

Section I: Integration

The intent of the Integration standard in the Proposition 84/1E Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program Guidelines is to ensure that Regional Water Management Groups (RWMGs) intentionally create a system where integration can occur. The IRWM Plan must demonstrate that the RWMG is forming, coordinating, and integrating separate efforts in order to function as a unified effort. Integration may occur on many levels. This section discusses three types of integration: 1) stakeholder/institutional integration, 2) resource integration, and 3) project integration. The processes, structures, and procedures that foster integration are also described, sometimes implicitly, in other sections of this IRWM Plan (including the Governance, Stakeholder Outreach, Data Management, and Project Review sections).

I.1 STAKEHOLDER/INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

IRWM Plans are required to contain governance structures and processes that enable diverse groups of stakeholders to participate in all levels of the IRWM planning effort. The California Water Code (CWC) §10541(h)(2) refers to ensuring that IRWM plans are developed collaboratively in a manner that balances interests and engages a variety of stakeholders regardless of their ability to contribute financially. This type of integration has been ensured in the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region through the governance structure, including composition of the RWMG and the process for stakeholder participation.

I.1.1 Governance

Eighteen organizations have come together to form the Greater Monterey County RWMG for the purposes of IRWM planning and project implementation within the Greater Monterey County IRWM region. These entities include government agencies, nonprofit organizations, educational organizations, water service districts, private water companies, and organizations representing agricultural, environmental, and community interests, as follows:

- Big Sur Land Trust
- California State University Monterey Bay
- California Water Service Company
- Castroville Community Services District
- City of Salinas
- City of Soledad
- Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
- Garrapata Creek Watershed Council
- Marina Coast Water District
- Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
- Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner's Office
- Monterey County Water Resources Agency
- Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency
- Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
- Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.

The Greater Monterey County RWMG is made up of diverse organizations with differing expertise, perspectives, and authorities of various aspects of water management, representing all major geographic

areas within the region. There is no one leadership position on the RWMG, and no hierarchy of decision-making. All major IRWM planning decisions are decided by vote at the regularly scheduled RWMG meetings. Each RWMG member organization is allowed one vote regardless of whether or not they have contributed financially to the Plan or to other RWMG activities. As such, in both its composition and rules of governance, the RWMG lays the foundation for an integrated approach to IRWM planning in the Greater Monterey County region.

I.1.2 Stakeholder Involvement

Outreach efforts to include stakeholders in the development of the IRWM Plan have targeted specific entities as well as the general public. An initial stakeholder email list, with about 175 names, was developed by the RWMG by brainstorming every known organization that might be affected by and/or interested in the IRWM Plan process. The current list includes about 250 individuals representing over 150 agencies, organizations, and interest groups. The list continues to expand and evolve as new stakeholders are introduced to the process.

Stakeholders have played an important role in the decision-making process throughout the development of this IRWM Plan. Together, stakeholders and the RWMG represent all of the major water resource management authorities in the region—as well as water resource management authorities and stakeholders from neighboring IRWM regions—and provide broad and fair representation of water supply, water quality, wastewater, stormwater, flood control, watershed, municipal, environmental, agricultural, and regulatory interests throughout all geographic areas of the planning region. Stakeholder organizations include such entities as the following:

- Water suppliers and water service districts
- Wastewater agencies
- Water quality regulatory entities
- Watershed groups
- Flood control agencies
- Federal, state, county and municipal governments
- Environmental non-profit organizations
- Agricultural organizations
- Business organizations
- Disadvantaged communities
- Other community organizations
- Universities and research institutions
- Elected officials
- Other interested individuals

All of the stakeholder groups necessary to meet the objectives of the IRWM Plan are included on the stakeholder list. Please see Appendix D for the full list of stakeholder organizations in the Greater Monterey County region (also posted on the website, <http://www.greatermontereyirwmp.org/documents/>).

The RWMG ensures public involvement in its decision-making processes through various means, including regular email updates to stakeholders on the IRWM planning process, a regularly updated website, public comment periods on all major IRWM Plan “milestones,” and occasional public workshops. In addition, stakeholders are always invited to participate in the monthly RWMG meetings, with locations and meeting times announced on the website each month. Meeting minutes are posted on the IRWM website following each RWMG meeting.

Through these efforts to develop as broad, diverse, and inclusive a stakeholder base as possible and to promote the active participation of all stakeholders in the planning effort, the Greater Monterey County RWMG ensures stakeholder/institutional integration in the IRWM planning process.

I.2 RESOURCE INTEGRATION

Resource integration can have multiple meanings. It can refer to the combining of multiple participant/agency resources to aid the regional planning effort, including the sharing of data or of differing expertise or technical capacity. Resource integration can also mean the consideration of different resources or resource management strategies—including both man-made and natural water resource infrastructure—as components of the water system being managed in the IRWM planning effort. This section describes how the RWMG promotes integration in both of these ways.

I.2.1 Sharing of Information and Expertise

Between the RWMG members and stakeholders, the combined knowledge, expertise, and technical capacity within the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region is truly immense. The RWMG members lend their expertise and unique perspectives through the ongoing planning process, and call in outside expertise from stakeholders as needed. For example, in the early stages of IRWM Plan development, water management and natural resource specialists from throughout the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region were asked to provide their knowledge and opinions about the water resource “issues and conflicts” that existed in the region. Outside experts are also asked to provide input on technical aspects of project applications during the project review process, as needed. The RWMG expects to involve outside experts and specialists to an even greater extent in the IRWM planning process as part of a Climate Change Task Force, with the intent of forming a sort of “hub” for climate change planning in the broader Monterey County and Monterey Bay region.

Another way in which the RWMG promotes integration in the IRWM planning process is through the sharing of data. Section K of this IRWM Plan describes the data management system for the Greater Monterey County region. Because the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan does not have an ongoing secure funding source for data management, the RWMG has opted to utilize existing State database frameworks including, for surface water quality, those developed by the California Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) and by the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN). Wetland and riparian habitat conditions will be measured and documented using the California Rapid Assessment Methods (CRAM), and groundwater data will reside in GeoTracker using the Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) database. The intent and design of the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan data management system thus focuses on a localized approach to data collection and management with uploading of data into statewide databases. The statewide databases include web tools for dissemination, which will easily allow for the sharing of data between stakeholders and project proponents in the planning region.

The RWMG is also making use of a new online data tool to track IRWM Plan implementation projects. The Conservation Action Tracker database, described in the Plan Performance and Monitoring Section of this Plan, is a data system for tracking land-use management improvements in the Central Coast region. It is an online tool that will allow project proponents to register and update information on conservation projects across the region in order to track efforts and improve stakeholders’ ability to evaluate collective impacts and effectiveness. The Conservation Action Tracker is being implemented by the Central Coast Resource Conservation Districts and project partners of the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan.

I.2.2 Integration of Resource Strategies

Implementing projects that utilize a diverse mix of resource management strategies and that promote the full capacity of the water management system in the IRWM planning region, including both natural and man-made water resource infrastructure, is yet another way in which the RWMG promotes integration in the IRWM planning process. Section E of this IRWM Plan lists and describes the resource management strategies chosen by the Greater Monterey County RWMG for inclusion in the Plan. The resource management strategies include both natural watershed systems and drinking water distribution systems as components of the water system being managed in the IRWM planning effort, and as such, reflect a recognition on the part of the RWMG that the proper and “healthy” functioning of both systems are equally important.

The projects included in the IRWM Plan utilize a broad and diverse mix of resource management strategies (see Table E-1 in Section E, which demonstrates how the various projects utilize resource management strategies). The RWMG encourages stakeholders to develop projects that employ a diverse mix of resource management strategies by offering additional points to projects that demonstrate such diversity as part of the project ranking process. The integration of resource management strategies not only ensures robust solutions to current water management issues but will enable the region to become more resilient to, and to mitigate for, uncertain future circumstances, including the impacts of climate change.

I.3 PROJECT INTEGRATION

One advantage of regional planning lies in the ability to address similar objectives of local organizations with regional programs. IRWM planning decisions can lead to existing projects being combined or replaced by new projects. The resources to implement multiple smaller efforts (e.g., personnel, finance, equipment) may benefit from economy of scale when similar local interests can be met with a regional project.

I.3.1 How the RWMG Promotes Project Integration

The RWMG encourages stakeholders in the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region to form partnerships and to collaborate on projects that meet regional needs and produce regional benefits. The RWMG also promotes project integration during the project review process for each IRWM Plan project solicitation. During every project solicitation, a Project Review Committee comprised of RWMG members reviews each project (both implementation projects and concept proposals) for potential integration opportunities, with an aim of combining discrete project elements or combining entire projects to create regional programs. Through this integration process, the RWMG helps coordinate activities within the IRWM planning region in order to avoid redundancies, increase efficiencies, and to create projects with multiple benefits.

Note that for future IRWM Plan project solicitations, the RWMG has considered the idea of hosting informal “mixers” for project proponents and other stakeholders where they can discuss current projects and brainstorm new project ideas. The concept behind the mixers is to bring individuals together in a casual setting that is conducive to “mingling” and to an easy exchange of ideas. The intent is to increase integration of projects and to enhance opportunities for coordination of activities, collaboration, and partnerships throughout the region.

I.3.2 Water Resource Project Coordination Process

One important effort that has resulted from the project integration process described above is the Water Resource Project Coordination (WRPC) process. The WRPC process represents an innovative approach aimed at addressing and resolving water-related conflicts in the region, while promoting stakeholder collaboration and project integration.

Historically, water issues and related solutions in the Greater Monterey County region have been developed without a great deal of interaction among the various parties that would be affected by the solutions. Moving into the future, with the call for integrated projects through the IRWM process, project proponents who have not historically interacted with one another will find themselves working together to develop or jointly advocate water-related projects. The IRWM planning process calls for issues and conflicts to be identified and solutions brought forth by the region, through collaborative efforts and project integration. However, projects cannot be integrated and collaboration cannot easily occur as long as underlying mistrust, isolation, and conflicts continue to exist among stakeholders in a region.

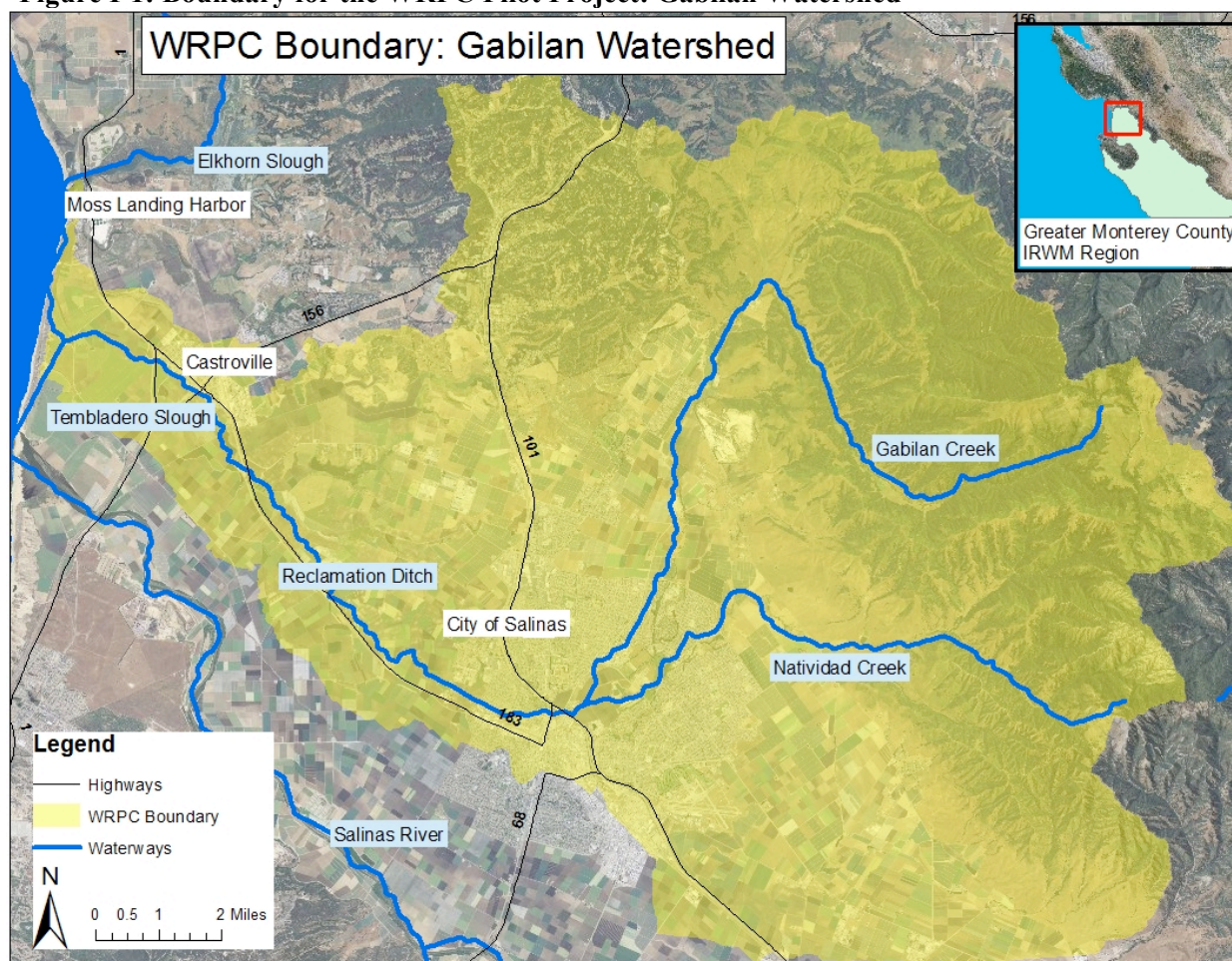
While many attempts at traditional conflict resolution in Monterey County have been made in the past, most of these attempts have failed. The RWMG concluded that a new approach was needed to foster collaboration and enable project integration to occur. In response to this need, the RWMG developed the “Water Resource Project Coordination” concept. The WRPC was initially conceived as a fact-finding process in which parties would discuss what factual questions they believed to be relevant to a decision, exchange information, and identify where they agreed and where they disagreed, then seek additional information to fill gaps, address hurdles, or resolve areas of disagreement. The goal of the WRPC process was to alleviate areas of mistrust and confusion and increase collaborative dialogue so that mutual solutions could be achieved. Beginning from a solutions-based platform, stakeholders share data, experiences, concerns, and viewpoints to develop a result that all involved can support.

The RWMG decided to test the WRPC process as a pilot project in one subwatershed area of the region, to see how well this type of process might facilitate coordination, collaboration, and project integration within the region. With this process, the RWMG hoped to proactively move to a paradigm of cooperation and reconciliation, and to create an open consensus-seeking process that would ensure the use of good science in water resource decision-making within the Greater Monterey County region.

WRPC Pilot Project: The Gabilan Watershed

The RWMG requested and received grant funds through the Proposition 84 IRWM Round 1 Planning Grant to test the WRPC process as a pilot project in one watershed area of the Greater Monterey County region. The Gabilan Watershed was selected as the focus area for this pilot project (see map below). Out of the 64 projects included in the IRWM Plan at the time that the WRPC pilot process was being developed, 35 were located within the Gabilan Watershed. The sheer number of projects located within this one watershed presented some unique opportunities for collaboration; however, some of the projects appeared to have potentially conflicting goals, which would need to be resolved or somehow reconciled for those projects to comfortably co-exist in the IRWM Plan, as well as for project integration to occur.

Figure I-1: Boundary for the WRPC Pilot Project: Gabilan Watershed



To begin, a subcommittee of the RWMG (the WRPC Committee) collaborated to develop an “invitee” list of stakeholders to invite to participate in the process. The list included all IRWM Plan project proponents who had projects located in the Gabilan Watershed, as well as all key interest groups. These interest groups included agricultural representatives and industry groups, environmental organizations, academic research institutions, municipalities, water districts, and government agencies with interests or regulatory authority in the Gabilan Watershed.

The first stakeholder meeting was conducted in January 2012, with 20 individuals in attendance. The purpose of that meeting was to set the stage for the WRPC process, to discuss what the end goals were, and to begin the process by selecting a facilitator. It was important to the stakeholders that the chosen facilitator would be seen by all parties to be absolutely neutral.

Determining the desired outcomes of the WRPC process for the Gabilan Watershed prompted significant discussion. The WRPC Committee emphasized the potential benefits of the process, namely, that by agreeing on *shared principles* for the watershed, stakeholders could maximize project integration and the competitive advantage of regional projects, ultimately bringing in more funding to the region. There was some question as to whether the goal should be to strengthen shared values between projects or to tackle the areas of disagreement. One stakeholder commented: “Finding shared values should be Plan A. ...There’s a difference between advancing shared values and advancing individual values without stepping

on toes. If we are clear about this process we can get both and advance coordination.” Facilitator qualifications and attributes were discussed at the meeting and a list of potential facilitators was agreed upon. In May 2012, the WRPC hired a facilitator.

The facilitator chosen for the Gabilan Watershed WRPC pilot project began by interviewing key stakeholders individually to get a comprehensive perspective on the various issues in the watershed. Some of their observations included the following:

- ***Ag Waiver:*** The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board’s Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements For Discharges From Irrigated Lands (known as the “Ag Waiver”) and related legal actions was identified as contributing to increasing the challenge for solution-seeking collaboration between people and organizations in this region. Trust between environmental, agricultural, and governmental stakeholders had eroded substantially as a result of the impacts of the Ag Waiver process and associated outcomes. The pervasive uncertainty about the future course of the Ag Waiver and fear of litigation was seen as a barrier to participation in project development and implementation. Many growers were struggling with the difficulty and costs of complying with the regulations. Many growers, at this point, were reluctant to take available government funds for projects as they were uncertain of the unexpected outcomes/consequences in terms of additional scrutiny and management complexity in light of the Ag Waiver. This polarized climate seemed to have fundamentally shifted the local collaborative environment.
- ***Outcomes of the “Spinach Scare”:*** In 2006, an outbreak of illness from spinach contaminated by *E. coli* resulted in significant public relation, legal, and regulatory impacts. This event, known locally as the “spinach scare,” resulted in growers ceasing ten years of work on conservation practices and removing acres of installed projects due to industry buyers’ food safety demands. This reversal was initially perceived as potentially souring interest in future such projects. Nonetheless, subsequent collaborative efforts between conservation and agricultural organizations and individuals created a standardized, transparent process for identifying safe wildlife habitat management practices and for adding management practices based on scientific evidence. This positive step suggested the potential for proactively engaging with industry partners across the supply-demand chain – despite the outcome of the “spinach scare.”
- ***Existing Local Collaborations:*** The richness and diversity of existing and emerging collaborative projects was considered impressive and hopeful. The facilitator found significant interest and support from academic and agency partners for collaborative projects to develop, demonstrate, and expand adoption of best management practices and other conservation innovations, and a strong record of grower collaboration. Additionally, it was clear that while recent regulatory actions had disrupted local collaboration, all of the individuals interviewed by the facilitators indicated an interest in seeking new options, while struggling to find a way forward within this complex regulatory framework.

Given the outcomes of the interviews, the facilitators expressed concerns that a formal joint fact-finding process, as initially planned, would not be the most effective approach given the significant regulatory hurdles and a general climate of mistrust in the region. Therefore, rather than a formal joint fact-finding process, the facilitators suggested that the WRPC Committee use an alternative approach. A decision was made to focus on identifying “shared values” in the Gabilan Watershed rather than moving directly to trying to find solutions to areas of disagreement.

The second stakeholder meeting, which was an all-day meeting held in January 2013, relied strongly on the use of graphic facilitation (“visioning”) as a tool to raise the participants’ sights beyond the immediate conflicts, and to identify a common image for the watershed over the long term. The hope was that ideas

for new or improved projects and collaboration could emerge during the workshop and be developed in follow-up small working group sessions.

The January 2013 meeting began with the participants sharing their understanding of the challenges facing the region, including social, economic, and environmental issues and trends, by placing anonymous sticky notes on a map. In this way the “elephants in the room” were brought out into the open without individuals needing to self-identify as proponents or opponents. After discussion about the challenges, the participants were divided into “affinity groups,” including agriculture, research, conservation, and government. Each group was asked to discuss amongst themselves their priorities for the watershed. Each participant was asked to create a visual image of their “desired future” for the watershed, its characteristics, and what they saw to be the key obstacles and opportunities for success. After everyone completed their images, the participants were led on a “gallery walk” and given the opportunity to view the other affinity groups’ images. The participants reassembled into their original affinity groups to discuss what they saw as common ground between the various images, what they saw as significant and/or irreconcilable differences, and finally to brainstorm possible opportunities to move things forward in new ways. The opportunities were posted on the wall charts via sticky notes.

After lunch, several stakeholders were asked to discuss “emerging collaborative efforts,” highlighting newly formed collaborative stakeholder initiatives that were currently addressing some of the issues in the watershed. The discussion returned to the visioning process within the context of these emerging efforts, synthesizing what the affinity groups had reported as “common ground,” as “tough spots” (i.e., significant or irreconcilable differences, or barriers to progress), and finally, as emerging solutions that should be explored further. From the groups’ images and discussion, it became clear that there was actually more common ground amongst stakeholders than anticipated.

After the workshop, a “Wordle” was generated based on the number of times certain words were used during the graphic imaging process by the different affinity groups (i.e., the more often the word was used, the larger it appears in the Wordle). The most commonly used words in order of frequency were as follows: water, clean, healthy, people, connected, community, agriculture, recreation, and nature. This constellation of key words suggested many options for collaboration. The Wordle is shown below.

drawings were then reviewed with ten members of different stakeholder groups in the watershed: farmers, water managers, municipalities, urban/rural residents, community groups and academia. Preparation for and follow-up from these discussions (mostly one-on-one) was vetted through a working group of five people from the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCD), Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA), Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG), California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

Based on the interviews with the different stakeholder groups, a final set of conceptual drawings was produced. These drawings, included in the final Gabilan Watershed Blueprint document, distill the themes expressed in the January 2013 stakeholder drawings – flood control, water quality, habitat restoration, public access to parks and natural areas, safe community, and productive agriculture – along with the following *shared ideals*:

- Residents of Salinas will enjoy and have good access to green places, and ample outdoor education and activities will engage children and other community members in maintaining local environmental quality.
- Within city boundaries, urban runoff management practices and facilities will minimize the impact of urban impervious surfaces on storm flows to regional waterways.
- Area farms will host a variety of farm runoff water quality management techniques reflective of individual approaches and needs and innovations, resulting in cleaner waterways amidst a thriving agricultural economy.
- The Reclamation Ditch/creek system will be able to safely and effectively convey storm flows while protecting or enhancing water quality as flows are conveyed to Elkhorn Harbor. Where possible, wetlands and other wildlife habitat will be incorporated into the system's function.
- Pedestrian and bike-friendly paths connecting Salinas to regional path systems will be developed along acceptable routes.

While the hoped-for outcome of the Landscape Strategy was a depiction of a single, common vision for the watershed, it became evident through interviews with the different stakeholder groups that developing such a vision would require a much more intensive, comprehensive, and extensive stakeholder process. Nonetheless, the conceptual drawings included in the Blueprint document represent a significant and positive step towards informing or structuring a more rigorous effort to bring forward good work in the region. The graphics will be used for continued outreach and education in the watershed.

2. On-Farm Solutions

Some of the challenges voiced at the January 2013 stakeholder meeting were the “barriers” to implementing on-farm sustainable management practices. One barrier was a simple lack of technical information regarding certain practices, such as nutrient management practices, and no industry-led approach to address the issue. In response to this challenge, a decision was made to allocate some WRPC funds to help growers answer some of those questions (fill data gaps) in order to help build capacity within the local grower community for implementing sustainable management practices in the Gabilan Watershed.

WRPC funds were provided to help kick-start a new effort called On-Farm Solutions. The idea for On-Farm Solutions was first developed at a Grower-Shipper Association (GSA) meeting in the fall 2012, at which time the GSA’s Water Committee had identified a few priority needs for grower assistance in terms of water quality improvement. One of those needs was a focus on better understanding Nitrate Quick-Tests, including how to use them, compile them, and interpret them, and their true cost benefit to the

organization. From that conversation and subsequent meetings with a group of growers and assistance providers, the GSA created the On-Farm Solutions Committee and began working on funding to assist growers in using Nitrate Quick-Tests on a larger scale.

The GSA, in association with researchers at the Watershed Institute of California State University Monterey Bay, purchased and distributed Nitrate Quick-Test kits (not funded by the Planning Grant) to growers in the Salinas Valley, and then tracked their use. The results of this effort were compiled into a document (Standard Operating Procedures) intended to provide growers with a comprehensive, Spanish-translated guide on how to perform and use soil Nitrate Quick-Tests as a diagnostic tool for fertilizer management decisions. The guide is regionally specific, and addresses differences in soil sampling, frequency of testing, and interpreting nitrate results based on crop types (general categories, such as shallow-rooted vs. not, cool season crops, longer season crops) and growing environments (e.g., soil type, irrigation system, fertilizer application methods). An appendix to the guide includes an economic overview of the cost-benefit of the Nitrate Quick-Tests that are commercially available and those that growers create from multiple sources. The final On-Farm Solutions Nitrate Quick-Test Standard Operating Procedures is included in the Gabilan Watershed Blueprint. In addition to creating the guide, a website was developed to provide Nitrate Quick-Test information for growers in the Salinas Valley, along with a database for storing the results of the testing. The website will be continually updated, with new information based on grower requests.

3. Corporate Social Responsibility

Like “On-Farm Solutions,” the goal of this Blueprint section was to advance agricultural sustainability in the Gabilan Watershed. With “On-Farm Solutions” working on the individual grower level, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) part of the Blueprint was intended to address the next level of the agriculture industry. SureHarvest, a private consulting company that provides solutions to growers and agrifood companies pursuing sustainability strategies, was hired to lead this effort.

The goal of the effort was to initiate greater dialogue within the agricultural industry about social/environmental responsibility programs, and to encourage agricultural leaders to take a greater role in funding sustainability practices. In March 2014, SureHarvest convened an industry-focused working session in the City of Salinas to bring together CSR leaders in the agricultural community to initiate an action-oriented discussion focused on advancing business models for stewardship of Monterey Bay watersheds. While the workshop focused on the general theme of sustainability in all arenas and was not watershed-specific, the dialogue was initiated for further discussion in this area. The workshop was co-sponsored by Central Coast Grower-Shipper Association, Western Growers, and Monterey County Sustainability Working Group.

Twenty-two industry leaders, company executives, and CSR/sustainability directors on California’s Central Coast and beyond participated in the workshop, a very large showing for a workshop in this region for this constituency. In large and small group discussion, participants shared experience and knowledge about a number of locally relevant sustainability topics and initiatives, including the following:

- Industry sustainability update and trends
- Self-assessment initiatives
- Performance-based initiatives
- Certification programs
- Other sustainability tools and initiatives
- Regional projects

Together, the group discussed and attempted to answer a number of questions, such as: In a future with more people to feed, fewer resources, and less predictable weather, what initiatives and tools hold the most promise to benefit people, planet, and profit (the “triple bottom line”)? How can we collaborate to build and scale-up locally relevant sustainability initiatives? What roadblocks stand in our way? How can we clear those hurdles to do more to enhance our local economy and environment? Can we leverage the region’s uniqueness and natural diversity in the marketplace, and vice versa?

Participants identified values, challenges, and opportunities for collaborative action across three broad categories: market and regulatory compliance; program design and core elements; and data collection, confidentiality, and information sharing. At the highest level the group expressed interest in and support for taking an industry-led proactive approach to advance sustainability for agriculture, community, and environment.

The following next steps were identified:

- Support the continued development and expansion of existing tools and initiatives
- Improve coordination amongst industry groups, resource agencies, and nonprofits
- Educate buyers and consumers on ag conservation/sustainability efforts in the region
- Create a roadmap for the development of a collaborative sustainability program

A summary report of the CSR workshop is included in the Blueprint document.

4. Agency Coordination

One of the major challenges to project implementation identified during the January 2013 stakeholder workshop was permitting and regulatory compliance. Hurdles to project implementation brought about by lack of interagency coordination and difficult and confusing regulation were voiced time and time again at the January 2013 meeting. Examples cited included confusion over which agency had control over waterways, coordination with and between permitting agencies, the practical and legal effects of differing biological opinions, and a general confusion over which agency managed what resources. The goal of this section of the Blueprint was to identify the regulatory constraints and challenges that projects in the Gabilan Watershed might encounter, and identify possible options for coordinating agency review and consultation.

The consulting facilitator also led this section of the Blueprint. The process involved internet research and phone interviews with agencies regarding permitting requirements and documents/materials, as well as meetings with key agency staff to discuss permitting processes and requirements. As a result of those conversations, a matrix summarizing primary permitting and regulatory oversight was developed. At the suggestion of various agency staff, the matrix is a linked document which gets the project sponsor or member of the public to the official website of the agency. This strategy was adopted as a result of the following realities: Requirements change frequently – sometimes in response to emerging conditions or issues, other times in response to political or local pressures or ballot initiatives. Staff turnover can result in subtle but significant changes in interpretation or review process, while agency budget changes can dictate new procedures and processes, as well as staff availability. The specific attributes of a project can result in multiple departments or staffers being involved in any given permitting action. The consensus was that presenting a matrix of applicable permits would result in the need for frequent and careful update and would not embody the nuanced complexity of permitting processes.

Additional discussions with agency staff were conducted to determine general willingness/ability to collaborate during project development and permitting. In general, while each agency staffer expressed a genuine willingness to collaborate, few of those contacted indicated having the allocated or available time

to do so on a project-by-project basis. While individual effort was clearly desired, institutional parameters frequently proved a barrier to such collaboration.

The interviews highlighted a significant difference between the actual specifics of moving a particular project through the regulatory process and the general process shown in the matrix. Without a specific project on which to comment, the contacted agencies could only direct the consultants to the general permitting processes, resulting in the matrix simply showing which agency to obtain permits from and the general process of applying, without much insight into the subtleties of interagency coordination, permitting agency/project sponsor communications, specific mitigation or project re-design that might be required by the agency, or other factors involved in actually get the permits issued. This difference is due in part to diverse layers of staff inside the agencies which are focused on separate components or aspects of a project; inability of staff to provide design-level assistance with the resulting “fine tuning” once projects enter the permitting system; and an increasing tendency of agencies to use permit applications as a vehicle for gathering baseline data and other technical data resulting in sometimes substantial permitting delays and/or increased expense. The consultants’ conclusion: “The reality is that this process will always be complicated and expensive.” However, the tools created will serve to help project proponents navigate that complicated system. The regulatory matrix and summary of this section of the Blueprint is attached in Appendix L.

Integrating Projects in the Gabilan Watershed

As the final product of the WRPC process, the facilitators led an effort to integrate projects within the Gabilan Watershed. The project integration process proceeded in two phases: 1) review of all existing projects in the IRWM Plan that were located in the Gabilan Watershed to identify integration options, and 2) discussions with project proponents to identify possible partners and integrated project components. The review of existing projects resulted in “groupings” of projects, organized by integrative themes or “integratable” places, e.g., Moro Cojo or the City of Salinas (where diverging projects could all be implemented in the same place, addressing different objectives). Following this initial project review, a series of one-on-one meetings were held across the region to discuss possible projects with the various proponents and stakeholders with respect to integration options. The outcome of this process was the development of six preliminary integrated project options, containing components of 18 previous IRWM Plan projects. For each of these project options, the facilitators identified an initial assessment of possible permitting constraints or coordination challenges, as well as potential funding options. These options are undergoing continued refinement as several stakeholders within the region will need to reach consensus as to the specific characteristics of the possible projects. The six possible integrated projects are briefly outlined below. Individual projects are identified by project number, name, and sponsor in the table that follows.

- Principal creek systems (Santa Rita, Natividad, Tembladero, Gabilan, Salinas River, Rec Ditch):
 - Applicable projects: 1-5
 - Possible narrative: These projects are general enough to be tailored to any of the six major waterways within the watershed. An integrated project might consist of reducing septic leakage in disadvantaged communities (1) along urban waterways to address one major source of water pollution. At the same time, combining that effort with projects to restore watersheds with native plants (2), constructed wetlands (3) and improvements to engineered flood-control channels (4) would address down-stream water quality. Finally, funding a research partnership with CSUMB to study water quality best management practices (5) would provide longitudinal data on the health of the watershed.
- Moss Landing:
 - Applicable projects: 6-8

- Possible narrative: MCWRA and Monterey County Public Works could integrate three physical infrastructure projects proposed for the Moss Landing area, consisting of improvements to the Potrero Road Tide Gates (6), the guide rail at the sanitation district (7) and the SCADA project (8). Together, these projects promise to reduce flooding and accidental sewage releases.
- Elkhorn Slough:
 - Applicable projects: 9-11
 - Possible narrative: Combining these three projects in or adjacent to the Elkhorn Slough would yield a holistic approach to wetland health. A sustainable agriculture demonstration station (9) next to the slough would develop and disseminate knowledge about best management practices; restoring coastal dunes and wetlands in the slough (10) would improve habitat quality and ecosystem services; and mapping drainages within the slough would improve understanding of nutrient and sediment flows (11).
- Southwest Salinas:
 - Applicable projects: 12-14
 - Possible narrative: The City of Salinas has proposed three similar, related infrastructure projects in the southwest part of the city, near Davis Road, which are ideal candidates for integration. They would consist of replacing a sewage pipeline (12), improving treatment facilities (13) and diverting urban run-off to detention ponds (14), which would reduce pollutant load entering the Salinas River.
- Boronda:
 - Applicable projects: 1, 8 and 15
 - Possible narrative: The Boronda district of Salinas, currently on the city's outskirts, is a high growth sector of the city which may facilitate the addition of 50,000 residents in coming decades. The City has proposed to improve the sanitation district's guide rail system (15) and implement the SCADA program there (8). Combined with assistance for disadvantaged communities to address septic leakages (1), these projects present a holistic strategy to reduce water contamination from both point and non-point sources.
- Coastal zone:
 - Applicable projects: 10, 16-18
 - Possible narrative: These projects are geographically specific to the coastal zone where the Gabilan watershed drains into Monterey Bay. If partnerships between the proposing organizations could be formed, the result might be a stronger alliance for the health of coastal ecosystems through projects such as planning for sea level rise (16), monitoring water quality with buoys (17), restoring dunes (10) and cleaning up beaches (18).

Table I-1: Individual Projects for Possible Integration in the Gabilan Watershed

#	Project Name	Project Sponsor
Principal Creek Systems		
1	Greater Monterey Bay Disadvantaged Community Wastewater Management Pilot Program	Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
2	Return of the Natives Restoration Education Project	CSUMB Return of the Natives
3	Water quality enhancement of the Tembladero Slough Phase II	Central Coast Wetlands Group
4	Maintenance and Flood Control Planning for the Old Salinas River Channel and Reclamation Ditch	Monterey Coastkeeper / The Otter Project
5	Study of environmental services from nutrient reducing BMPs	Central Coast Wetlands Group
Moss Landing		

6	Potrero Road Tide Gates Construction Project	Monterey County Water Resources Agency
7	Moss Landing County Sanitation District Wastewater System Upgrade Project	Monterey County Public Works
8	SCADA Project	Monterey County Public Works
Elkhorn Slough		
9	Sustainable Agriculture and Sustainable Development - Field Station and Demonstration Area	Central Coast Wetlands Group
10	Coastal Wetland Erosion Control and Dune Restoration	Central Coast Wetlands Group
11	Historic and Existing Drainage Network Mapping Project: Phase 1	Central Coast Wetlands Group
Southwest Salinas		
12	Replacement Raw Sewage Pipeline to Monterey Regional WWTP and City of Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment System Expansion	City of Salinas
13	Integrated Industrial Wastewater Conveyance and Treatment Facility Improvements	City of Salinas
14	Dry Weather Runoff Diversion Program	City of Salinas
Boronda		
15	Boronda County Sanitation District Guide Rail Upgrade Project	Monterey County Public Works
	Also see projects 1 and 8	
Coastal Zone		
16	Development and Evaluation of Climate Change Response Strategies in the Elkhorn Slough, Gabilan and Salinas River Watersheds.	Central Coast Wetlands Group
17	Coastal Confluence Monitoring	Central Coast Wetlands Group
18	Save Our Shores Watershed Protection Program - Annual Coastal Cleanup Day in Monterey County	Save Our Shores
	Also see project 10	

In addition, during the interview and contact process several jurisdictions indicated a willingness and desire to rethink their project options in light of the integrated perspective. These conversations are now ongoing throughout the region.

The projects are further described in the Blueprint document (Appendix L).

Evaluation of the WRPC Process

Since the Gabilan Watershed WRPC process was conducted as a pilot experiment to determine whether such a process would be beneficial as an ongoing part of IRWM planning in the Greater Monterey County region, the final step was to evaluate the process. An evaluation was conducted with stakeholders who participated in the process, and with the WRPC Committee and the RWMG.

In May 2014, a final stakeholder meeting was held to present the results of the Gabilan Watershed Blueprint, to discuss next steps, and to gain the stakeholders' feedback on the process. Stakeholders were asked to respond to the following questions on a written survey:

- Did you find this process beneficial/useful?
- What did you learn through the process (if anything)?

- If this process were to be conducted again in another watershed, how could it be improved?

Almost all of the stakeholders who responded found the process to be very beneficial, and one stakeholder who found it to be “somewhat beneficial” pointed to “too many interests” in the watershed and the problem of “stakeholder fatigue” in attempting to work out solutions. Several stakeholders appreciated the graphic visioning process as being especially useful for understanding common goals and major challenges, and for providing clarity of the core issues. Some stakeholders commented that the process had been very helpful in terms of building and strengthening relationships, and several commented that it was useful in getting people “to speak the same language.” One stakeholder wrote, “Bringing together solution-focused people is a good thing and I appreciated the opportunity to learn from that process and understand perspectives different than my own.” One stakeholder cautioned, however, that the most important part of this exercise will be to develop the Blueprint document as a tool that can be used for making positive progress in the watershed, noting that “if a tool that we develop cannot be used, the process failed.”

Answers varied in response to the question, “What did you learn?” One stakeholder said she learned about the ideas that are being pursued in the IRWM Plan. Another stakeholder learned additional ways to provide recreation for recreation-deficient Salinas. Another said she learned that one of the big hurdles to implementing projects is permitting, and one stakeholder in the agricultural sector commented, “[I] was glad to understand that it wasn't just us that had a challenge with regulation.” Another stakeholder wrote, “[I learned] that the challenges around getting landscape-scale initiatives/efforts implemented look different, but fundamentally haven't changed over the past decade.” Yet another commented, “Despite disparate views, several common themes emerged. Identifying the shared interests is key to moving forward.”

Suggestions for improving the process focused largely on providing more meetings over a shorter period of time (the WRPC process had been significantly extended due to delays with the Planning Grant contract amendment), in order to be able to show tangible results sooner. Another recommendation was to clarify the purpose of the process and provide greater focus at the outset in order to better define a collective path forward. One stakeholder requested that disadvantaged communities (DAC) and DAC advocates be brought in during the planning stages in order to get community input and engage DACs earlier on. Some stakeholders commented on the limited presence of individual growers in the WRPC process, and recommended finding ways to engage them in the process (noting that it is difficult to get growers to attend these types of meetings).

Overall, comments from stakeholders regarding the WRPC process were very favorable. In June 2014, a RWMG meeting was held to internally evaluate the WRPC process in terms of what worked, what didn't work, and whether the WRPC process proved beneficial as an ongoing tool for IRWM planning in the Greater Monterey County region. The results of that discussion are as follows:

What worked: It was agreed that the landscape visioning process was an extraordinarily useful tool. Focusing on *project outcomes* (as opposed to conflicts in the watershed) kept the process positive. Also, the watershed focus was seen as a good approach. One person commented that the WRPC proved to be “more accessible to a layperson” coming to water management than the usual IRWM planning process. Others commented on the positive outcomes of networking, partnership building, and “people talking to each other for the first time.” All in all, everyone agreed it was a very positive experience, providing a solid foundation for bringing stakeholders together and implementing integrated projects in the Gabilan Watershed.

What didn't work: Everyone agreed that the extended timeline was a major challenge in the process. A delayed contract process with the Department of Water Resources resulted in a significant loss of

momentum, which negatively impacted the process. WRPC Committee members agreed there should have been more meetings, more conversations, and more input from stakeholders as the process moved forward. Others felt the process should have been less “conceptual.”

Is this process useful for the future? Would we want to do it again? The RWMG members concluded that the process was indeed useful, though the true utility of the process will depend on the extent to which integrated projects are actually developed and implemented in the Gabilan Watershed area. As to the question, “should we do it again?” the response was, rather than do it all over again in another part of the region, it would make most sense to build off the momentum of what has occurred in the Gabilan Watershed. One modification of the process recommended by the facilitators would be to conduct more one-on-one stakeholder meetings, in addition to the large group meetings.

In summary, the Gabilan Watershed WRPC pilot process proved to be a positive and beneficial experience, and much was learned from the process. If we ask, “were the original conflicts resolved?” the answer would be no; but what was learned was that if we focus on the “common desired outcomes” rather than on the conflicts in the watershed, a great deal can be achieved in terms of developing and implementing multi-benefit, environmentally sustainable, “triple bottom line” (people, planet, profit) projects that everyone can get behind.

Next Steps

Next steps include using the Gabilan Watershed Blueprint document – including the visioning graphics, the Nitrate Quick-Test guide and website, CSR efforts on the Central Coast, and the regulatory matrix – as an educational outreach tool to engage additional stakeholders. If funds become available, more stakeholder meetings will be conducted (largely in the form of one-on-one meetings) with the purpose of developing additional integrated projects within the Gabilan Watershed region for the IRWM Plan. As opportunities arise, these educational tools will be brought to other areas of the Greater Monterey County region to initiate a similar project development/integration process, building off the momentum of what has occurred in the Gabilan Watershed.

The Gabilan Watershed WRPC process is fully outlined on the Greater Monterey County IRWM website in order to provide information to stakeholders as well as to other IRWM regions that might be interested in initiating a similar process (<http://www.greatermontereyirwmp.org/current/wrpc/>). The final Gabilan Watershed Blueprint along with other documents that were produced from the WRPC process are available for download from the website.