

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
August 19, 2015
Location: Moss Landing Marine Labs, Moss Landing, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Kaitlyn Chow – for the Marina Coast Water District
Naomi Farrell – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Daisy Gonzalez – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Vicente Lara – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Frank Lopez – City of Soledad
Kevin O’Connor – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Michael Ricker – City of Salinas
Paul Robins – Monterey County Resource Conservation District
Brian True – Marina Coast Water District
Eric Tynan – Castroville Community Services District

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Katie McNeill – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. 2015 IRWM Grant Submission: Susan provided a brief report on the application recently submitted on behalf of the Greater Monterey County RWMG for 2015 Implementation Grant funds.

She reminded everyone that two projects had been selected by the RWMG to go forward in the application: Castroville Well #6, and a Disadvantaged Community Program consisting of three water supply/wastewater projects for three different small DACs in the Salinas Valley, led by San Jerardo Cooperative. However, less than two weeks before the due date, DWR confirmed that San Jerardo would have to submit new proof of its being a DAC, which essentially meant having a new MHI survey conducted. San Jerardo was reluctant to have an MHI survey conducted, because the last income information on file showed income slightly over 80% of MHI. They believe the higher income was due to the fact that household sizes in San Jerardo had grown over the last few years due to the impacts of the recession, where some adult children who had been living on their own had moved back in with parents or siblings, and others had delayed leaving the house. So if San Jerardo had an MHI survey conducted now, household income levels might show artificially high, and the community would be tied to those survey results for five years. San Jerardo could have applied in the IRWM grant round as non-DAC, however, matching funds would have been required and they didn’t have the funds available. In addition, the recycled water planning project that they were putting forward would not have been eligible (only DACs could apply for planning funds). So they had to drop out. The other two DACs (Alpine Ct. and San Vicente Rd.) didn’t have the administrative capacity to apply on their own, so they had to drop out as well. It was too late at that point to include other projects in the application (with just 10 days before deadline), so the Castroville project went forward on its own.

Susan noted that the application will be somewhat less competitive without the DAC Program. However, there is a true and urgent need for the Castroville deep well project; the seawater intrusion front edge is located less than ¼ mile away from Castroville’s water supply wells, and their entire water supply may be contaminated within a year’s time. Susan said she hopes the urgency of that need will make up for any deficiencies caused by the DAC Program being withdrawn from the application. Susan offered to send the application to anyone interested in seeing it.

3. Integrated Drinking Water and Wastewater Plan for DACs in the Salinas Valley: Susan gave a brief progress report on this planning effort being conducted on behalf of the Greater Monterey County IRWM region. The purpose of the planning effort is to identify disadvantaged communities in the Salinas Valley, identify their drinking water and wastewater issues, prioritize those issues, and identify potential solutions. Over the past eight months, the project team has accomplished the following: 1) they have collected data on DACs and potential (“hidden”) DACs, 2) they have collected water quality data and other relevant data and created data maps, 3) EJWC has conducted community outreach to survey individuals about their drinking water and wastewater issues, 4) Karen McBride (RCAC) has interviewed the larger water systems to determine their issues, if any, as well as the potential capacity of these larger systems to consolidate small DACs, and 5) the project team held a Technical Advisory Committee meeting the previous day to prioritize the issues known to date.

Vicente described the TAC meeting. At the meeting, the project team gave an overview of the communities surveyed and based on those findings, led the TAC through a discussion about how to prioritize the issues. Vicente presented the TAC with a suggested methodology, in which “high priority” included communities with both drinking water and wastewater system failures, and on shared systems; “medium priority” included communities with either a drinking water or wastewater system failure, and on shared systems; and “low” priority included smaller systems (i.e., not on shared systems). He said there were a number of farmworker labor camps that met the “high priority” category. Vicente noted that the TAC provided good feedback, and that the priority list of issues is still in draft form.

4. Salt Source Assessment in the Lower Salinas Valley: Susan provided an update/summary of the salt source assessment study that is being conducted by Tetra Tech, with EPA funds and with oversight by the Central Coast Regional Board. She said the RWMG’s role in this study was simply to oversee the stakeholder outreach component. Kevin O’Connor facilitated the three stakeholder meetings at Moss Landing Marine Labs. (Michael complimented Kevin on doing a great job with the facilitation.)

Susan said the study is now nearly complete. The final stakeholder meeting was held on July 29th, and the deadline for stakeholder comments has passed. The Tetra Tech team is currently addressing the comments, and is expected to release the final report at the end of August.

Susan explained the purpose of the study, which was to:

1. Summarize the state of knowledge regarding hydrology and salinity of surface waters and aquifers
2. Support a source assessment of salinity-impaired surface waters (to determine whether or not a TMDL is necessary)
3. Support development of a salt and nutrient management plan for the aquifers
4. Develop a tool for testing the impacts of potential management strategies on the salinity of water resources

Susan briefly described the process. Tetra Tech divided the study area into 25 reach segments and sub-basins, and four aquifer subareas, and then categorized the land use/land cover into ag, urban, and undeveloped land. They used various sources of data and a modeling tool called SaltMod to estimate the volume of water and the amount of salt transported by water for each of those land uses and for each of the 25 reach segments and four aquifer sub-basins. The salt tool that they developed calculated for each area the amount of salt carried by surface runoff, by tile drains, and by deep percolation into the aquifers.

Susan noted that the study was complex and she encouraged the RWMG to look at all of the results. But what impressed her was the finding that the vast majority of salt entering surface waters appeared to come from undeveloped land (via geologic weathering); the second largest source was the salt coming into the study area from upstream of Bradley (boundary condition). The majority of salt entering the aquifers appeared to come from reach infiltration, and secondarily from ag irrigation – though most of the irrigation water originally came from the aquifers in the first place, and so it appears that there is actually a net decrease in the amount of salt going back into the aquifer via irrigation. She said she would send the draft report to anyone interested in seeing it. The final report is expected to be released by the end of the month.

Bridget asked about the purpose of the study, and Susan responded that it was mainly to see if a TMDL was necessary, and to provide foundational information for a salt and nutrient management plan. Bridget wondered whether there was an issue with salt, and Katie said she would send the group information about salt impairments in surface waters. She said the Regional Board will occasionally contract a study like this to assess the sources of contamination. If they find the primary source is natural, then a TMDL would not be warranted. Elizabeth asked Susan about the tone in the room during the last stakeholder meeting. Susan said she thought stakeholders continued to be confused, and wary, about the purpose of the study. Ag folks expressed some confusion about the study's combined focus on surface waters and groundwaters, noting that these bodies of water are regulated separately. They also had issue with aspects of the methodology. But Susan said she thought Tetra Tech did a good job with the amount of time they had to conduct the study, which was extremely limited under their contract.

Kevin, who had facilitated the stakeholder meetings, agreed, and added that there were concerns about data gaps (but there are *always* data gaps, he noted), and skepticism about how the data will be used. He agreed that Tetra Tech did the best they could given the short timeframe. Elizabeth noted that the Tetra Tech team spent a lot of time talking with MCWRA staff, but she thought the data they really needed simply doesn't exist.

5. AB 1249: Susan briefly explained the requirements of AB 1249 (regarding nitrates, perchlorate, arsenic, and hexavalent chromium contamination), its impact on the IRWM Plan, and its relevance for upcoming IRWM grant applications. She said AB 1249 was approved in September 2014 and is now law. It states:

- If an area within the boundaries of an IRWM plan has nitrate, arsenic, perchlorate, or chromium-6 contamination, the bill requires that the plan include a description of (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. (In other words, the IRWM Plan needs to include a plan to address these contaminants.)
- If a grant application includes areas that have nitrate, arsenic, perchlorate, or chromium-6 contamination, the bill requires the RWMG to include in the grant application information regarding how a project or projects in the application help to address the contamination, or an explanation why the application does not include such a project or projects.
- For grant applications that include areas that have nitrate, arsenic, perchlorate, or chromium-6 contamination, the bill requires DWR to consider whether the RWMG has included projects that help address the impacts caused by the contamination, including projects that provide safe drinking water to small DACs.

Susan emphasized that AB 1249 is a big deal. She noted that on account of AB 1249, the current DAC planning effort for our region will be broadening its scope to include not only nitrates (its primary focus) but also arsenic, perchlorate, and chromium-6; so in a sense we will be a step ahead of other regions. The requirements of AB 1249 do go beyond the scope of the DAC plan, however, so additional work will be needed. She noted that AB 1249 was applicable in this last IRWM Implementation Grant round, though DWR seemed to have “remembered” about AB 1249 only after the fact (it was not included in the PSP or Guidelines), so she's not sure what weight it will carry. Bridget wondered whether AB 1249 differentiates between surface water and groundwater. Katie said she thinks it focuses only on groundwater.

Kevin asked, what about areas that are non-DAC? Susan agreed that this falls outside of the ongoing DAC planning effort, and this work would need to get done. Kevin commented that this is a huge amount of work and wondered whether the State would be providing grant funds to offset the cost of meeting this requirement for IRWM Plans. Susan said she wasn't aware of any planning money, and Katie said she'd look into it.

6. SB 985 and Stormwater Resource Plans: Susan gave a brief overview of SB 985. SB 985 requires that agencies that want to put forward stormwater and dry weather runoff capture projects for IRWM Prop 1 funds will need to have an approved stormwater resource plan – and that plan will need to be incorporated into the IRWM Plan. The stormwater resource plans need to comply with guidelines. The State Water Board is going to release draft guidelines this month (final guidelines in December).

Katie noted these stormwater resource plans will likely be required just for cities, not for small communities or low-income communities. She said she thought the plans would prove to be a very useful tool. Rather than seeing a city as a discharger of stormwater, the plans look at areas that will be good for infiltration; it's not just a list of BMPs, she emphasized, but a true watershed plan. Katie noted that cities should be looking at the timing of this process carefully; it will all happen fairly quickly, and the cities may need time to get their plans approved. She also said that there will be planning money available for developing the plans, and possible assistance for communities that need help. Katie offered to send the RWMG more information.

Susan asked Frank (City of Soledad) and Michael (City of Salinas) how their existing stormwater plans stand up to these new "stormwater resource plan" requirements. Michael said their plan is more of a list of "to do's" and would likely require more work. Frank said their plan focuses mainly on flood control; they will likely have to revamp their plan. There was some discussion about 2NDNATURE and their work in developing tools to monitor functionality of LID; they could be a great resource. Paul mentioned Andy Fisher in Santa Cruz, looking at opportunities for infiltration, and how that might be useful in regard to the Eastside aquifer around Salinas. Eric added that they're moving in that direction in Castroville; they recently put in a perc bed. Susan asked whether Castroville has a stormwater management plan, and Eric responded yes, they are designated MS4; Susan noted therefore they will also need to meet the requirements of SB 985. Katie reminded everyone that the draft guidelines will be released this month.

7. Desalination in the Monterey Bay Area: Bridget provided an overview of the three main desal projects being proposed in the Monterey Bay Area. She showed a map, noting this was an internal document (draft form) – and asked that the group not circulate it. The three projects are as follows, and discussed each in turn:

1. **Deepwater Desal Project:** This project proposes a 24 MGD regional facility. It would install two new 42" diameter intake lines about 100' deep, and two 36" diameter discharge lines, which would discharge 4,600' offshore in about 100' of water. The California State Lands Commission is the CEQA lead, and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) is the NEPA lead. They are moving forward with a joint EIR/EIS document. The scoping is in June. Bridget said MBNMS is involved because of the discharge of brine and disturbance of the seabed, both of which require MBNMS permits. She noted that the project is proposing a very large facility; they will need to explain where all that water is going and the need for such a large facility. She said the project includes a data center; about 10% of the water would be used to cool the data center, at the same time heating the water to make it easier for processing.
2. **People's Moss Landing:** Moss Landing Harbor District is the CEQA lead for this project. A DEIR is currently being developed. They have not applied to MBNMS for permits, though Bridget has informed them that this project will trigger a federal process. The People's project proposes a 15 MGD desal plant; 9-10 MGD would go to the Peninsula, the rest would go to North County (Eric noted – Castroville not included). This project has a relatively small footprint, and includes a 30" diameter intake pipe extending 50' offshore via an existing pier, a 51" diameter discharge line extending 2,700' offshore. There is still a lot of work to be done for this project.
3. **CalAm:** The project proposes a 9.6 MGD facility. It includes a subsurface intake using slant well

technology to take in groundwater. It would use 10 slant wells, 1000' long, 30" in diameter, in three different clusters. They would use the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA) outfall to combine the brine discharge with wastewater effluent, when MRWPCA is discharging effluent (which they are not currently doing, due to drought). The DEIR has been out and they are taking comments until end of September. The water from this project would be used strictly for CalAm's district. The intake water would come out of the 180 and 400 Foot aquifers. CalAm hopes the intake will be more seawater than freshwater; they will replace whatever freshwater they take in. Kevin asked about the impact to marine life. Bridget responded that the intake will be below the photic zone, so impact on marine life is expected to be minimal.

All three projects would provide water to the Monterey Peninsula. Eric noted that Castroville Community Services District has an MOI with the Deepwater project, and is negotiating with CalAm on their proposed desal project. Susan asked Bridget her opinion about these three projects. She responded that CalAm is the MBNMS preference because of the subsurface intake. Also, Deepwater hasn't convinced them yet of the need for a plant of that size. Finally, regarding People's, MBNMS is concerned about the intake being only 50' offshore. On the other hand, she noted that the slant well isn't proven technology, either. Eric commented that the Deepwater Desal project would be good for Castroville. Elizabeth said the MCWRA has preference for the CalAm project, also because of the use of slant wells.

Michael asked Bridget her sense of the likelihood of any of these projects going forward. Bridget responded that MBNMS wouldn't be involved if they didn't feel each one could get permitted, though maybe not exactly as proposed. She added that she thinks desal is inevitable – but she's excited about the stormwater resource plans, mapping areas for potential recharge. She said she thinks the region will be most sustainable if there are multiple ways of creating storage for water, and she hopes the IRWM process can help move that along. Susan asked how the RWMG could be most effective in that regard. Bridget thought the Water Resource Project Coordination process, which resulted in the Gabilan Watershed Blueprint, was a great effort, and an example of what this group can do (though the Legislature keeps attaching strings to the IRWM process, making it very difficult).

8. Central Coast IRWM Funding Strategy: Susan reported that the Central Coast IRWM regions met recently to discuss developing a Central Coast IRWM Region cooperative funding strategy for future Prop 1 grant funds (though neither Bridget nor Susan was able to attend the meeting). The group decided to try to develop a cooperative funding strategy by December, and will be meeting again in September to push the conversation forward.

Susan presented a spreadsheet, created by Carolyn Berg from the San Luis Obispo region, showing eight possible methods for divvying up grant funds. The methods weigh three different factors: 1) dividing all or some portion of the funds evenly between the six regions; 2) weighting by population; 3) weighting by geographic size (square acreage) of the region. Susan said, personally, she felt whatever option we consider should factor in population. Kevin added that the "baseline" (factor 1) was also important, recognizing all the work that the regions have put into their IRWM Plan and planning effort. Susan agreed, and added she felt acreage should also be a factor, since a large region geographically may have greater likelihood of more projects that need funding; and also, selfishly, because the Greater Monterey County IRWM region is large. But she also noted, all else being relatively equal, she would opt to give the Monterey Peninsula region more funding, since they have received so little IRWM funding to date.

Elizabeth asked if we could trust DWR to adhere to the regions' MOU. Susan thought we could, and explained that there was an assembly bill that lays out requirements for a "streamlined" IRWM application process, whereby the regions within a Funding Area, having entered an MOU approved by DWR, could decide where the funds should go. DWR would still need to approve the project lists, but presumably projects would be eligible as long as they followed the IRWM PSP and Guidelines for that round. Susan agreed to send the RWMG a copy of AB 1874 (follow-up note: AB 1874 did not pass).

Susan pointed out that if we were to choose the cooperative funding strategy alternative, we would be re-directing competition from between the six Central Coast IRWM regions to within our own region. We would need to develop very clear game rules, and would have to be on our very best behavior. She asked, *does* the RWMG want to pursue this option? Consensus was that they did, though Elizabeth noted that she would need to take it to their board.

Someone asked about the separation of “DAC funds” in the spreadsheet. Susan explained that the first two rounds of Prop 1, to her understanding, will be focused entirely on DACs (first for planning, then for implementation). EJCW has put forward a proposal to take the lead in developing a Central Coast-wide DAC Plan, much like the one we are currently conducting within our region. The regions are considering the idea. Paul pointed out that not all regions are created equal in terms of their DAC needs; for example, the Monterey Peninsula region doesn’t have much in the way of DACs. Perhaps we should re-think that allocation. Susan said she’d bring that up with the other Central Coast regions. Kevin suggested we use the DWR DAC map to come up with percentages for divvying up the DAC funds; Susan said we could, but that wouldn’t take into account the “hidden” DACs; identifying hidden DACs is a big part of the current DAC planning effort in our region.

Elizabeth noted that one problem with the funding strategy is that it would exclude an entity from having a very large project in any one round. In Prop 50, she said, they were able to fund one large project over other projects, knowing there would be other funding rounds. Susan said that was a very good point; on the other hand, without a funding strategy there would be no certainty of funding *any* projects, let alone large projects, so in that sense it may be better to have the certainty of *some* money.

Since there wasn’t much time remaining in the meeting, Susan suggested that each RWMG member consider the various options laid out in the spreadsheet for a cooperative funding strategy, discuss it with their organizations, and that the RWMG meet again in September to discuss it as a group (unless the Central Coast regions get together prior to the RWMG’s usual meeting date of the third Wednesday in September, in which case we will hold a discussion via email). Everyone agreed.

The next RWMG meeting will be held either September 16th or November 18th, TBD.