

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
September 18, 2013
1:30 - 3:30 PM
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Monterey, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
Brian True – Marina Coast Water District
Michael Ricker – City of Salinas
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Rob Johnson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust
Sierra Ryan – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Christina McGinnis – Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office
Julianne Rhodes – Watershed Institute, CSUMB
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Susan Robinson – IRWM Plan Coordinator
Jeanette Pantoja – California Rural Legal Assistance
Katie McNeill – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Update on Planning Grant and Round 1 Implementation Grant: Bridget began with an update on the Planning Grant. She explained that Planning Grant activities have been somewhat stalled recently; the DAC outreach, data management, and Action Tracker efforts have continued, but most of the other activities have been on hold. This was due to the fact that the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation, on behalf of the grant recipients, made some amendments to the Scope of Work and requested an extension from DWR on the overall contract, and it has taken all summer to get those changes accepted. The Scope of Work amendments involved mainly Task 6 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Tool), Task 8 (Water Resource Project Coordination effort), and Task 9 (Economic Feasibility Analysis). Bridget is hoping to have the amended contract set up by the 1st of October, which will include an extension of the contract through September 2014.

Regarding Round 1 Implementation Grant activities: Monique began with a summary of the Elkhorn Slough Foundation’s project to do tidal marsh restoration near the mouth of Elkhorn Slough with beneficial reuse of sediment coming from the Pajaro River. Status: They have completed permitting, and in August, 60,000 cubic yards of sediment were delivered to the edge of the slough and stockpiled.

Horacio provided a brief summary of the San Jerardo Wastewater project. He said Karen Nilsen’s been very busy doing most of the work on this project. He said that they have received the grant money and are still waiting on a final design in order to get the permit from the County. They are done with the CEQA process (they don’t need full review), and will probably begin construction in December, completing work in September 2014. He commented that the State Water Resources Control Board has been very helpful throughout the process.

Sierra provided an update on the water quality improvement project in Tembladero Slough, near Castroville. She

said that they have had some problems getting the contract finalized (due mainly to issues concerning their foundation) so they still don't have a contract. However, they have been doing some initial work, including public outreach.

Bridget talked about the Santa Rita Creek watershed project, which will be implemented by the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG), Monterey County Resource Conservation District (RCD), and Return of the Natives. Bridget said they don't have a contract yet either, though they have gotten started on some of the work. They have 100% design for the restoration project and have applied for permits. Sierra explained that CCWG will be doing invasive plant removal both on the Little League Ball Park and on the County-owned properties. Actual restoration work probably won't get started until early next summer. Paul said that the RCD has begun outreach with growers and has done a couple of field visits and recon regarding potential problem areas. They are excited to have a new program engineer on board.

Susan noted that the other projects included in the Round 1 Implementation Grant are the City of Soledad Water Recycling project, City of Castroville Well 2B treatment (for arsenic), and UC Davis's LID evaluation project – but representatives for those projects were not able to attend today's meeting to provide a status report.

3. Follow-up Discussion on Last Meeting's Water Supply Presentations: Susan remarked that it was unfortunate that there was no time for questions or discussion following the water supply presentations given by Dave Stoldt, Rob Johnson, and Mike Jones at the last Regional Water Management Group meeting (on July 17, 2013). She said she wanted to at least open the table for any lingering questions or discussion.

Michael began by saying that the City of Salinas would recommend combining the Greater Monterey County and Monterey Peninsula IRWM regions into one IRWM region. Bridget agreed that there is a lot of overlap and maybe this could occur down the road – though she noted that both regions have already done so much work on their respective IRWM Plans.

Bridget said she learned a lot from the last RWMG meeting and she hopes that our IRWM planning effort can play a bigger role in the water supply issue. There is a need for more planning, i.e., a watershed plan that looks at all of the opportunities for water supply. She noted that she keeps hearing people say, "We have enough water, if we could only capture it and store it..." Susan remarked that we need more *money* for planning. Bridget agreed, saying that we did try to do an interregional project through the Round 1 Implementation Grant, but it was hard to do through this program; we need IRWM money for interregional planning and implementation. Katie commented that if we do want more money for planning, now is the time to write letters regarding the next Water Bond.

Susan asked if anyone had updated information on the Water Bond. Rachel responded that there are now two bills being floated, one in the Assembly and one in the Senate, with both asking for roughly the same amount of money (about \$5 - \$7 billion). The Assembly bill is requesting some money for water storage (which she notes has been somewhat controversial with environmental groups) and the Senate bill places slightly more emphasis on water quality. These two bills will need to be reconciled. Rachel volunteered to find out more information and pass it along to the Group. Katie asked about DAC needs. Jeanette responded that CRLA is working with some other groups to ensure those needs are addressed in the next Water Bond.

Bridget commented that one thing that astonished her from the last RWMG meeting was Mike Jones saying that Cal Water can pump as much water as they want (i.e., need) from the Salinas Valley aquifers, and that from their perspective there's plenty of water – the problem is more with water quality than with water supply. This initiated a discussion about permitting of wells. Rob explained that a landowner is required to have a well permit if they drill a well – any sized well – but if you have a "high capacity well" (defined as 1,000 gal/minute or more), certain permit conditions will apply (and those permit conditions are related mainly to fish passage). The permits are issued by the Department of Environmental Health. He noted that there *were* no well permits prior to the

1960s. Michael asked if the well owners are reporting to the Monterey County Water Resources Agency how much water they're pumping, and Rob explained that well owners who have a greater than 3" discharge line are asked to report once annually what they pump on a monthly basis. Elizabeth clarified that this applies not to all well owners but only to those in Zones 2, 2A, and 2B (which includes most of the Salinas Valley). Rob said this information is available online in MCWRA's Groundwater Extraction Management Program reports. The reporting is voluntary, though Elizabeth commented that the reporting rate is very high, typically in the upper 90 percentile (and the lowest reporting rate was in the mid-90%). Susan politely suggested that everyone read Section B of our IRWM Plan, which provides a great summary of all of this...

Susan brought the discussion back to Bridget's initial comment, asking, "so there are really no limits on the amount of water that can be legally pumped?" Rob explained that "you can pump as much as you want as long as you 'don't reasonably hurt your neighbor.'" Michael asked if there has ever been discussion of the permitting going to the State Water Resources Control Board rather than to Environmental Health, as it seems now to be not just a water quality issue but a water supply issue. (There was no definitive answer to this.)

4. "Other Business": Funding Fair: Monique said she had attended the California Financing Coordinating Committee 2013 Funding Fair last week. The fair was presented by two Federal and five State agencies, and was quite informative. She emailed the RWMG the hand-out and guide to funding sources. She noted that there is lots of money out there for water supply and drinking water, quite a bit less money available for environmental restoration.

Technical Assistance for DACs: Jeanette said that at the end of the Round 2 Implementation Grant application process, several groups got together and wrote a letter to DWR outlining the special challenges for DACs in the application process and the need for technical assistance. She pointed out the inability for us to use our Planning Grant money to advocate a project for the IRWM Plan and to assist DACs with the application process. She said the whole time they were discussing these issues with DWR, it turns out there was actually quite a lot of technical assistance money available that would have covered a variety of services to help DACs, that they simply weren't being told about. At one point there was \$1 million available; the money wasn't used and so it was allocated elsewhere. Currently there is \$150,000 available for technical assistance (for the entire state) which must be used by June 2014. This money cannot be used for proposal writing, but it can be used to do a Median Household Income (MHI) survey (whereas our Planning Grant money could not be used for that purpose). There are also separate funds available for facilitation support services. Horacio emphasized that there is a great need for technical assistance for DACs: with all of the paper work and reporting required, he said there's no way the Spanish community can handle it. Jeanette added, "It's challenging for anyone!" Everyone agreed.

5. Round 3 Timeframe and Project Review Process: Prior to the meeting, Susan had emailed the RWMG a proposed timeframe leading up to the Round 3 Implementation Grant application. The final PSP is anticipated to be released in the fall of 2014, with applications due in the winter. Working backwards from that, Susan proposed a timeframe beginning with a project solicitation for the IRWM Plan in March 2014 and proposals due eight weeks later (May 26, 2014). She asked the Group if they thought that was enough time. Consensus was yes, it was enough time as long as we let stakeholders (particularly DACs) know well in advance that a project solicitation would be occurring in March so they can be prepared for it.

Susan then proposed a two-step process for Round 3: The Project Review would occur first by a Project Review Committee, and this will result in a ranked Project List. Project proponents interested in applying for Round 3 would be required to submit a *preliminary* economic analysis in addition to their project proposal (we will provide templates for the preliminary economic analysis, which should be available this winter through the Planning Grant); those not interested in Round 3 would not be required to submit this. With the ranked Project List and the preliminary economic analyses in hand, a separate Project Selection Committee would then select which projects should get put forward in Round 3 and would make that recommendation to the RWMG. Susan said she thought the Project Selection Committee should be comprised of "disinterested" parties, i.e., those who do not have

projects on the table. Monique disagreed, and after a brief discussion, Susan agreed with her. There were questions about the overall process and some suggested changes to Susan's initial proposed timing. Then Susan began describing details of her suggested changes to the current project ranking criteria (these suggested changes had been sent to the group in summary form prior to the meeting). The changes were technical and it wasn't long before the Group began to fade... Paul suggested that the discussion get tabled until the next RWMG meeting. Rachel suggested that Susan revise the timeframe based on the Group's discussion and provide more clarity regarding the two separate processes – Project Review and Project Selection – and send that to the RWMG. She agreed to do so.

Next month's RWMG meeting is scheduled for November 20th from 1:30 – 3:30 PM, location TBD.