

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
January 21, 2015
Location: Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Salinas, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Robert Johnson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Kevin O’Connor – Central Coast Wetlands Group, Moss Landing Marine Labs
Sierra Ryan – Central Coast Wetlands Group, Moss Landing Marine Labs
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Ken Ekelund – Garrapata Creek Watershed Council
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
Colin Bailey – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Vicente Lara – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Daisy Gonzalez – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Jordan Maeding – CSUMB Watershed Institute
Brian True – Marina Coast Water District
Bob Holden – Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator
Dane Mathis – California Department of Water Resources
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates
John Hunt – UC Davis
Bob Siegfried – Carmel Valley Association, Water Committee
Roger Dolan – Carmel Valley Association, Water Committee
Ann Clarke – Carmel Valley Association, Water Committee
Claire Jahns – The Nature Conservancy
Alison Imamura – Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc.
Josh Harwayne – Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc.

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Miscellaneous Announcements/Updates: Susan announced that a date had been set for the first stakeholder meeting for the salt and nutrient source and balance assessment that is being conducted by Tetra Tech for the lower Salinas River and Rec Ditch watersheds, in support of salt and nutrient-related TMDLs. The first meeting will be on February 11th, from 10:00AM – 12:00PM, at the Monterey County Ag Commissioner’s Office. Susan encouraged RWMG members to participate, but asked that since they are trying to keep the stakeholder group focused, that there be only one representative for any one organization/agency. The first meeting will primarily be introductory in nature, and Tetra Tech will present any initial results.

Susan reminded everyone that the next IRWM Implementation Grant round is coming up: the draft PSP is expected to come out in the spring, the final PSP will follow in the summer, and applications are expected to be due in the fall. Susan asked the group whether they would like to hold a project solicitation for this round (i.e., to solicit new projects to the IRWM Plan in order for those projects to be eligible for grant funds). Everyone agreed that they should. There will be approximately \$4.9 million in the 2015 Implementation Grant round for the Central Coast IRWM funding region. Monique asked whether the Department of Water Resources might supplement the funding pot with Prop 1 funds. Susan said she’d find out.

Susan briefly brought up the subject of funds needed to continue the IRWM planning effort. Prior to the meeting, Susan had sent the group a list of tasks that she (as IRWM Coordinator) performs as part of the ongoing IRWM coordination process. Someone asked what the approximate cost would be to maintain the IRWM effort, and Susan responded that a “baseline” effort would cost about \$10,000/year. Ken asked if that amount would be increased during a project solicitation year, and Susan said it would. Bridget suggested that the group consider contributing \$10K - \$15K annually (Rob suggested \$20K) to fund the Coordinator position. Bridget asked everyone to talk with their decision-making bodies about chipping in funds to support the ongoing effort. They agreed to discuss this further at the next RWMG meeting.

3. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act: Rob Johnson gave a slide presentation to explain the new Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The slides are incorporated into these meeting minutes by reference. The following describes some of the conversation that occurred beyond that which is contained in the slides.

Rob announced that we should be compliant with CASGEM by February. He noted that CASGEM may become moot with the advent of SGMA, anyway. He noted that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) has been monitoring wells for years. However, they don’t have sufficient data for the purposes of CASGEM, and so MCWRA has sent letters to well owners asking if they would voluntarily make their data available. About half said yes, half said no. The “no” is where litigation (re: SGMA) will likely occur. Someone asked what triggers a “priority” basin in the CASGEM system. Dane Mathis (DWR) explained that the priority status is based on eight different criteria.

Back to SGMA, Rob noted that sustainability plans for the Salinas Valley and Carmel groundwater basins will need to be completed and turned into DWR for approval by 2020. There was some discussion as to whether the MCWRA is looking to be the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Salinas Valley basin. Rob said that decision-making process will entail a lot of stakeholder input, noting that the public meeting held earlier that morning about SGMA was just an informative meeting, not a “noticed” meeting announcing MCWRA as the GSA. If MCWRA becomes a GSA they will then have a regulatory arm (which they do not have now).

Bob Siegfried asked where the legal basis comes from to regulate the Carmel basin, since the Carmel aquifer meets the definition of “water that flows in a known and definite underground channel” (and is therefore outside the scope of SGMA). Rob said that’s a question for the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, which has been appointed the GSA for the Carmel basin. Some discussion around this ensued. Someone else asked, regarding the requirement to ensure sustainability of a basin over a 50-year time period, “sustainable compared to what?” Rob responded that there must be no significant undesired effects, with the relative benchmark being “now.” By June 2016, DWR will be releasing guidelines for the sustainability management plans; it may be counterproductive to get started on the plan too quickly, Rob commented. Dane (from DWR) said he’s been attending these meetings in order to pick up on questions and comments from individuals, and noted that there will be public workshops and a public comment period before the final guidelines and requirements are released.

Bridget commented that the agency that seems to make the most sense to be the GSA is MCWRA. Ken noted that there will be a very inclusive oversight committee to set the program up (including disadvantaged communities, etc.). Rob said Monterey County is the default agency for the GSA, and the County has defaulted to MCWRA for the stakeholder outreach part of this process. The MCWRA Board of Directors is recommending that MCWRA be the GSA, but the County Board of Supervisors is less certain.

Roger Dolan asked about the Seaside basin being defined as part of the Salinas Valley basin, which seems problematic (they should be defined separately, he said). Rob responded that the fact that the Seaside basin has been adjudicated takes it off the table as far as SGMA is concerned; the job of the Water Master is to make the basin sustainable. He added, SGMA is essentially a legislative adjudication process...

Colin asked whether the Regional Water Management Group could become a JPA (Joint Powers Authority) for the purposes of becoming a GSA. Rob said no, because not all RWMG members are eligible entities. However, there *will* be an oversight committee, and the RWMG or RWMG members could potentially play a role in that.

Vicente wondered if there was a stakeholder outreach plan. Rob said the “plan” has begun with that morning’s public meeting, and more stakeholder meetings will follow... Regarding stakeholder input, Rob said written comments would be most helpful.

4. Water Reuse and Habitat Considerations in the Blanco Drain and Rec Ditch: Because Ross Clark had requested that this topic be discussed, and because he was unable to attend today’s meeting, the group decided to postpone this agenda item to a time when Ross could be present.

The next RWMG meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2015, location TBD.