

Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
July 20, 2011
1:30 - 3:30 PM
Phone Conference

RWMG Attendees:

Dana Jacobson
Bill Phillips
Elizabeth Krafft
Ken Ekelund
Horacio Amezquita
Donna Meyers
Bridget Hoover
Gary Rogers
Dawn Mathes
Kevin O'Connor
Ross Clark

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Susan Robinson – IRWMP Coordinator
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates

Meeting Minutes:

1. Planning Grant Update: Bridget gave a brief update on the status of the Planning Grant contract process. Keith Wallace, our grant manager, has been promoted at DWR and will no longer be our DWR contact (happily for him, sadly for us). Until another grant manager is assigned to our region, Trevor Joseph will be overseeing the Planning Grant contract. Trevor will be reviewing the contract that Keith had developed and should be getting back to us within the next couple of weeks.

2. Goals and Objectives: Susan had sent to the RWMG prior to the meeting the revised goals and objectives, as recommended by the G&O Subcommittee. These included a request by the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Directors Planning Committee to delete the phrase “for designated beneficial uses” from the following two goal statements:

Water Supply: “Improve water supply reliability and protect groundwater and surface water supplies *for designated beneficial uses.*”

Water Quality: “Protect and improve surface, groundwater, estuarine, and coastal water quality *for all designated beneficial uses*, and ensure the provision of high-quality, potable, affordable drinking water for all communities in the region.”

Ken and Bill explained the Board’s rationale. Essentially, the phrase “beneficial uses” relates to the Basin Plan and the Regional Water Quality Control Board’s water quality goals for the region. Bill noted that numerous errors have been found within the beneficial use classifications. As an example, “drinking water” has been listed as a beneficial use for the Old Salinas River Channel. Using the “beneficial uses” language in the IRWMP goals may obligate the RWMG to attempt to meet certain water quality standards that are not appropriate or practicable. Bill and Ken stressed that omitting this phrase would actually make the goals *more* inclusive, rather than limiting the water supply and water quality goals to “designated beneficial uses” which may, in fact, be in error.

In addition, Ken noted that several MCWRA Board members say they have been observing a trend from

“cooperative and voluntary” to “regulatory,” and they worry that using the Basin Plan language in the IRWMP (a voluntary Plan) may potentially lead to a situation in which what is currently considered a voluntary “objective” may eventually become a “requirement” for the RWMG. The Board especially wants to discourage the RWMG from using any language that may “spook” agricultural interests in the region (particularly given the most recent disputes between growers and the Regional Board over water quality requirements).

Susan asked if anyone felt there was a strong reason for retaining “for designated beneficial uses” in the language for those two goals. Bridget said she thought the language did make clear the original intent of the goals, but since the goals are not “measurable” (only objectives are measurable), she saw no harm in omitting the phrase. No one else opposed omitting the phrase, so Susan officially made that revision to the goals. Susan asked if anyone had any other questions or comments about any other revisions to the goals and objectives. No one did. She asked if everyone was OK with submitting the revised goals and objectives, as is, for a 30-day public comment period. All were in favor. The public comment period will begin tomorrow.

Dawn asked if anyone had spoken to the new Farm Bureau executive director about the IRWM planning effort. No one had. Dawn volunteered to do so.

In addition, Susan told the RWMG that the G&O Subcommittee was recommending to not prioritize objectives. She had double-checked that decision with DWR, and they said it would be OK not to prioritize objectives as long as we had good justification (which we do). She asked the group if they were all on board with that decision; they were. She noted, however, that if we choose not to prioritize objectives, then the scoring criteria in our project ranking system must reflect that. This could occur in either of two ways:

- 1) *We weight the objectives equally.* This means we would keep the original scoring system, in which a project gets points for each objective addressed (0-5 points, depending on extent addressed). Or:
- 2) *We weight the goals equally.* We give an equal number of possible total points to each of the seven goal categories, and then we figure out how well a project addresses that goal category by the number and extent of objectives addressed within that category. However, if we choose this option, we would be essentially weighting each individual objective in the water supply category (for example) less than those in the regional communication category, because a project would have to address two of the objectives in the water supply category to get the same score as addressing just one objective in the regional communication category.

This was confusing to the RWMG members. Susan asked if we should convene a Project Ranking Subcommittee to examine this issue (and recommend other needed changes to the project ranking system), or if the RWMG would prefer that Susan take an initial stab at revising the project ranking system, and then make recommendations to the Group. All were in favor of the latter option.

3. Letter to Secretary John Laird: Ken gave a brief overview of a meeting that occurred on July 9th between John Laird, who is the new California State Secretary for Natural Resources, and six members of the RWMG. The RWMG members met with Secretary Laird for about an hour and a half to relay concerns and make certain requests to the State regarding the IRWM planning process. Secretary Laird requested that the points covered during the meeting be documented in a letter. (Ken noted that Secretary Laird “doesn’t like whiners”; he likes suggestions. So if we want to ask anything of him or his department, we should make positive suggestions and put them in a letter.) Ken then reviewed a letter that was drafted by Bill Phillips, paragraph by paragraph, for input and approval by the RWMG.

One issue that concerned Ken was Secretary Laird’s response to whether the IRWM process would become institutionalized or whether we’d have to go “bond to bond.” His response was essentially that we’ll have to go bond to bond – the IRWM program is up to the Legislature, so there can be no guarantees. Bill commented that he thinks the IRWM process *is* institutionalized to a degree, even if it doesn’t get funded. He pointed out that the California Water Plan almost relies on the IRWM process to carry it out. Bridget noted that DWR is pushing the IRWM program, but other State agencies aren’t; so we need to lobby for the IRWM program to become accepted

on a higher, broader, State-wide level. Bridget offered to make some slight revisions to the draft letter to emphasize that point. The Group approved of sending the letter on behalf of the RWMG, with Bridget's revisions. Ken will sign it on behalf of the entire RWMG. Bill asked if we had letterhead for the Greater Monterey County RWMG; we do not. Everyone agreed that – we should. Bill offered that MCWRA create a temporary letterhead for the purpose of sending this letter to Secretary Laird, and all thought that was a good idea.

4. Other Business: Susan reminded everyone that we will soon need to convene a Project Review Committee for the purpose of reviewing and ranking this year's IRWMP projects (the project solicitation is expected to begin August 29th, with project applications due October 3rd). She reiterated Elizabeth's idea of creating one committee of five RWMG members, rather than having five separate Project Committees as we did last year. Elizabeth added that the five members who participate this time won't have to participate again (at least not until everyone else in the RWMG has taken a turn). These five committee members would review all of the projects, not just a sub-set of projects. Susan pointed out that although this would mean more work for each committee member, it is important because what was vitally missing in last year's process was *consistency*. Having all committee members familiar with all of the project applications will ensure consistency. Donna suggested we put this on next month's agenda and discuss it then.

Next month's meeting is scheduled for August 17th from 1:30 – 3:30 PM, at Moss Landing Marine Labs.