private purchase and an overwhelming majority of land in the Eastern Sierra is owned by government agencies. Results of the survey question addressing land ownership suggested that area residents are

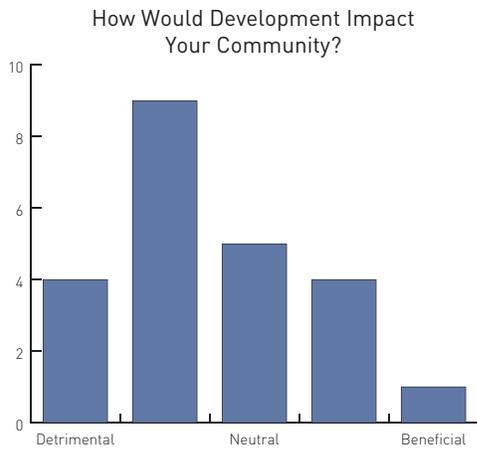


Figure 75. Development Opinion

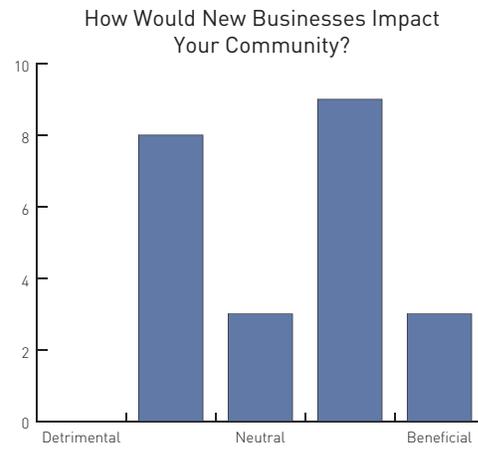


Figure 77. Business Opinion

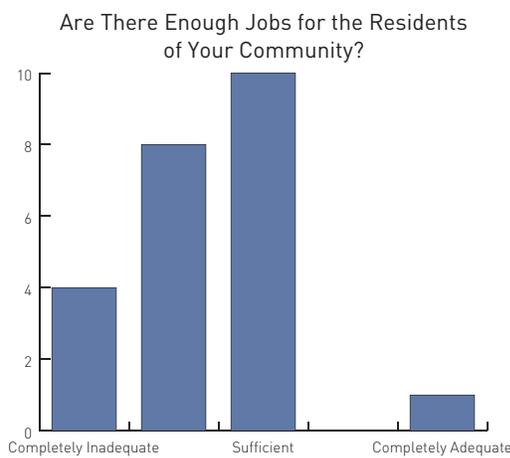


Figure 76. Jobs Opinion

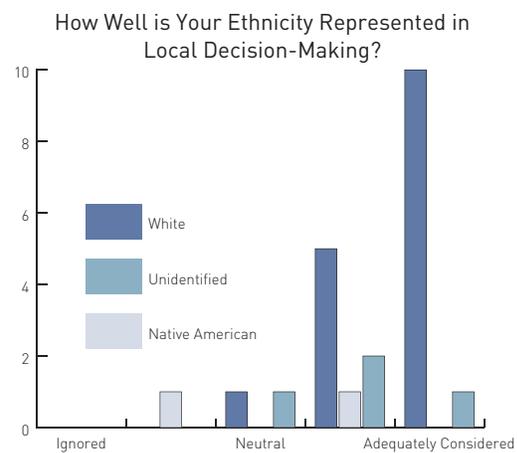


Figure 78. Ethnic Representation

mostly satisfied with the current situation, though there is some feeling that more land should be privately owned (see Figure 71). Despite the few stated preferences for more individual ownership, responses also showed that local citizens would be in favor of more protected public lands (see Figure 73).

To better understand local opinions about economy and recreation, several survey questions addressed tourism. Nearly all respondents suggested that tourism is important to their local economy (see Figure 72). With so much land accessible for public use, the tourism industry is almost entirely based on outdoor active recreation. Local opinions of recreation activities suggested that the dominant forms of recreation include winter sports, camping, fishing, and hiking (see Figure 74).

Looking for more nuanced data on the status of local economies, the survey addressed potential new development, the current job market, and new businesses. Responses showed that while most would be opposed to a great

deal of new development (Figure 75), they also saw benefit in attracting new businesses to their communities (Figure 77). In regards to employment, survey respondents generally agreed that there were enough jobs for the residents, though several rated the opportunities as inadequate or severely deficient. This may reflect the situation identified by the workshop participants, where although there were enough jobs, they were low-paying (Figure 76).

Only two survey respondents identified themselves as minorities, and their responses suggested no trend in whether or not they felt adequately considered in local decisions (Figure 78).

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Discussion

The results of land ownership and management questions may seem conflicting at first. Values expressed in other parts of the survey as well as at the community workshops suggested that people appreciate the open views and recreational opportunities afforded by the public land management. Conversation about the conversion of public land ownership to private ownership was focused on properties within or adjacent to the established towns that are currently owned by LADWP or other public agencies. Once this spatial arrangement was understood, the public and private land ownership debate did not seem contradictory, but rather showed that community members wanted strategically concentrated development that retained the benefits of public land in the surrounding areas.

Within the Eastern Sierra, local economies rely heavily on recreation-based tourism. Due to the complexities of land ownership as well as the need for environmental and cultural preservation, the team understands that any economic stagnation cannot be remedied by simply supplying more recreation. This sensitive situation provides an opportunity to propose recommendations and guidelines to expand related industries, establish a stable recreation network, and bolster the local economy in a variety of ways.

Respondents to the community survey helped this process by expressing their opinions regarding which outdoor recreation activities were the most popular. While the sample size was small compared to the total population of the study area, the survey results were significant in that they exhibit a strong correlation with empirical studies of visitor behavior. With this strong empirical foundation, the survey results greatly aided the project's subsequent development of planning guidelines and implementation activities.

Examining visitor behavior in Mono County, Schlaw Consulting (2009) reported results of four surveys conducted between 2007 and 2008. The surveys, carried out once per season (winter, spring, fall, summer) collected detailed information on all activities that visitors participated in. Of the visitors who participated in outdoor recreation, the specific activities they participated in show a strong correlation with the results of the online survey conducted for this project (Figure 79). The Schlaw Consulting study did differ from this project's work in that it measured actual

visitor experiences, while the online survey for this vision plan sought opinions of popular recreation activities from local residents. Despite this fundamental difference, the correlation of the data substantiates the results from this project's survey, and validates the recreation-based sample implementations generated for this planning effort.

Though it is outside the scope of the planning document to create jobs within the area, guidelines for carefully considered development could provide opportunity for new businesses to bring jobs to the area without spoiling the character and scenic resources of the Eastern Sierra.

Although the results of minority representation were inconclusive, the team sought to avoid making any recommendations or guidelines that would compound any hardship already experienced by minority populations. However, given the results of the survey, it is difficult to conclude that any portion of that segment of the population feels disenfranchised. Due to the poor response rate from any minority populations, more data would be necessary to make conclusions regarding local opinions of minority representation in ongoing planning processes.

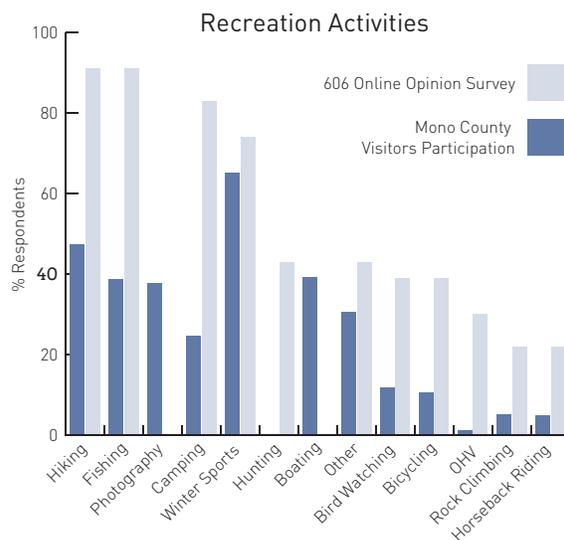


Figure 79. Outdoor Recreation Activities
Source: Schlaw Consulting 2009

Interviews

One-on-One Meetings

Community workshops and the online survey provided valuable information about the community and stakeholder needs within the general study area. In order to develop a better understanding of specific aspects and agency planning within the Eastern Sierra, the team met with the following 14 individuals:

- Josh Hart and Cathreen Richards - Inyo County Planning Department
- Chris Plakos - LADWP Public Relations
- Mark Bagley – Owens Valley Committee Board of Directors
- Scott Burns – Mono County Planning Department
- Danna Stroud – Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Holly Alpert – Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group
- Sally Manning and Daniel Pritchett – Big Pine Paiute Environmental Director, OVC Board of Directors
- Larry Freilich – Inyo County Water Department
- Michael Prather – Eastern Sierra Audubon
- Alan Bacock – Big Pine Paiute Tribe and OVC Board of Directors
- Tom LaBonge – Los Angeles City Councilmember, District 4
- Geoffery McQuilkin – Mono Lake Committee Executive Director

These individuals were chosen to provide additional depth and detail to the data from the community workshops and survey. They represent the decision making agencies; organizations with significant influence on the planning and land management of the area; and underrepresented organizations that have specific interest in local planning and land management. Unfortunately, U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management representatives could not be reached for an interview, though they were contacted by email to request an interview.

Each meeting began with an explanation of the project to the interviewee and an opportunity for the interviewee to ask the team any clarifying questions. Prior to the interviews, the project team prepared discussion topics specifically tailored to each interview. Interviews were informally structured and the conversation was allowed to flow naturally. The project team took turns posing the prepared discussion topics to the interviewees to make sure that all the necessary points were covered.

Following all the interviews, the team transcribed all the responses and performed content analysis to determine common terms and trends as well as significant responses particular to each organization. In later stages when the

team considered programmatic interventions, this data was considered along with the themes from the other methods of community outreach. Care was taken to give all of the various outreach results equal weight, as the project aims to balance the needs of all community members.

Meeting Themes

Several important themes were expressed by these contacts, some of which were addressed by several individuals. The most common theme was the lack of constructive cooperation between LADWP and local governments, agencies, interest groups and residents. As with many of the concerns expressed in the public outreach, this issue is beyond the scope of the project, but recommendations for future policy change attempt to show how further openness could be mutually beneficial for the residents and agencies operating within the study area. Recreation was brought up in several different forms, and it became clear that the planning tools within this document needed to address how to maintain and improve upon the current recreation system that brings so many people to the area. Environmental quality related to the water extraction practices also came up in several of the meetings, and became a constant component in the development of planning guidelines and implementation activities.

Community Outreach Conclusion

Environmental quality and recreation access, recreation amenities, and tourism's relation to the local economy were common themes that were addressed from many different directions throughout the community outreach. The outreach made clear that any planning done for the project should be sensitive to what the local citizens value, and maintain the unique features of their communities. While many of the concerns raised throughout the outreach are beyond the scope of this project, the team had the opportunity to publish these concerns as necessary for further study, and to create guidelines and implementation activities that would empower the local residents to address these concerns themselves.

After the community workshops and most of the individual meetings, the team revised the issues and objectives to ensure that they addressed all project-compatible concerns and topics that had been raised by the experts and local residents. This in turn created a stronger foundation for later GIS analysis of the physical landscape features, and ensured that the land use designations reflect the planning priorities and values expressed by the people of the Eastern Sierra.

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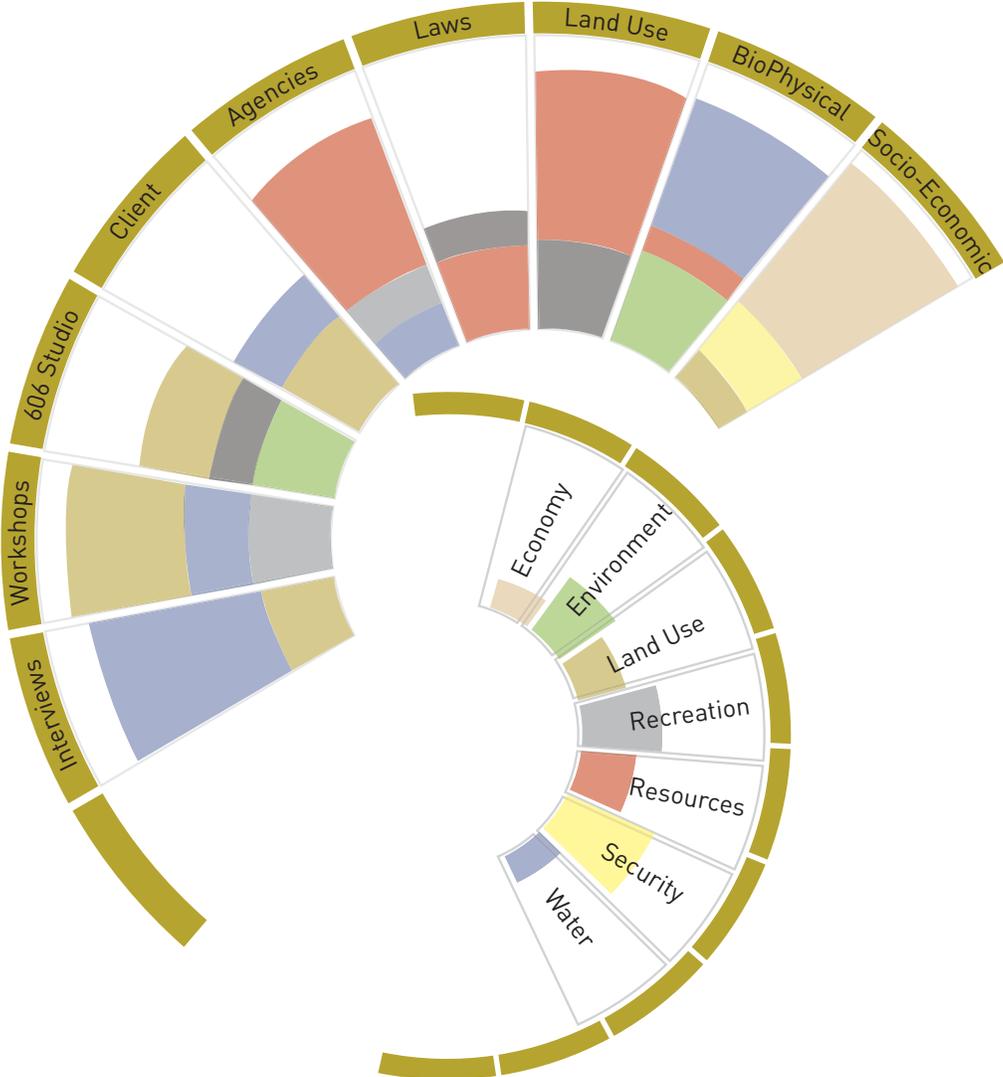


Figure 80. Program Development

Program Development

After compiling all the data from the various types of community outreach, this information was compared with the project scope as determined by the boundaries of the Aqueduct Futures Project; by research into recent and historical project precedents; and by consideration of how this vision planning document could best address the needs of the communities within the Eastern Sierra. This rich basis of analysis allowed the team to holistically reshape the objectives of the project. The production of new objectives ensured that the project was aimed at not only achieving the study’s original goal, but also reflective of the team’s new understanding of existing conditions and community identity within the Eastern Sierra.

After the objectives were solidified, the

community data was again cross-referenced with the tenets of the Aqueduct Futures Project, demands of the 606 studio, and the results of preliminary research and biophysical inventory data (Figure 80). Combining the objectives with these other inputs created five broad land use categories that took into account community needs, Aqueduct Futures goals, and the biophysical and human needs of the area. These categories also provided a blueprint for interagency land use and resource management planning and allowed the creation of guidelines to aid community planning and development throughout the study area. The five categories were: Agriculture, Development, Habitat Rehabilitation, Hydrologic Regeneration, and Recreation.

Agriculture

Agriculture was one of the most frequently discussed topics at the community workshops as individuals expressed the desire to achieve local food sustainability. It is also a major planning concern for the Owens Valley in particular because of the historic importance of farming for the area, and the ranching leases that are currently operated by the LADWP. Comparison of the cost of water with the market value of crops shows that large-scale farming would never be profitable for the valley, but the number of small community gardens has increased in communities throughout the Eastern Sierra and there is a groundswell of enthusiasm for tribal and local food sovereignty.

Development

Development became an interesting point of discussion for community members and stakeholders. There was a general agreement that a stronger economy and more jobs would be beneficial for the area, but at the same time individuals expressed a great deal of concern for maintaining the wide-open spaces and historic aesthetic that characterizes the area. Vision planning for this area is well situated to establish guidelines that will maintain the rich character and cultural values of the place, while suggesting economic diversity and sustainable development opportunities.

Habitat Rehabilitation

As the vast majority of the lands within the study area are governmentally owned and protected from development, the Eastern Sierra has been able to provide habitat for a wide variety of species. Despite this, habitat corridors and connectivity have been destroyed for many rare and endangered animals because of fenced ranching lands, resource extraction, recreation and urban development, and the intensive alteration of hydrologic patterns around Mono Lake and on the Owens Valley floor. Habitat availability for certain species such as the pupfish was expressed several times as a concern during the community meetings. The USFS and BLM also plan for specific habitats, as does the LADWP within the newly established Lower Owens River Project (LORP). These plans are not necessarily connected or cohesive, so management guidelines for the entire watershed area will allow better understanding of the possibilities for habitat connectivity and restoration.

Hydrologic Regeneration

Reflecting its importance to both the history and current state of the Eastern Sierra, the topic of water was brought up many times during community outreach activities. Identifying areas for improving hydrologic function will help with the overall goal of the project by improving the health of the watershed. This will be accomplished by reconnecting areas of surface or groundwater table disruption and create more stabilized patterns of water supply for both human and wildlife communities in the face of climate change.

Recreation

Recreation is a vital component of the Eastern Sierra's economy. It is, however, highly seasonally dependent and is focused in a few key areas such as Mammoth Mountain. The topic of recreation was very important at the community meetings, especially in relation to keeping governmentally owned lands open for public access. This is also an important component of the vision-planning document since this will help to create stronger connections between Los Angeles and the Eastern Sierra while fostering local stewardship efforts.