

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program  
Regional Water Management Group Meeting  
May 20, 2015**

**Location: Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Salinas, CA**

**RWMG Attendees:**

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.  
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group  
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Rich Guillen – City of Soledad  
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency  
Michael Ricker – City of Salinas  
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust  
Brian True – Marina Coast Water District  
Eric Tynan – Castroville Community Services District

**Non-RWMG Attendees:**

John Hunt – UC Davis  
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates  
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator

**Meeting Minutes:**

**1. Brief Introductions.**

**2. Summary of Central Coast IRWM Regions Meeting.** Representatives from the six Central Coast IRWM Regions met by conference call on April 22. Susan said that all of the regions, except maybe the Monterey Peninsula region, will most likely be submitting applications in the upcoming IRWM Implementation Grant round. While this last Prop 84 grant round will be very competitive, everyone seemed amenable to the idea of working on a cooperative agreement for Prop 1 IRWM funds. The six regions have attempted to develop a strategy of cooperation in the past, always unsuccessfully; but Susan pointed out that by now, after so many years, everyone is probably tired of competing – the grant application process is expensive and time-consuming, with no guarantee of reward. Chances of coming to some sort of cooperative arrangement are better than ever because of it. Susan said this topic will come up again later, after the final Prop 84 round is over.

In addition, the representatives from the other five regions seemed amenable to a proposal put forward by Colin Bailey from EJCW to replicate the Salinas Valley Water and Wastewater Plan for Disadvantaged Communities (that our own RWMG is currently working on) throughout the entire Central Coast region. There will be funds set aside (10%) in Prop 1 for non-competitive projects that assist disadvantaged communities. This would seem to be a good opportunity to work cooperatively on a Central Coast-wide plan. Susan said this is another topic that will come up for discussion again later, once Prop 1 gets underway.

**3. 2015 IRWM Implementation Grant Round:** Susan gave an update on the project selection process for the upcoming grant round. The Project Selection Committee met two days prior. Unfortunately they were not able to come up with a final recommendation of projects to put forward, and so the discussion continues.

Susan noted that the IRWM program is not so much about “integration” anymore. In this round, DWR is placing priority on 1) disadvantaged communities, 2) drought-preparedness, and 3) physical benefits. She said the group needs to be strategic this time; if we don’t “tick” all of the right boxes with our application, there’s just no use in applying. This last round will be particularly competitive, since at least five of the six IRWM regions will be competing, each region will most likely request the full \$4.9M pot of funds, and only one region is likely to be awarded.

So in light of DWR's priorities for this particular round, two of the six projects originally on the table have dropped out (Blanco Drain project, and the Elkhorn Slough project). The Blanco Drain project was removed from the list because of a lack of DAC benefit, and Elkhorn Slough fell out for the same reason plus a lack of direct drought-preparedness benefit (though both projects do provide both of those benefits to some degree).

Bridget expressed frustration about DWR's shift in focus away from "integration." Susan agreed that it has been very frustrating. Our region has worked very hard these past several years to develop a process for integration (e.g., the Water Resource Project Coordination process), and yet none of that seems to matter in the IRWM grant rounds. Ross suggested that as we move into Prop 1, we should challenge ourselves to strengthen these collaborative relationships. Susan wholeheartedly agreed.

Susan and the project proponents who were present gave a brief summary of each project remaining for consideration in the upcoming grant round. Susan then went over the budgets and physical benefits for each project, briefly, and noted that all of the projects were still somewhat weak regarding their second physical benefit. She asked the group if they would lend their expertise.

Eric described the Castroville deep well project. He said he anticipates their existing wells in the 400 foot aquifer to be impacted by seawater intrusion within the next year or so. Their primary physical benefit – water supply – is clear but they were still working on a secondary benefit. One possibility is to partner with Central Coast Wetlands Group to create some wetlands in an existing stormwater pond, which is stagnating, in order to gain a water quality benefit. Michael asked about the prevention of seawater intrusion as a possible secondary benefit (by not pumping out of the 400 foot aquifer), and the group discussed how CCSD might measure and monitor for that. Elizabeth suggested they keep their old well as a monitoring well. Susan pointed out that the arsenic treatment in itself might be sufficient for the secondary (water quality) benefit.

Rich described the Soledad Reclamation Distribution project. They are considering as a secondary water quality benefit the improvement in river water quality, due to preventing effluent from the treatment plant holding ponds from entering the river. The question again is, how would they measure and monitor that? Bridget said MBNMS and CCAMP have water quality data on the river.

Susan briefly described the physical benefits for the Salinas Stormwater Diversion project. Their secondary physical benefit is a water quality benefit derived from preventing polluted dry weather runoff in the city storm drains from reaching the Salinas River and the Monterey Bay. Susan noted that the City will need a better monitoring plan to measure that benefit. Elizabeth asked about trash removal, and Michael said they would capture that. The group discussed different ways to monitor (using existing storm drain data). Ross noted that this is a prime candidate for an integrated project for Prop 1, suggesting a connection with the Carr Lake project.

The secondary benefit for the DAC Program has also proven challenging. Karen explained that the septic system in one of the communities (Alpine Court) has failed. The County has issued letters stating that it needs to be replaced. But how do they measure the water quality benefit associated with fixing the septic system? The group discussed various ways. Eric suggested measurements in lbs/day of effluent prevented from leaching into the groundwater. John noted that the key constituent will be nitrate, since the pathogens would be mitigated by the soil; and Bridget noted that that might be hard to distinguish from nitrates introduced from ag. Elizabeth suggested maybe this is a simple case of drilling holes and monitoring on a regular basis (the aquifer underlying is shallow). John asked about direct human health indicators. Others suggested Karen contact the County – if the situation is considered enough of a public health threat for them to send a letter, they may have some ideas. Another possibility for the secondary benefit is county relocation costs, which is what San Jerardo did in the Round 1 application (and DWR didn't seem to object).

Regarding the overall application, Bridget asked if all of the project proponents were willing and able to pay for the grant writing costs. She asked if Susan was going to write the application; Susan responded they hadn't discussed that yet.

Susan then asked the RWMG how they would like to proceed in terms of the project selection. She said that rather

than the RWMG voting on the final projects to submit in the application package (as was planned for today's meeting), she asked the RWMG to approve a "process" for making the final decision. She noted that each of the remaining project proponents has submitted alternative, reduced budgets in preparation for the next round of discussions. It looks like the DAC Program will definitely be included in the application (since that project will "sweep the points"). Given that, the options are:

- 1) DAC Program + Castroville deep well; or
- 2) DAC Program + one or both of the other projects

Susan asked if the RWMG would be OK with allowing the Project Selection Committee to continue along their process of deciding which projects should go forward, and if the RWMG would then simply approve that decision. (The Project Selection Committee consists of representatives from each of the four projects, plus Susan, Brian True, and Katie Burdick who has been called in to offer outside advice.) The group discussed this, and ultimately decided they would be OK with that; and if the Project Selection Committee cannot come to consensus, the RWMG will then be called in to make the final decision (via email). Bridget also reminded the project proponents to call on the RWMG for help with figuring out the secondary benefits, if needed.

**4. Other Business:** Horacio announced that San Jerardo Cooperative has just finished their wastewater treatment plant upgrade with the Cleanup and Abatement Account (CAA) funds. Everyone congratulated him! Susan asked Rich about the Round 1 grant, and he said the processing of invoices is moving right along. Every project is now under construction, except for Soledad (they have been considering design-build and will be getting a new engineer; construction will be underway shortly).

**The next RWMG meeting is scheduled tentatively for July 15, 2015, location TBD.**