

Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
August 17, 2011
1:30 - 3:30 PM
Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, Moss Landing CA

RWMG Attendees:

Sierra Ryan
Rob Johnson
Bill Phillips
Horacio Amezcuita
Gary Rogers
Dana Jacobson
Bridget Hoover
Michael Ricker
Paul Robins
Ken Ekelund
Dawn Mathes
Eric Tynan

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Susan Robinson – IRWMP Coordinator
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates
Hector Hernandez – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Meeting Minutes:

1. Update on Project Solicitation Process. Susan noted that we were expecting to vote on the revised goals and objectives for the IRWMP at this month's RWMG meeting, because ideally we would like include the "final approved" goals and objectives in the project application form (which will be sent out to stakeholders on August 29th). However, the public comment period for goals and objectives doesn't end until August 22nd (today is August 17th) and the MCWRA Board also doesn't meet until that date to discuss and submit their comments. Therefore it doesn't make sense for the RWMG to vote on final goals and objectives at this month's meeting, without all of the public comments in. We will wait to vote on the goals and objectives until next month's RWMG meeting, and will have to be content with including just the tentative goals and objectives in the project application form.

Susan reminded everyone that the 2011 IRWMP project solicitation will officially begin on August 29th, with applications due on October 3rd. She asked the RWMG if they thought five weeks was enough time. Karen Nilsen thought that DACs may need more time. Bill commented that Susan sent out an email to stakeholders a few weeks ago (July 21, 2011) giving them an early heads-up about the 2011 project solicitation; he felt that this was ample notification for interested stakeholders to begin considering and preparing project ideas. Susan also reminded everyone of our rather strict timeframe for getting projects in, reviewed, ranked, and approved: we need them to be reviewed and ranked by November 17th, in order to have projects approved by the RWMG and ready for incorporation into the IRWMP by December 2011. More discussion ensued, with the Group generally agreeing that the project application deadline should remain on October 3rd. Susan suggested that she include in her email to stakeholders on Monday (August 22nd) that if they have questions or need assistance with the project application preparation, that they contact her or one of the RWMG members.

Paul summarized plans for the upcoming public workshops on August 30th in King City and August 31st in Salinas. He asked for RWMG volunteers to attend the workshops; several volunteered.

2. Convene Project Review Committee. Susan asked for volunteers for the Project Review Committee for this year's IRWMP project solicitation. She explained that there will be just one committee (as opposed to the five different Project Committees we had last year, which was way too complicated). She asked for five volunteers, preferably, those who did not serve on a Project Committee last year. The following RWMG members volunteered to serve on the Committee:

Gary
Michael
Dawn
Rob
Sierra

Bridget offered to serve as an alternate, and suggested that once we see how many projects come in, we may want to ask other RWMG members to assist. All agreed.

3. Update on Planning Grant: Bridget provided a brief update on the Planning Grant contract, noting that the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation has the contract in hand and just needs to sign it, return it to DWR, and wait for their signatures. She expects a starting date of September 15, 2011. Bridget reviewed the Planning Grant tasks one by one on an excel sheet, with start/end dates and party(ies) responsible for each task. She was still unclear as to whether the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water would be able to assume the DAC outreach task (task 3) since she had been trying to contact Debbie Davis (EJCW) but hadn't heard back. Karen Nilsen said she thought EJCW was expecting to manage the task, and explained that Debbie Davis had been out of town and has only just returned. Bridget asked Bill to what extent he wanted to be involved with task 10, the economic feasibility analysis. He said he did want to be involved, but he would like partners, suggesting specifically Donna, Horacio (or someone else involved with DACs), someone from a small watershed community, and/or a proponent of a project that deals with environmental enhancement – in other words, people who are directly involved with projects that traditionally represent “soft spots” in terms of economic analysis.

Susan revisited the question with the Group: Given the delays that have occurred with the Planning Grant contract, should we loosen the timeframe for the development of the IRWMP (e.g., shift it back three months)? The problem in a nutshell is that without the Planning Grant funds, we haven't been able to implement tasks that directly inform the IRWM Plan, and so we are already quite behind in developing the IRWMP, according to the timeline; yet if we don't keep to the timeline, we won't have a completed and approved IRWMP ready by June 2012, which is the expected date for DWR's Round 2 Implementation Grant solicitation (and according to the guidelines, we cannot apply in Round 2 unless we have a completed and approved IRWMP). Bill added that although we're “close” to getting the Planning Grant contract signed, there could still be delays. Bridget informed the Group that Trevor Joseph (DWR) said that DWR is currently discussing eligibility for Round 2 in light of the Planning Grant delays, and will have some information for us in about two weeks. Given that, the Group decided to push forward with development of the IRWMP best we can, but to “hang loose” until we hear from DWR. Bridget noted that she did push back the IRWMP completion date in the Planning Grant contract from June 2012 to December 2012, just to buy us more time if we need it.

4. City of Soledad: The City of Soledad has informally requested to join the RWMG. Susan reminded everyone that when this RWMG was first formed, there had been an intention to gain representation from one of the cities in the southern Salinas Valley, but it never came to fruition. A lengthy discussion ensued about the protocol for new membership, with several members voicing concern about the lack of an official protocol. Susan reviewed the MOU, which says potential new members will be considered on a case-by-case basis and can be approved by majority vote. Dawn had issue with “majority vote”; she feels a new organization should be invited to join only if the RWMG members unanimously approve.

Susan noted that there were indeed criteria for the original formation of this Group, including broad representation of the different water resource and environmental issues (i.e., water supply, water quality, flood management, environmental resources, DACs) and broad geographic coverage of the region; however, those criteria had not been laid out in terms of a formal protocol for new membership. While most of the RWMG seemed satisfied with

the current wording in the MOU (i.e., deciding new membership on a “case-by-case” basis), Susan suggested that she formally write up the original criteria, and discuss further with the Group the issue of “majority” vs. “unanimous” vote for new membership at next month’s meeting.

Bill also brought emphasis to the wording in the MOU, which states that members are expected (though not required) to attend every RWMG meeting and to participate actively on subcommittees. There was some discussion about the notable lack of participation on the part of several (un-named) RWMG member organizations. Susan suggested that she send out a reminder to all RWMG members about their commitment to participate in the process; and if those organizations continue to not show up, that their continued RWMG membership be discussed by the Group.

The RWMG circled back around to the original topic regarding the City of Soledad’s request to join. Several reasons for accepting the City’s request for membership were put forward, including: 1) the City would provide south Salinas Valley representation, which is currently lacking (and which was in fact intended when the RWMG was first formed); 2) the fact that the City of Soledad has stepped up to be the lead applicant for the Prop 84 Implementation Grant, along with their previous involvement in the Prop 50 Implementation Grant, shows their commitment to participate in the IRWM planning process; and 3) the City of Soledad’s mayor will be able to provide general representation of the other mayors in the county. Based on these criteria, all RWMG members in attendance voted to accept the City’s request to join, with none opposed (Eric and Paul had left the meeting before the vote was called, and therefore did not participate in the vote).

Next steps: Bill suggested that Susan request a formal letter from the City of Salinas expressing their desire to join the RWMG. We will need to amend the MOU to add the City of Soledad as a RWMG member (and add their signature on the signature page). Gary will send Susan an example of the letter the Marina Coast Water District had recently sent to the Monterey Peninsula IRWM RWMG requesting membership in their RWMG, along with the amended MOU.

5. Letter to John Laird: On July 9, 2011, six members of the RWMG met with John Laird, the new California State Secretary for Natural Resources, 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. A letter was drafted by Bill, signed by Ken on behalf of the RWMG, and sent to Secretary Laird on July 25th. At today’s RWMG meeting, Ken asked the Group for their approval in forwarding that letter to the other five IRWM RWMGs in the Central Coast Funding Area. The RWMG approved. Bill volunteered to send the letter to the other Central Coast IRWM regions.

6. Project Ranking System: Just prior to today’s meeting, Susan sent the RWMG a document outlining her suggested changes to the current, approved project ranking system (i.e., the system that was used to rank implementation projects submitted last year for inclusion in the IRWMP). She walked the Group through that document. Her recommended changes were based both on comments/concerns that various RWMG members had raised regarding last year’s system, and on the criteria that DWR had used earlier this year to score proposals in Round 1 of Implementation Grants. The comments/concerns from RWMG members included: 1) too many points given to DACs; 2) the need to account for a “morality” factor: additional points should be given to projects that are urgently needed (e.g., projects that provide safe drinking water); and 3) the unequal number of objectives within each goal category poses a problem: since objectives are given equal weight in terms of the number of points potentially awarded, projects that address, say, water supply (which has a greater number of objectives) will automatically receive more points than projects that address, say, regional coordination (which has fewer objectives).

Susan’s response to these concerns and to DWR’s own scoring criteria for Implementation Grant proposals resulted in the recommended changes shown in the tables below (which were included on the document that Susan sent to the RWMG). The recommended changes can be summed up as follows:

- The number of potential points awarded for DACs has been reduced.
- A new category for “need” and “urgent” need (the “morality” factor) has been added.

- The scoring of objectives has been kept the same (no change).
- The “Integration” category has been removed. Susan’s rationale: The “integration” factors (in particular, resource management strategies, partnerships, and regionalism) do not carry any weight in DWR’s scoring of proposals. They may be important for IRWM planning in general, but they do not seem to matter in terms of scoring actual projects (to DWR, anyway).
- The number of points awarded for IRWM Grant Program Criteria has been significantly reduced (since DWR gives this somewhat less weight in the scoring of Implementation Grant proposals).
- A new separate category for Project Benefits has been added (since DWR weights that factor heavily).
- A new category for the strength of projects overall has been added.

CURRENT PROJECT RANKING SYSTEM

Objectives = 40	Objectives	40
IRWM Grant Program Criteria = 40	Statewide priorities	14
	Land use planning	5
	Water-related conflicts	5
	DACs	8
	Climate change	8
Integration = 20	Multiple/strong benefits	8
	Resource management strategies	4
	Partnerships	4
	Regionalism	4

RECOMMENDED PROJECT RANKING SYSTEM

Objectives = 40	Objectives	40
IRWM Grant Program Criteria = 20	Statewide priorities (7 of them, but no points for the DAC statewide priority)	12
	Land use planning	2
	Water-related conflicts	2
	DACs	2
	Climate change	2
Need/Benefits/Project Strength = 40	Water Supply, Water Quality, Flood Reduction, and Other Benefits	20
	Need/Urgent Need	10
	Overall Strength of Project, including: technical feasibility (4), budget (3), work plan (3)	10

Susan explained the recommended changes one by one and answered questions from the Group. Bill noted the importance of “integration” for the IRWM planning process and asked that those factors (resource management strategies, partnerships, and regionalism) be brought back in. He felt it was important for integration to be reflected in the project ranking system, both to acknowledge its importance in the overall IRWM planning process and to act as incentive to project proponents for them to seek partnerships, create more “regional” projects, and to help diversify the region’s resource management strategies.

Regarding the suggested 20 points for project benefits, Bridget pointed out the practical difficulties in awarding points in this category since we will not be asking project proponents to provide detailed economic analyses. Susan suggested we reduce the maximum points for “benefits” from 20 to 10 and, to address Bill’s concern, add back in the category for “integration,” giving it a maximum of 10 points. All agreed with that suggestion.

There was some discussion about the reduction in points for DACs. Most seemed OK with this change, with some pointing out that the points for DACs haven’t really been removed but rather have been “shifted”: the points will

invariably be made up (and then some) by the new category created for “urgent need,” since most DACs will get points for urgent need. Karen Nilsen said she would like more time to consider this change.

Dawn commented that there are no points in the project ranking system for “landowner support.” After some discussion, it became clear that she was not so concerned with giving projects points for landowner support but rather with having some mechanism for *disqualifying* projects that propose to do work on property that doesn’t have the landowner’s approval. All agreed that all implementation projects included in the IRWMP *must* have the landowner’s support, and that certainly no project would ever get put forward for funding without the landowner’s expressed approval and support. This is and has always been the intent. But in case it is not clear enough, Susan agreed to emphasize in her letters to stakeholders during the project solicitation: “If your implementation project does not have landowner support, it will not be eligible for inclusion in the IRWMP!”

There was brief discussion about the scoring of objectives. Susan recommends that we continue to weight the objectives equally (i.e., each objective can get 0-5 points). Her rationale: Since the RWMG opted to *not prioritize* objectives, our scoring criteria must reflect that. Giving each objective the same number of points achieves that. She added, any which way we opt to do this will be problematic...and this seems to be the best option among them. Gary voiced his support for this option, pointing out that the higher number of objectives in certain goal categories seems to be reflective of the relative importance that the RWMG places on those goals over others. Others agreed.

The revised project ranking system was clearly a lot to digest in the 45 minutes that remained in the meeting. As time ran out, Susan suggested that the RWMG members mull over her suggested changes during the next two weeks and email her their concerns/suggestions. She will make changes accordingly, communicate them to the Group via email, and the discussion will then continue at next month’s meeting. The goal is to have the RWMG approve the project ranking system by next month’s (September 21) RWMG meeting – in time for the Project Review Committee to rank the 2011 projects (the Project Review Committee will have from October 3 to November 14 to review and rank the projects).

Next month’s RWMG meeting is scheduled for September 21st from 1:30 – 3:30 PM, location TBD.