

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
April 18, 2012
1:30 - 3:30 PM
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Office, Monterey, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Bridget Hoover
Ken Ekelund
Rob Johnson
Kathy Thomasberg
Horacio Amezcuita
Karen McBride
Brian True
Michele Lanctot
Carol Corpus
Donna Meyers
Joanna Devers (Big Sur Land Trust)

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Susan Robinson – IRWMP Coordinator
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates
Kevin Bollin – Nilsen & Associates
Monica Reis – DWR

Meeting Minutes:

1. DAC Outreach Plan: At last month's Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) meeting, Karen Nilsen presented a draft outreach plan for disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the Greater Monterey County region that will be conducted by the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW) as part of the Round 1 Planning Grant. At today's meeting, Karen presented the "final proposed" outreach plan for the RWMG's general approval. Karen explained that the initial goals for this effort were to: 1) identify water needs of DACs in the region; 2) provide outreach to get them involved in the IRWM planning process; and 3) help the DACs bring projects forward. EJCW plans to use a phased approach: 1) outreach; 2) needs assessment to determine where to focus the effort; and 3) provide technical assistance. Karen said that we now have a DAC map, a mapping tool for DACs from DWR, and in addition, we now have strategies on how to reach the DACs.

Karen reviewed the map and pointed out DAC census tracts that are not shown on the map but that have been identified through the American Community Survey (ACS) from the U.S. Census Bureau. She mentioned that there are additional disadvantaged areas that the ACS data does not show, and finding these communities will be part of the outreach effort. Karen noted that DWR has not yet developed an accepted policy on defining DACs, beyond the ACS data. The policy will be made clear at the next IRWM grant solicitation (the PSP is expected to be released in October).

Rob cautioned that we should be careful not to set up expectations that we cannot necessarily meet, for example, telling certain communities that they are eligible for funds by qualifying as a DAC when in fact they may not qualify. Susan added we should also be careful not to lead DAC members into thinking that "funds are definitely available for them" since the IRWM grant process is extremely competitive and we may not get the funds.

Bridget asked how Native Americans fit into this outreach plan. Karen said that both she and Susan have done research on Native American communities living in the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region. Susan has contacted several of the Native Americans regarding the IRWM planning process. Karen will continue to

contact Native American individuals and invite them to participate in the planning process.

Karen then described certain criteria that DWR will use in determining whether DAC projects meet their definition for having “critical water supply or water quality needs.” She noted that these “critical needs” do not include issues such as natural habitat, public recreation, or access to open space. So the question was raised: Should we use these same criteria in the “DAC” categories of our project ranking criteria? There was a short discussion, and the group seemed to conclude that we should leave our project ranking criteria as is, and perhaps take into account DWR’s criteria when it comes time to selecting projects for an IRWM grant application.

Karen turned to the “needs assessment” part of the outreach plan. She intends to recommend to EJCW that they should focus attention on where the DACs are located in relation to known “problem areas,” for instance, geographic areas where the groundwater tests high for nitrates. Kathy reminded Karen that the UC Davis report that she references in the outreach plan is still in draft form. She added that arsenic is also a major problem in groundwater. Someone noted that the Central Coast Regional Board is proposing to implement a “Regional Groundwater Assessment and Protection Program,” and suggested that we include them in this discussion.

Karen raised the question, what other barriers do DACs face? She discussed the problem of affordability, and invited Horacio to describe to the RWMG what the community members of San Jerardo had gone through with their drinking water problems. Horacio described how community members were getting sick from the water, and how long it took (about six years) to get a new water system installed (including the problem of not being able to qualify for grant funds). An unexpected result of the new water system, unfortunately, has been the sharp rise in cost to members – e.g., from \$25/month to \$100/month – and many simply cannot afford this. Horacio pointed to inefficiencies in managing the new water system, and noted ways to reduce costs (though this is not in the community’s control). Horacio emphasized how imperative it had been to have community members (such as himself) take a leadership role in pursuing a new water system; and how this sort of leadership is critically needed in other DACs.

Kevin Bollin raised the question as to how a group like the RWMG can help communities such as San Jerardo expedite the process to get functioning drinking water and wastewater systems. Can we help the State Legislature better understand this problem? Rob pointed out, however, that the nature of grant processes in general is very slow, and isn’t necessarily intended for emergency situations. Bridget concluded that we need to take all of this information into consideration as we implement the DAC outreach plan.

Karen harkened back to Horacio’s earlier point: In conducting DAC outreach to implement projects through the IRWMP, we need to ensure that a community has the leadership to see the project through. Ken agreed, and noted how the problem of leadership (e.g., of people “showing up to meetings”) is not just a DAC problem, but a problem in most rural areas, as Ken has experienced in Big Sur. Ken said we should capture the lessons learned from San Jerardo in the IRWMP process. Kevin added, part of the DAC outreach should include education; perhaps the chronology of events as they occurred in San Jerardo can be graphically illustrated and used as a learning tool for other DACs. Karen McBride noted that one of the obstacles that San Jerardo faced was that they weren’t *given* an affordable option. We should make sure the DACs are given affordable options, and that they are set up to be successful in the long term. Also, DACs should be provided technical assistance to enable them to be their own responsible entities. Susan noted that we have included funds in our Round 2 Planning Grant request for financial and other technical assistance for DACs to address this need.

The RWMG accepted the DAC outreach plan as presented, while clearly acknowledging the plan to be a “living document” subject to change as we move forward. (Note that approval of the outreach plan was requested because the Round 1 Planning Grant requires approval by the RWMG as a deliverable.) Horacio said that he will assist whomever EJCW hires to conduct the DAC outreach plan. He is hoping that EJCW will work with California Rural Legal Assistance to hire a full-time person.

2. RWMG Membership News: Donna Meyers informed the RWMG that she will be leaving the Big Sur Land

Trust (BSLT) at the end of this month, to begin her own consulting business. Joanna Devers of BSLT attended today's meeting, and will be taking over as the BSLT representative. They are not sure whether BSLT will be able to continue to afford staff to participate on the RWMG, but they are hoping to continue their participation. Susan thanked Donna for her above-and-beyond work on the RWMG, and noted that Donna was instrumental in getting this new Greater Monterey County IRWM region initiated. Also, she was responsible for securing the private grant funds to hire the Coordinator (Susan) to help get this process started. Others in the Group made note of Donna's exceptional work over the past few years, and thanked her for all of her extraordinary efforts.

3. Next Project Solicitation for the IRWM Plan: Susan asked the RWMG whether they would consider holding one more project solicitation for the IRWM Plan prior to the Round 2 IRWM Grant solicitation – which is now slated to occur much earlier than was originally thought. The Implementation and Stormwater Grant PSPs are expected to be released in October, with Stormwater Grant applications due in December and Implementation Grant applications due in March 2013 (the Implementation Grant solicitation was originally expected to occur in summer 2013). Susan said she realizes that we practically just finished the last project solicitation, and she knows how much work it entails – but we did promise stakeholders that there would be one more solicitation before the next Implementation Grant round. Ken said if we promised, we should do it.

Rob raised concerns about the timing of this solicitation and the Water Resource Project Coordination (WRPC) process: the WRPC is a long-term process (18+ months), and the participants simply won't be ready with new projects to submit for the IRWM Plan in time for this solicitation. He said the WRPC process needs to come to fruition before the next IRWMP project solicitation in order to be fair to that process. What can we promise the WRPC participants at the end of the process, if we're requesting IRWMP projects "now" and submitting projects for IRWM grant funds before the WRPC process has had time to produce results, in terms of new projects for the IRWM Plan? Susan noted that there will be a Round 3. Ken said we need to talk with our legislators to help ensure that there will still be money available for our region in Round 3; but Susan noted that whether or not money is available for our region is not within our control. There *will* be IRWM money remaining in Round 3 for the Central Coast region (Monica Reis confirmed this) but the IRWM grant process is competitive; we are competing with the other five Central Coast IRWM regions, and our region may or may not get grant funds in either round.

Bridget also expressed concern about the timing of this project solicitation and the process for completing the IRWM Plan. If the solicitation occurs, say, August-October, this is exactly when the IRWM Plan will be getting its final approvals. How can the RWMG approve the Plan without the final Project List? Susan reminded everyone that the Project List is a constantly evolving list that will itself require formal RWMG approval with every new project solicitation and project review process. "Completion" of the IRWM Plan allows for the Project List to change. For the purposes of finalizing and approving the IRWM Plan, the existing ranked Project List will be used.

There was discussion about the logistics of holding a new solicitation. Susan explained that the stakeholders who submitted projects in the last solicitation will *not* have to re-submit project applications. We will use the same application forms and the same project ranking process for the new projects. We will only rank the new projects (which shouldn't be too many, since the last project solicitation was so recent). The existing projects will keep their scores from the previous project ranking process. Then all of the projects together will get re-ranked (so while the scores of existing projects will not change, the actual ranking might). Everyone seemed to be agreeable to the process, as outlined.

The Group then came up with a timeframe: The project solicitation will commence in early August and will run for six weeks, with project applications due mid-September. The new projects will be scored and all of the projects ranked by mid-October, in time for the October 17th RWMG meeting; and the Project List will hopefully be approved at the November 21st RWMG meeting. The RWMG will then need to decide which projects to submit for Round 2 by the December 19th RWMG meeting, and the RWMG will begin the application process in January 2013 (assuming the application will be due in March 2013). Susan will run this timeframe by the rest of

the RWMG before sending out a notification to stakeholders.

4. Timeframe: Completion of the IRWM Plan: Susan briefly reviewed the timeframe for completing the IRWM Plan. The deadline for the RWMG's review of the Draft IRWM Plan has been extended -- the new deadline is **May 25th**.

5. Other Business: Ken announced that the RCD just received grant funds from the Department of Fish and Game to conduct a watershed assessment of the Big Sur River watershed. Bridget announced that the State Water Board is funding a series of three two-day trainings on watersheds, the first of which will be held at Moss Landing Marine Labs on June 18-19 (save the date!). The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's Water Quality Protection Program is the liaison for the Central Coast effort, and is working to refine the agenda to make it more specific to Central Coast needs. Bridget also mentioned that the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is trying to bring a lot of grant money to the Central Coast through the "Monterey Bay Conservation Initiative." Currently these grants consist of EQIP funds, which is specific to growers, but the Sanctuary is trying to expand the focus of the funding beyond agriculture to include efforts such as watershed restoration. Bridget would like the IRWM planning effort and IRWMP projects to be part of this. Susan asked if it would be possible to have someone from NRCS attend one of our RWMG meetings to talk with the Group about the Monterey Bay Conservation Initiative. Bridget said she will pursue that.

Next month's RWMG meeting is scheduled for May 16th from 1:30 – 3:30 PM, location TBD.