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## Appendix L

# Gabilan Watershed Blueprint

### INTRODUCTION

The Gabilan Watershed Blueprint is the result of a pilot project conducted by the Greater Monterey County Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) aimed at addressing and resolving water-related conflicts in the region, while promoting stakeholder collaboration and project integration. This process is called “Water Resource Project Coordination” (WRPC).

While many attempts at traditional conflict resolution in Monterey County have been made in the past, most of these attempts have failed. The RWMG concluded that a new approach was needed to foster collaboration and enable project integration to occur. In response to this need, the RWMG developed the Water Resource Project Coordination concept. The WRPC was conceived as a fact-finding process in which parties would discuss what factual questions they believed to be relevant to a decision, exchange information, identify where they agreed and where they disagreed, then seek additional information to fill gaps, address hurdles, or resolve areas of disagreement. The goal of the WRPC process was to alleviate areas of mistrust and confusion and increase collaborative dialogue so that mutual solutions could be achieved.

A pilot project to test the WRPC process in one sub-watershed area of the Greater Monterey County IRWM region – the Gabilan Watershed – was initiated in early 2011, and involved numerous stakeholders representing agricultural interests, environmental groups, government agencies, academic institutions, and interested citizens. The pilot project ended in early 2014. The process and outcomes are described in detail in Section I Integration of the Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan.

The end product of the WRPC process was the Gabilan Watershed Blueprint. Based on the results of a stakeholder meeting held in January 2013, the RWMG’s WRPC Committee determined that the challenges to “making progress” in the Gabilan Watershed had less to do with a lack of information (e.g., scientific data) and more to do with funding constraints and other barriers. The challenges spanned such a large range of topics that the Committee felt a comprehensive “umbrella” was needed to pull it all together. That umbrella is what they termed the “Gabilan Watershed Blueprint.” The Gabilan Watershed Blueprint was envisioned as a process to address some of the major hurdles that have slowed and prevented progress in resolving problems related to water quality, and to a lesser extent flooding, in the Gabilan Watershed.

The Gabilan Watershed Blueprint is comprised of four main sections, designed to address some of the regional challenges and opportunities expressed during the January 2013 stakeholder meeting. The four Blueprint sections are: 1) The Landscape Strategy, 2) On-Farm Solutions, 3) Corporate Social Responsibility, and 4) Agency Coordination. The background for each of these sections is described briefly below, and the sections themselves follow this Introduction as “standalone” documents.

#### **1. The Landscape Strategy**

One important outcome of the stakeholder meeting held in January 2013 was a collection of visual depictions of ideal and/or desired future characteristics of the Gabilan Watershed. The purpose of the Landscape Strategy was to bring these images together in order to outline common goals for the watershed and to describe some of the common hurdles affecting the ability to advance joint work in the

watershed. The drawings contained in the Landscape Strategy section of the Blueprint distill the themes expressed in the January 2013 stakeholder drawings – flood control, water quality, habitat restoration, public access to parks and natural areas, safe community, and productive agriculture – along with the following *shared ideals*:

- Residents of Salinas will enjoy and have good access to green places, and ample outdoor education and activities will engage children and other community members in maintaining local environmental quality.
- Within city boundaries, urban runoff management practices and facilities will minimize the impact of urban impervious surfaces on storm flows to regional waterways.
- Area farms will host a variety of farm runoff water quality management techniques reflective of individual approaches and needs and innovations, resulting in cleaner waterways amidst a thriving agricultural economy.
- The Reclamation Ditch/creek system will be able to safely and effectively convey storm flows while protecting or enhancing water quality as flows are conveyed to Elkhorn Harbor. Where possible, wetlands and other wildlife habitat will be incorporated into the system's function.
- Pedestrian and bike-friendly paths connecting Salinas to regional path systems will be developed along acceptable routes.

The graphics in the Landscape Strategy will be used for continued outreach and education in the watershed.

## **2. On-Farm Solutions**

Some of the challenges voiced at the January 2013 stakeholder meeting were the “barriers” to implementing on-farm sustainable management practices. One barrier was a simple lack of technical information regarding certain practices, such as nutrient management practices, and the lack of an industry-led approach to address the issue. In response to this challenge, a strategy was developed to help growers answer some of those questions in order to help build capacity within the local grower community for implementing sustainable management practices in the Gabilan Watershed. The On-Farm Solutions section of the Blueprint is the outcome of that effort.

The idea for On-Farm Solutions was first developed at a Grower-Shipper Association (GSA) meeting in the fall 2012, at which time the GSA’s Water Committee had identified a few priority needs for grower assistance in terms of water quality improvement. One of those needs was a focus on better understanding Nitrate Quick Tests, including how to use them, compile them, and interpret them, and their true cost to the organization.

The GSA, in association with researchers at the Watershed Institute of California State University Monterey Bay, purchased and distributed Nitrate Quick Test kits to growers in the Salinas Valley, and then tracked their use. The results of this effort were compiled into a document (Standard Operating Procedures) intended to provide growers with a comprehensive guide, in both English and Spanish, on how to perform and use soil Nitrate Quick Tests as a diagnostic tool for fertilizer management decisions. The guide is regionally specific, and addresses differences in soil sampling, frequency of testing, and interpreting nitrate results based on crop types (general categories, such as shallow-rooted vs. not, cool season crops, longer season crops) and growing environments (e.g., soil type, irrigation system, fertilizer application methods). An appendix to the guide includes a cost analysis of the Nitrate Quick Tests that are commercially available and those that growers create from multiple sources.

The On-Farm Solutions section of the Blueprint is comprised of the following documents:

- Nitrate Quick Test Standard Operating Procedures – How to Use the Nitrate Quick Test
- Nitrate Quick Test SOP – Spanish: Cómo Utilizar las Pruebas Rápidas de Nitrato
- Appendix A: Cost Analysis of Nitrate Quick Test Program – What are the True Costs to Growers?
- Apéndice A: Análisis de Costo del Programa de Pruebas de Rápidas de Nitrato: ¿Cuáles Son los Costos Reales Para los Productores?
- Appendix B: In-season Soil Nitrate Testing Explained
- Apéndice B: Explicación de las Pruebas de Nitrato en Suelos en Temporada

In addition to creating the guide, a website was developed to provide Nitrate Quick Test information for growers in the Salinas Valley, along with a database for storing the results of the testing. The website address is: [www.growershipper.com/sys/static/irwmp.php](http://www.growershipper.com/sys/static/irwmp.php). The website will be continually updated, with new information based on grower requests.

### **3. Corporate Social Responsibility**

Like “On-Farm Solutions,” the goal of this Blueprint section was to advance agricultural sustainability in the Gabilan Watershed. With “On-Farm Solutions” working on the individual grower level, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) part of the Blueprint was intended to address the next level of the agriculture industry. SureHarvest, a private consulting company that provides solutions to growers and agrifood companies pursuing sustainability strategies, was hired to lead this effort.

The goal of the effort was to initiate greater dialogue within the agricultural industry about social/environmental responsibility programs, and to encourage agricultural leaders to take a greater role in funding sustainability practices. In March 2014, SureHarvest convened an industry-focused working session in the City of Salinas to bring together CSR leaders in the agricultural community to initiate an action-oriented discussion focused on advancing business models for stewardship of Monterey Bay watersheds. The workshop was co-sponsored by Central Coast Grower-Shipper Association, Western Growers, and Monterey County Sustainability Working Group. Twenty-two industry leaders, company executives, and CSR/sustainability directors on California’s Central Coast and beyond participated in the workshop. Participants identified values, challenges, and opportunities for collaborative action across three broad categories: market and regulatory compliance; program design and core elements; and data collection, confidentiality, and information sharing. A summary report of the CSR workshop comprises this section of the Blueprint document.

### **4. Agency Coordination**

One of the major challenges to project implementation identified during the January 2013 stakeholder workshop was permitting and regulatory compliance. Hurdles to project implementation brought about by lack of interagency coordination and difficult and confusing regulation were voiced time and time again at the January 2013 stakeholder meeting. The goal of this section of the Blueprint was to identify the regulatory constraints and challenges that projects in the Gabilan Watershed might encounter, and identify possible options for coordinating agency review and consultation. The result was a matrix summarizing primary permitting and regulatory oversight (see Table 3). At the suggestion of various agency staff, the matrix is a linked document which gets the project sponsor or member of the public to the official website of the agency.

As the final product of the WRPC process, an effort was initiated to integrate projects within the Gabilan Watershed. The project integration process proceeded in two phases: 1) review of all existing IRWM Plan projects located in the Gabilan Watershed to identify integration options, and 2) discussions with a wide

variety of project proponents to identify possible partners and integrated project components. The result was identification of several integrated multi-objective, multi-stakeholder projects that can potentially be developed and put forward for IRWM and other grant funds. These projects are briefly described in the Agency Coordination Final Report.

The Agency Coordination section of the Blueprint is comprised of the following documents:

- Final Report – Agency Coordination in the Gabilan Watershed: From the Mountains to the Sea
- Table 2 – Monterey Agency Contact List
- Table 3 – Permitting Matrix
- Table 4 – WRPC Project Integration Matrix
- Table 5 – 2012 WRPC Project List Sorted by Program