

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
May 14, 2014
1:30 - 3:30 PM
Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Salinas, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Rob Johnson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA)
Michael Ricker – City of Salinas
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust
Julianne Rhodes – Watershed Institute, CSUMB
Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Sierra Ryan – Central Coast Wetlands Group, Moss Landing Marine Labs
Christina McGinnes – Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office
Vicente Lara – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Susan Robinson – IRWM Plan Coordinator
Jeanette Pantoja – California Rural Legal Assistance
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates
Kevin Bollin – Nilsen & Associates
Katie McNeill – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Jennifer Biringer – The Nature Conservancy
Katie Burdick – Burdick and Company

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Safe Drinking Water Project: The Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW) recently submitted an application to the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board for Safe Drinking Water Project grant funds. These funds are intended to provide interim safe drinking water to individuals and small communities in agricultural areas affected by nitrate pollution from fertilizers. Katie McNeill said that Regional Board staff has sent a recommendation to the Board to adopt a resolution to fund two projects, including EJCW’s proposed project, each project receiving \$59,000. Vicente provided a brief summary of EJCW’s proposed work, which would include outreach, education, and a plan to provide interim drinking water to communities in northern Monterey County and along Spence Road in the southeastern part of Salinas. The RWMG approved Susan signing a letter of support for EJCW’s project on behalf of the Group, if a letter would be still be beneficial.

3. Project Ranking for 2014 IRWMP Projects: Susan said we received 11 new projects for inclusion in the IRWM Plan from the 2014 project solicitation. Ten of those projects were implementation projects and therefore underwent the full project review/ranking process; one project was a concept proposal (and did not undergo the full project review/ranking process). This year’s Project Review Committee consisted of Christina, Horacio, Jeanette, Bridget, and Susan. The RWMG had received brief summaries of each project prior to the RWMG meeting, along with access to the full project proposals on DropBox, and the project ranking Excel worksheet, which showed scores for each individual project in each ranking category plus the overall ranking of all implementation projects (new and existing) in the IRWM Plan. The discussion began with a brief summary of each new project, provided either by Susan (for Ecology Action’s projects) or by the project proponent, if present (i.e., Michael for the City of Salinas/MRWPCA project, Rob for MCWRA’s seven projects, Karen and Horacio for San Jerardo’s DAC program, and Jennifer for The Nature Conservancy’s project).

Noting the CASGEM requirement for the Drought Grant round, someone asked Rob whether we were now CASGEM compliant for the purposes of applying in this round. Rob replied, “no one has said we’re compliant,

but no one has said we're not compliant, either..." Rob said they are continuing to work with DWR on the CASGEM requirements. Susan added that DWR may be somewhat more relaxed regarding CASGEM for the Drought round given the expedited nature of this round, but we may have some issues for future rounds.

As Rob described the MCWRA projects, Sierra asked whether MCWRA's Dedicated Monitoring Well Expansion Program was "relevant" for the Drought Round. Susan said unfortunately it wasn't, as it wouldn't provide immediate water supply benefits (Rob agreed). Jeanette asked Rob whether the added wells would provide the same type of data that the ag wells provide, and Rob said yes, the project would give MCWRA more comprehensive coverage in the Salinas Valley, a much better data network. Regarding MCWRA's Groundwater Conservation and Extraction Monitoring Expansion project, Jeanette commented that she thought there was a lot MCWRA could do to collaborate and provide technical outreach to growers in regard to water conservation BMPs. Rob agreed. Rob also described their Water Supply Augmentation Project concept proposal – a huge project that would essentially address all of the County's water needs into the foreseeable future, including seawater intrusion, nitrates, flood management, and general infrastructure repair/upgrades. In discussing the MCWRA's Nacimiento Dam Low Level Outlet Works project, Karen raised concern that the work appears to be primarily O&M – and from her experience in Round 1 with the San Jerardo Cooperative wastewater project, DWR won't fund anything resembling O&M. Rob responded that the Nacimiento Dam project has gone "from O&M to catastrophic failure." Finally, regarding the Salinas River Flood Risk Reduction Project, Susan asked Rob how this project meshed with The Nature Conservancy's project and Rob responded that the MCWRA project would complement and augment the TNC project.

Susan then asked everyone to look at the scores for each project in the Excel project review worksheet. She noted that the members of the Project Review Committee were remarkably close in the scores they had each given the different projects in the various scoring categories, though there were a few disagreements. She asked if anyone had any questions about any of the scores, or concerns, or qualms. No one seemed to have issues with the scores. Rob commented that having been on a Project Review Committee in the past, he appreciated how much work the project review took and he trusted the Project Review Committee's judgment. Others agreed. Rob motioned to approve the recommended ranked Project List for inclusion in the IRWM Plan; Michael seconded the motion. All voted in favor, none opposed and none abstained.

4. IRWM (Expedited) Drought Grant Round: To begin discussion of the IRWM Drought Grant round, Katie Burdick offered to "pass along some of the intelligence" she's picked up from her discussions with DWR as well as from her work on both successful and unsuccessful IRWM Implementation Grant applications in previous rounds. Successful applications, she said, contain a *thorough integration* of projects in the bundle – the projects together tell a narrative, meet multiple objectives, with multiple stakeholders, and provide a solid cost-benefit analysis. For example, one region bundled together 40 discrete projects into eight programs, and received \$5.5 million in IRWM grant funds.

The upcoming Drought Grant, Katie said, will be a statewide competition, and it will be fierce. In the past when this has occurred, she'd noticed that the larger, more urban regions tended to be most successful. In the upcoming round, the money will mainly go to communities that *have no water*. To be successful in this round, we will need to tie our projects directly to *this* (2014) drought, with possible anticipation of a similar winter next year. Projects that aim to augment existing supplies – if we cannot show that those supplies have been impacted by *this drought* – will not be given priority. She also said to keep in mind that the project scores will be averaged – so if one project cannot be directly related to the drought, that will pull down the overall Proposal score.

This prompted a larger discussion among the Group regarding drought impacts in Monterey County. Susan said the Monterey County Board of Supervisors had recently passed a resolution encouraging voluntary water conservation efforts in Monterey County. However, she noted, even the Monterey County Office of Emergency Services, which is the agency heading up the County's interagency drought task force, is uncertain as to actual impacts of this drought. Rob discussed the deficiency of water for steelhead in the Salinas River, Christina noted that some ranchers have had to move cattle off the land due to the drought, Karen mentioned a recent article in the *Monterey Herald* that cited dry wells in some disadvantaged communities (including San Ardo, San Lucas, and San Jerardo), and someone said they had heard that Castroville's drinking water wells had fallen 50' in the last

two weeks. Generally, though, everyone agreed that the Central Valley had it worse. Susan and several RWMG members agreed to look into the severity of the drought impacts in our region to determine whether it would be worthwhile to apply in the Drought round.

Susan noted that the projects currently “on the table” for the Drought round are:

1. City of Salinas/Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency: Stormwater Diversion Implementation and Water Supply Project
2. San Jerardo Cooperative: DAC Water Quality and Conservation Program
3. MCWRA: Nacimiento-San Antonio Interlake Tunnel Project (a big maybe – Rob is looking into whether this project is a possibility for the Drought round)

Rob asked what about the San Lucas (DAC) water supply project. Karen responded that she had spoken recently with Nick Nichols at the County, and the San Lucas project wouldn’t be ready for construction before the April 1, 2015 deadline.

Next steps: The project proponents for those three projects agreed to investigate the severity of drought impacts in the Greater Monterey County region and decide, based on those impacts, whether it makes sense to put an application forward in this round. The RWMG said that they would approve an application going forward on behalf of the Greater Monterey County IRWM region, if the project proponents decide it would be worthwhile. Susan said, “we’ll take this discussion off-line, then” and announced that the “extra” RWMG meeting that had been scheduled for next week would be unnecessary.

5. Other Business. Sierra urged everyone to attend the final Water Resource Project Coordination stakeholder meeting, which will conclude the WRPC process. The meeting is scheduled for May 28th at the Ag Commissioner’s Office.

The May 21st RWMG meeting has been cancelled. The next RWMG meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2014, location TBD.