

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
December 13, 2017
Location: Conference Call**

RWMG Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Brian Frus – City of Salinas
Sarah Hardgrave – Big Sur Land Trust
Tom Harty – Monterey County Resource Management Agency
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Heather Lukacs – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Karen McBride – Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Moises Moreno-Rivera – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW)
Kevin O’Connor – Central Coast Wetlands Group

Non-RWMG Attendees:

John Hunt – UC Davis
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen and Associates
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Local Water Plans - Update for the IRWM Plan: Susan Robinson briefly explained the IRWM Plan update process to meet 2016 IRWM Program Guidelines. Prior to the meeting, she had sent RWMG members a link to three revised chapters in the IRWM Plan, reflecting updated information from the most up-to-date local water resource plans. Susan asked if anyone had any questions or comments about any of the revisions. There were no questions. Bridget Hoover commented that it was great to have an opportunity to keep the IRWM Plan a living document. Susan asked the RWMG for a “thumbs up” on the chapter revisions, and the revisions were approved.

3. Hosting IRWM Website: Susan noted that hosting fees and website domain registration for the Greater Monterey County IRWM Program website and Central Coast Action Tracker were coming due (January 19, 2018). After a short discussion it was decided that the hosting and domain registration fees could legitimately be paid for out of the Storm Water Resource Plan planning grant. Bridget alerted the RWMG that she would be putting a call out in January for funding to support Susan’s position.

4. RWMG Executive Committee: Susan provided a brief update: Mike McCullough has agreed to serve as the Agency rep, and Ross Clark has agreed to serve another one-year term (supported by the other Conservation/Watershed members). Susan also mentioned that immediately after last month’s meeting, she had called Colin Bailey and asked if he was interested in serving out the remainder of his term for the Disadvantaged Community seat (through May 2018), but he said he was not interested; in that case, Karen McBride will serve as the Disadvantaged Community rep.

5. Thanks to Heather Lukacs: Susan noted that Heather will soon be leaving EJCW for other adventures. She thanked Heather for all of the great work she has done on behalf of the Greater Monterey County IRWM Region to assist disadvantaged communities. Heather said that she will continue to work in the region, and that Moi Moreno-Rivera is EJCW’s Central Coast Coordinator. Moi will be working on the Disadvantaged Community Involvement grant moving forward.

6. AB 1249 “Plan of Action”: AB 1249 requires IRWM regions with nitrate, arsenic, hexavalent chromium, and/or perchlorate contamination to describe: 1) the location and extent of that contamination in the region, 2) the impacts caused by the contamination to communities within the region, 3) existing efforts being undertaken in the region to address the impacts, and 4) any additional efforts needed to address the impacts. Since March 2017, Susan and Karen Nilsen have been meeting with a Technical Advisory Committee to identify the extent of contamination within the region and to determine a “plan of action” for the purposes of meeting AB 1249 requirements for the IRWM Plan. Susan summarized the data gathered over the course of the effort and explained the recommended “plan of action.”

There was quite a bit of discussion. Sarah Hardgrave commented that it would be a reach to create a JPA, and asked, “Would it be more appropriately addressed by the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA)?” Heather said she would talk with Gary Petersen about it, while noting that the new GSA has its hands full currently with developing the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Susan commented that the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act focuses on the supply and water quality of aquifers rather than on repairing or improving drinking water systems, so she wasn’t sure the extent to which the GSA would be interested in taking on this issue. Heather added that much of the contamination for nitrate, arsenic, and chrom-6 is located in North County, which lies outside of the GSA boundaries.

Elizabeth (a TAC member) noted that the TAC also wasn’t sure that forming a new entity, such as a JPA, was the way to go. Some entity needs to take responsibility, but who should it be? Someone suggested a better recommendation might be for the State to look at how these small water system projects are funded, and set money aside for these systems (for consolidation, etc.).

John asked whether an association of small public water systems exists that could help coordinate these things. Heather commented that small water systems typically have so few staff and resources that asking them to participate in an association would be a “big ask.” Elizabeth mentioned ACWA – Association of California Water Agencies.

Sarah commented that the County Environmental Health Bureau is under-resourced. Perhaps if they had staff capacity they could look at solutions. Susan noted that Cheryl Sandoval (with Environmental Health) has emphasized repeatedly that they are *regulators*, not tasked with implementing solutions. Maybe there needs to be a mission change? Sarah added, maybe more money would help with that.... Heather said that the County has played the role of implementing solutions in the past – through Public Works. She emphasized that the AB 1249 recommendation is really just to study the issue. She also noted that AB 1249 considers all systems, not just those in disadvantaged communities, and therefore finding resources to implement solutions – without the assistance of disadvantaged community grants – will be quite a bit more challenging.

John Hunt said that he has been looking into setting up an organization that would facilitate solutions (grants, etc.). The issue here is, how do you fund a *program* that will help facilitate these projects? Not necessarily a JPA, but how do you build programmatic capacity?

Sarah noted that this is a public health emergency that the County should take responsibility for, having allowed these systems to be built in the first place. She thought it made sense for the “responsible entity” to be an existing agency rather than a new entity. Susan added that a large percentage of the contaminated systems are located in unincorporated areas of the County. Heather noted that the County Board of Supervisors is very much aware of the crisis.

Bridget concluded that there’s more work to be done on the AB 1249 “plan of action.” She suggested beginning by talking with Gary Petersen (GSA) and Cheryl Sandoval (County Environmental Health). Ross suggested the group ask for guidance from the State or County on *who* should be responsible for this problem. Bridget wondered how the issue is being dealt with in other parts of the state. Heather said it is

case by case; in Tulare County, the County plays this role. Bridget commented, so if resources were available to increase capacity, maybe the County would step up to fill the void.

Heather added that another major issue is the level of community interest in these projects; the County will need some assurances of community support. Interest depends on cost, and project cost depends on many factors. There are a lot of barriers. As part of the AB 1249 “plan of action,” she emphasized the need to specifically look at community perspectives regarding why previous County water projects have failed or have succeeded – with an eye to learning lessons on how future projects can be successful.

Susan said she would consider the RWMG comments and come back to the group with “next steps.”

7. Chile Climate Smart Ag Mission with CDFG: Paul Robins, Monterey County RCD, was scheduled to provide a brief presentation on his recent trip to Chile with a group organized by the California Department of Agriculture to learn about what ag operations and researchers were doing to deal with climate change. Due to poor cell phone reception, however, it was decided that this agenda item would be postponed to a future meeting.

8. Other Business: There was no other business.

The next RWMG meeting will be held on January 17, 2018, 1:30PM – 3:30PM, location TBD.