

ForestPlan\_Comments  
March 24, 2010  
Transparency:

Mr. Klamt:

At yesterday's WQMP meeting you asked for specific suggestions regarding calls for "transparency" when it comes to the type(s) of issues we were discussing.

In short I think it comes down to the Waterboard(s) willingness to create and implement a meaningful public education program about what you guys are tasked to do, the conditions under which you have to work and how the public can accurately assess the success (or lack of same) you're having in doing your job(s)

As you well know these are very complicated issues and the vast majority of the public doesn't understand them and so it's easy for people to be misinformed and (at times) unfairly critical.

However on the other side, I spent a number of years as a news reporter (covering government) and I've repeatedly watched governmental entities retreat into "bureaucrat-ese" and acronyms as part of (an often) unnecessary defensive posture that fosters further misunderstanding and mistrust.

My experience is that what most members of the public really want from their government is to be talked to honestly and treated with respect

They also want to have a basic understanding of what the job is.

Unfortunately the general public cannot be expected to all go out and get a PhD and spend 10 years working at the Waterboard in order to be able to navigate their way through the complexities and so it really is up to the people who do understand those complexities to find a way to educate and communicate in a manner that the public (with a reasonable amount of knowledge and effort) can understand.

I also think that we could both agree that while much of the complexity is somewhat organic and unavoidable, there is also a lot of it that is (if not purposefully created) allowed to exist because there are interests that benefit from it.

Anyway the point here is that if governmental entities as a whole and the Waterboards in particular are willing to work at educating the public about what they do and do that in a way that is designed to focus on the needs of the public vs. the needs of the agencies, I think you'd find that you would have a lot more public support.

This includes making your various websites easy to navigate in order to find information.

I realize it's easy to say; "You should do this...." and I've also worked for local government in mental health services so I know what being underfunded and over worked feels like!

But you guys do have a public Information/participation department and if the rest of you tell your bosses that you want them to get on this because it will make your job easier, they just might do so.

Thanks for your time.

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Mike Thornton  
Mining Project Community Organizer  
The Sierra Fund  
432 Broad Street

Nevada City, CA 95959  
Phone: (530) 265-8454 ext.10  
Cell: (530) 262-7335  
Fax: (530) 265-8176  
[mike.thornton@sierrafund.org](mailto:mike.thornton@sierrafund.org).  
[mike.thornton2021@yahoo.com](mailto:mike.thornton2021@yahoo.com)