

## Escalante Valley Appropriation Policy Public Meeting

June 26, 7:00 PM Escalante High School

The Meeting started at 7:15 PM, 15 minutes late due to the small turnout of 7 people. Comments were made from the audience that the meeting was not publicized correctly and was not in that day's paper. I responded that I thought it was publicized the 2 weeks before the meeting and promised to look into it.

Kurt Vest made the introduction and began his presentation on the Existing Appropriation Policy for the Escalante River drainage. He spoke generally of prior appropriation policy and beneficial use and what it takes to establish a water right, outlining the water right approval process and criteria. He spoke specifically of the Colorado River appropriation policy that is limited to small domestic filing. He gave the short history of what we know of the area closed to appropriation around the developed agricultural areas of Escalante and the boundary drawn in 1996. Kurt indicated that without good reason or convincing public input to the contrary, this closure could be removed and applications could be accepted for small domestic filings.

James Greer then presented the technical hydrological details for the area, outlining the mechanisms for recharge and discharge in the basin and sighting the highlights of the 3 hydrology studies that have been done on the basin in the last 40 years. He described the upper, thin valley alluvium, the underlying Entrada Sandstone that supplies most of the high quality water to the area, the confining Carmel formation and below that the Navajo Sandstone that has water of questionable quality. He presented an estimate on how much water is available in the basin and moratorium area and the amount of water and water rights that have been dedicated for diversion and depletion. James's conclusion was that, even with the limited hydrological understanding of the area, there is sufficient water available for new appropriations from this area.

Several questions about how each small domestic application in the moratorium basin would be treated, on a case-by-case basis, according to Utah Water Law if the area were open, just as they are considered outside the moratorium area now. This office could approve applications within the city limit, but it was up to the city to approve or deny this kind of development within the boundaries of the city water system. Applications would require an immediate, new need for water, be given 5 years to develop and not be for speculation. The question that kept repeating was; why was the area closed to appropriations in the first place, to which we have no good reply.

The meeting closed on a positive note with most attendees favorable to the removal of the moratorium on small domestic filings. Comments were encouraged and there was an understanding that at the close of the comment period on July 31 2008, the State Engineer will make his determination based on the facts.