

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
November 17, 2010
1:00-3:00 pm
Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board Room**

Attendees:

Ken Ekelund
Bridget Hoover
Sierra Ryan
Butch Kronlund
Donna Meyers
Mike Jones
Dawn Mathes
Rob Johnson
Elizabeth Krafft
Horacio Amezcuita
Bryan Largay
Gary Rogers
Ross Clark
Paul Robins
Michael Ricker
Vanessa Vallarta

Non-RWVG members:

Susan Robinson — IRWMP Coordinator
Greg Pepping – Coastal Watershed Council
Leslie Dumas – RMC

Meeting Minutes:

1. Project Ranking

Susan emailed the Regional Water Management Group (RWVG) members the latest list of ranked projects just prior to the meeting, including three “integrated” projects. The list was presented to the RWVG for review and discussion.

Ken was concerned that the Granite Ridge project was ranked so low on the list, when it is clearly such an important water supply project for that community. (The project is vital for the community, but does not impact a large region, does not have “multiple benefits,” and does not address a large number of objectives—all of which affect the scoring.) A long discussion ensued on that topic. Bridget pointed out that the RWVG had made the decision early on not to prioritize objectives, and that lack of prioritization of objectives is perhaps one reason why a project that is clearly so important as Granite Ridge could get ranked so low. She pointed out that the RWVG now recognizes the need to prioritize objectives, and has proposed doing so with the support of Planning Grant funds. So hopefully this sort of problem will naturally resolve itself the next time we solicit and rank projects for the IRWMP.

Ken emphasized that he was worried about public perception of the list, in regards to Granite Ridge. He suggested we include some sort of “morality” category to consider alongside the other criteria during the project ranking process, a category that takes into account “dire need.” Susan reminded the Group that the public ranking system does allow for some “tweaking” if the

RWMG finds that it does not function up to par: we *could* add another column and re-do the numbers. Most of the RWMG members opposed that idea, however, saying that they were generally pleased with how the project ranking system worked, and that it would suffice for this round. Ken accepted that decision, noting, however, that we need to be extremely careful in how we explain the ranking to stakeholders. We need to make sure they understand how this list will be used (i.e., that it is not a “judgment” on the merit or value of any particular project but that it is merely a way of organizing the projects for the purposes of the IRWM funding program specifically, and that in addition, any project on this list – even projects ranked low – can be chosen for any solicitation if it fits the criteria of that solicitation and works well as part of the overall submission package).

Leslie Dumas pointed out a discrepancy between two recycled water projects in terms of the points they received for objectives, noting that similar projects should presumably receive similar scoring in that regard. Rob explained that the Integration Committee, when scoring projects, relied on the “boxes” that were checked by the project proponents themselves for the number of objectives addressed by their projects. The Integration Committee did not add extra points for objectives if the project proponent failed to check a box that perhaps should have been checked (on the assumption that the project proponent knows their project best); but the Integration Committee did take points away if they felt the project proponent was overzealous and inappropriate in checking boxes. Therefore, the discrepancy between the two projects could have been due to the number of boxes for objectives that the project proponents themselves checked.

Bridget also pointed out that each project application form (including boxes checked for objectives, etc.) was reviewed and approved by outside experts, along with the Integration Committee members. So the checking of boxes in each project application was OK’ed by several people. Leslie asked, wouldn’t it make sense to send the application forms back to the project proponents and give them another opportunity to re-check those boxes (given that they may not have realized that the project ranking would depend so heavily on how many boxes they checked)? Susan asked the RWMG if they wanted to extend the project ranking process, give the project proponents one more chance to review their applications and make changes, and also add a “morality” column to the scoring as Ken suggested. The RWMG’s response was a strong “no.” Bridget concluded: maybe next round, but let’s leave it as is for this round. Ken agreed that we need to move on now, for the purposes of Round 1. But let’s be really clear to stakeholders about what this ranked project list means, and what it doesn’t mean. Leslie added that the RWMG should also make it clear to stakeholders that they will have another chance next time around.

The RWMG agreed to submit the list as is to stakeholders for a 30-day public comment period.

2. Round 1 Implementation Grant Solicitation

The intent of this discussion was to determine a process for deciding which projects to put forward in Round 1, and to develop a list of those projects by the end of the meeting (if possible). Susan noted that the typical process for determining which projects to put forward in any grant solicitation would be: the RWMG would select a Funding Committee that would take a long hard look at all of the projects in the Plan, and based on project ranking and on the particular criteria of the grant solicitation, along with budget information for each project, economic feasibility, and readiness-to-proceed factors, would recommend to the RWMG a package of projects to put forward. The RWMG would then vote to accept or not accept that recommendation. However, Susan noted that because the RWMG decided only weeks ago to apply in Round 1, and because the project ranking has only just been completed, we are woefully behind in the process. The application deadline is January 7, 2011 and our timeline is extremely tight. Therefore, we will

need to figure out a fair way to decide which projects to put forward for Round 1, and let the application process get underway.

Michael raised the question as to why we are applying in Round 1 in the first place. Bridget and Ken both noted that no agreement with the other Central Coast regions had been struck regarding a long-term IRWM funding strategy for the region as a whole, and therefore we are pretty much free to submit in Round 1. Much discussion ensued. Susan reminded everyone that the RWMG had debated this point for many months, finally coming to a decision (with a vote) last month to apply. Given that decision, and in the interest of time, we should put the debate to rest and move on.

Susan suggested the first thing the RWMG should decide, perhaps, is how much to request. There was quite a bit of discussion, but no conclusion. Some said “ask for what we need,” others said “let’s keep it to \$3M” (assuming an even split between the four Central Coast regions that will be applying in Round 1), others said “let’s ask for the whole pot” with the reasoning that submitting many projects will make the overall package stronger (scoring more points overall), and others said “let’s just be reasonable” in conciliation to the other Central Coast regions. No conclusion was reached.

The RWMG then decided to simply go down the list of ranked projects and review the projects eligible to apply in Round 1, one by one, noting the budget requests for each. As each project was brought up, the project proponent (if present) was asked if their organization *wanted* to apply in Round 1. A “short list” was then made of potential projects for Round 1, including the following project sponsors: Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (ESNERR), San Jerardo Co-operative, Moss Landing Marine Lab’s Central Coast Wetlands Group, Castroville Community Services District, Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation, City of Salinas, UC Davis Granite Canyon Marine Lab, and the City of Soledad.

A question was raised about our definition of disadvantaged communities (DACs). It was noted that the State defines DACs based on median household income, but our definition includes ethnicity as well. Susan explained that our definition was based on another IRWM region’s definition of DACs, and that the RWMG approved that definition early on in the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning process. In addition, our expanded definition was presented to and approved by DWR during the RAP process, so it appears to be credible in the State’s eyes. However, she continued, perhaps it is best to formally use the State’s definition. The Group agreed that the definition is fine for now, but perhaps we should re-define DACs when we re-consider other aspects of the IRWMP with the anticipated Planning Grant funds.

Bryan noted that ESNERR (who has potentially agreed to take the lead in applying for Round 1) is concerned about the logistics of the application, in terms of gathering all of the information needed from all of the project proponents under such a tight timeframe. He said, “We *need* engaged partners.” Ken emphasized that any project proponent sponsoring a project in the Round 1 submittal must be willing to devote sufficient staff time, which will be considerable, to the application process over the next several weeks (which will include the holidays, unfortunately). Bryan suggested that those project proponents break down their budgets for “phase 1” (and be reasonable) in preparation for determining the overall budget request.

Finally, a subcommittee of RWMG members (mainly those on the “short list”) was formed to work out the details in deciding the most appropriate package of projects to submit for Round 1, along with a budget. They will communicate with the rest of the RWMG via email over the next couple of weeks to obtain the RWMG’s approval of the final project package and budget request.

Next month's meeting is scheduled for December 15th from 1:00 – 3:00 PM, at Moss Landing Marine Labs in the Seminar Room.