

Introduction

Integrated regional water management is a relatively new approach to water resource management in California. It is an approach that is being strongly promoted by State water managers and legislators as a way to increase regional self-sufficiency, encouraging local water resource managers to take a proactive, leadership role in solving water management problems on a local level through collaborative regional planning. This regional approach is considered absolutely necessary in order for water managers to be able to cope with the impending water management challenges ahead.

The *California Water Plan* is the State's blueprint for managing water resources. Updated every five years, the *California Water Plan* provides a framework for water managers, legislators, and the public to consider options and make decisions regarding California's water future. The *California Water Plan Update 2009* identifies the most pressing water management issues and challenges faced statewide, and provides recommendations (in the form of 13 objectives and over 115 related actions) to help ensure California's sustainable water use and reliable water supplies through the year 2050 and on for future generations. The authors of *California Water Plan Update 2009* write with a certain sense of urgency:

California is facing one of the most significant water crises in its history... We must adapt and evolve California's water systems more quickly and effectively to keep pace with ever changing conditions now and in the future. Population is growing while available water supplies are static and even decreasing. Climate change, as evidenced by changes in snowpack, river flows, and sea levels, is profoundly impacting our water resources. The Delta and other watersheds and ecosystems continue to decline. The state's current water and flood management systems are increasingly challenged by legal remedies and regulatory protections, with economic and societal consequences. The entire system—water and flood management, watersheds, and ecosystems—has lost its resilience and is changing in undesirable ways. (vol. 1, p. 2-5 and p. 2-26)

Planning for and adapting to the effects of climate change, in particular, “will be among the most significant challenges facing water and flood managers this century” (ibid., vol. 1, p. 2-9). While the exact conditions of future climate change remain uncertain, the effects of climate change on hydrology (snowpack, river flows), storm intensity, temperature, winds, and sea levels are already evident in California. The average early spring snowpack in the Sierra Nevada decreased by about 10 percent during the last century, a loss of 1.5 million acre-feet of snowpack storage, and sea level rose 7 inches along California's coast (vol. 1, p. 4-36). The authors conclude: “For more than 200 years, California water and flood management systems have provided the foundation for the state's economic vitality, providing water supply, sanitation, electricity, recreation, and flood protection. However, the climate patterns that these systems were designed for are different now and may continue to change at an accelerated pace. These changes collectively result in significant uncertainty and peril to water supplies and quality, ecosystems, and flood protection; and our water systems cannot be operated as they were originally designed” (vol. 1, p. 2-9).

Integrated regional water management offers an approach for managing the uncertainties that lie ahead. While the traditional approach to water resource management has typically involved separate and distinct agencies managing different aspects of the water system, i.e., water supply, water quality, flood management, and natural resources, integrated regional water management considers the hydrologic system as a whole. The IRWM planning process brings together water and natural resource managers, along with other community stakeholders, to collaboratively plan for and ensure the region's continued water supply reliability, improved water quality, flood management, and healthy functioning

ecosystems—allowing for creative new solutions, greater efficiencies, and an increased promise of long-term success.

In 2008 the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) developed a set of policy principles for environmental and economic sustainability, including the following five overriding principles (ibid., vol. 1, p. 5-21):

- Reliable, adequate water supplies and a healthy ecosystem must be primary co-equal goals for sustainable water management.
- Sustainable solutions will require comprehensive programs that combine substantial investments in ecosystem enhancement and water supply infrastructure.
- Providing reliable, high quality water supplies remains the primary mission of ACWA’s public agency members.
- Water investment and management decisions must recognize that investing in an environmentally sustainable system serves the economic interests of water users statewide.
- New investments are required to progress toward sustainability and adapt to changing environmental conditions like climate change.

The ACWA developed these principles because “ACWA member agencies believe that California’s water policies today are unsustainable” (ibid.). The IRWM planning approach represents an effort to make California’s water policies more sustainable. IRWM planning recognizes the critical link between water supply reliability and healthy ecosystems, and seeks to manage these systems in a way that is adaptive to changing conditions and sustainable for future generations.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

California voters have passed several statewide bond measures providing billions of dollars to support local and regional water management activities. In November of 2002, California voters passed Proposition 50 (the “Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act”), approving the IRWM Program, administered jointly by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the Department of Water Resources (DWR). The purpose of the IRWM Program is to “encourage integrated regional strategies for management of water resources and to provide funding, through competitive grants, for projects that protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependence on imported water.” Proposition 50 authorized \$500 million in grant funds for IRWM projects.

In November 2006, California voters passed Proposition 84, the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006.” Administered by DWR, Proposition 84 includes an additional \$1 billion in funding for the IRWM Grant Program. Of that \$1 billion, \$52 million has been allocated specifically for projects within the Central Coast Funding Area. Proposition 1E, the “Disaster Preparedness and Flood Prevention Bond Act of 2006,” was also passed in 2006, authorizing \$4.09 billion in State bonds to rebuild and repair California’s most vulnerable flood control structures to protect homes and prevent loss of life from flood-related disasters; and to protect California’s drinking water supply system by rebuilding delta levees that are vulnerable to earthquakes and storms.

In order to be eligible for IRWM grant funds through Proposition 84 or Proposition 1E, a project must be contained within an adopted IRWM Plan. According to the California Water Code §10540(c), an IRWM Plan must address at a minimum all of the following:

1. Protection and improvement of water supply reliability, including identification of feasible

- agricultural and urban water use efficiency strategies.
2. Identification and consideration of the drinking water quality of communities within the area of the plan.
 3. Protection and improvement of water quality within the area of the plan, consistent with the relevant basin plan.
 4. Identification of any significant threats to groundwater resources from overdraft.
 5. Protection, restoration, and improvement of stewardship of aquatic, riparian, and watershed resources within the region.
 6. Protection of groundwater resources from contamination.
 7. Identification and consideration of the water-related needs of disadvantaged communities in the area within the boundaries of the plan.

This IRWM Plan has been developed for the Greater Monterey County region to fulfill the goals of IRWM planning in our region, and as a prerequisite for obtaining IRWM grant funding through Propositions 84 and 1E for regional planning and project implementation. This Plan may also serve as a basis for obtaining grant funds through other sources, such as the federal Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Implementation Program, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Title XVI Program, and other federal, state, and private funding programs.

EVOLUTION OF THE GREATER MONTEREY COUNTY IRWM PLAN

To meet requirements for the Proposition 50 IRWM Grant Program, six IRWM Plans were initially developed within the Central Coast region:

- Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Plan (May 2007)
- Monterey Peninsula, Carmel Bay and South Monterey Bay IRWM Plan (November 2007, amended March 2009)
- Salinas Valley IRWM Functionally Equivalent Plan (May 2006, amended October 2008)
- Northern Santa Cruz County IRWM Plan (October 2005)
- San Luis Obispo County IRWM Plan (December 2005, amended July 2007)
- Santa Barbara Countywide IRWM Plan (May 2007)

The first three plans covered geographic areas within Monterey County. Together these plans represented most of the Salinas Valley, all of the Pajaro River watershed, all of the Carmel River and San Jose Creek watersheds, and the Monterey Peninsula. However, many key areas of Monterey County were not represented within any of these plans, creating significant coverage voids for the purposes of IRWM planning and project implementation. These areas include, specifically: the Big Sur coastal watersheds and communities on the western side of the Santa Lucia Range, from Pt. Lobos south to the San Luis Obispo County line; the larger Salinas River watershed from the Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge at the Pacific Ocean south to the San Luis Obispo County line and including the east and west ranges of the valley (including a small portion of western San Benito County); and the Gabilan watershed.

In February 2008, representatives of the Central Coast IRWM regions decided that the Salinas Valley IRWM Functionally Equivalent Plan (FEP) region should be expanded and an entirely new region created for the purposes of IRWM planning and implementation. The proposed new region—the Greater Monterey County IRWM region—would address IRWM plan coverage voids in Monterey County and would bring previously underrepresented areas into the IRWM planning process, including such key areas

as the Big Sur coastal watersheds, the larger Salinas watershed, the Gabilan watershed, and parts of northern Monterey County. The maps on the following page illustrate the change in geographic coverage from the Salinas Valley IRWM planning region to the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region.

This IRWM Plan for the Greater Monterey County region supersedes and replaces the Salinas Valley IRWM FEP, and meets all requirements established by Proposition 84 and Proposition 1E as specified in the Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program Guidelines, Appendix C: Guidance for IRWM Plan Standards (DWR 2010, and DWR 2012). This Plan is intended to be a living document that will be updated and amended as needed to meet the changing conditions in the region as well as the changing legislative standards of the State's IRWM Grant Program.

Figure Intro-1: Change in geographic coverage from the Salinas Valley IRWM planning region to the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region:

