

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
September 17, 2015
Location: Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Salinas, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Colin Baily – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Daisy Gonzalez – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
Rob Johnson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Vicente Lara – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Mike McCullough – Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency
Michael Ricker – City of Salinas

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Tim Carson – Santa Cruz IRWM Region
Jeff Condit – Monterey Regional Stormwater Management Program
Paul Greenway – MNS Engineers, Inc. (consultant for Castroville Community Services District)
John Hunt – UC Davis
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen & Associates
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Storm Water Resource Plans and Grant Program: Susan announced that the State Water Resources Control Board has released Storm Water Resource Plan and Storm Water Grant Program draft guidelines. There will be both planning grant and implementation grant funds available. Eligible applicants include public agencies, nonprofits, public utilities, mutual water companies, and Indian tribes. Planning grants will be available for up to \$500K per grant (\$20M available statewide) to support entities in developing a Storm Water Resource Plan. Planning Grant funds will be available in Round 1 only, which will occur in Spring 2016. Storm Water Implementation Grants will be available for up to \$5M per grant (with a 50% non-State match requirement of the total project amount – not the requested amount, but total project cost – and reduced match requirements for DACs and Economically Distressed Areas). There will be two Storm Water Implementation Grant rounds: Round 1 will occur in Spring 2016, with a statewide total of \$80M available; Round 2 will occur probably in Spring 2018, with a statewide total of \$86M available.

She explained that any entity wishing to apply for Prop 1 storm water or dry weather capture projects must have their project included in an approved Storm Water Resource Plan, or a functionally equivalent plan (FEP). She briefly described the Storm Water Resource Plan requirements, and explained that these are watershed-based plans, requiring a rather intensive, metrics-based quantification of project benefits and a prioritization of projects within the plan.

Susan asked Michael whether the City of Salinas and Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA) had decided whether or not to apply in Round 1 for Storm Water Implementation Grant funds with an FEP, to support their Storm Water Diversion Project. Michael said they haven't yet decided. Elizabeth cautioned Michael (and Mike) about FEPs, based on the Agency's experience with Prop 50 IRWM: she said the Agency went down the FEP route originally, and wound up spending as much time and as much money as it

would have taken to write a full plan.

Susan said regardless of whether the City of Salinas and MRWPCA decide to pull together an FEP for Round 1, she recommended that the IRWM region apply for Planning Grant funds and develop a proper Storm Water Resource Plan for future grant funds. Jeff clarified: a Storm Water Resource Plan will be required for any project requesting storm water grant funds from any bond approved by voters after January 1, 2014. The others expressed agreement that the RWMG should apply for Planning Grant funds.

Susan noted that the plan must be watershed based, and so it would include the Salinas River watershed along with other smaller watersheds within the Greater Monterey County IRWM region. Elizabeth noted that if an FEP is developed for the City of Salinas and MRWPCA, the FEP could be added to the plan as a chapter. Susan said that if the City and MRWPCA decide *not* to do an FEP, she would recommend that the IRWM region submit a comment letter requesting that all of the implementation grant funds be dispersed in Round 2, in order to give entities and regions sufficient time to develop their plans. Susan also recommended that if the City and MRWPCA do decide to do an FEP, to get started on that right away, and to check in with the State Board about the specific requirements. The timeframe will be very tight. Elizabeth commented that she didn't see an approval process for FEPs in the guidelines; that's something to ask the State Water Board about. Mike added that in speaking with stormwater staff at the State Board, they emphasized that they are looking to fund *multi-benefit* projects.

Susan asked what sort of comments the RWMG might want to submit about the guidelines. Tim said the guidelines had generated a lot of response from agencies in the Santa Cruz IRWM region, including: 1) The quantitative assessment requirements are excessively detailed; they have concern about being able to meet those requirements, and will probably request that some qualitative indicators be included in lieu of all quantitative indicators. 2) The 50% match requirement for grants is high, particularly for public agencies; they will recommend that the State Board move the match date back to November 2014 (from the current date of December 2015).

Jeff asked if there were any benefit to collaborating with the Monterey Peninsula region. Mike noted that this could make sense because of overlap with the Groundwater Recharge project. Rob said based on the watershed requirements for the Storm Water Resource Plans, it would make more sense to collaborate with the San Luis Obispo region (Salinas River watershed) than it would with the Monterey Peninsula region; Susan agreed, and added that it would probably make most sense to stick to our regional boundaries.

Susan offered to draft a timeline for developing an application for Planning Grant funds and for writing a Storm Water Resource Plan. She also offered to draft a comment letter from the RWMG regarding the draft guidelines.

3. Central Coast Funding Strategy: Susan began the discussion about a potential Central Coast funding strategy for future Prop 1 IRWM funds by asking if everyone had had time to consider the eight options currently on the table (presented in a spreadsheet, which had been emailed to the RWMG prior to the meeting). She said since Paul Robins (RCD Monterey County) and Ross Clark/Kevin O'Connor's (Central Coast Wetlands Group) were unable to attend the meeting, they had sent Susan their preferences beforehand, and Susan reported those preferences to the group.

Elizabeth said the Agency had had a Planning Committee meeting the day prior, and while the Committee didn't dismiss the funding strategy idea out of hand, she said they thought choosing one specific funding strategy over another was premature while there was no commitment or assurance from DWR that any funding agreement among the IRWM regions would even be honored. They did see value in having some sort of funding strategy, but they wondered how it would get worked out in each funding round. There needs to be some sort of template for how it would work. Rob added that they had some concern about the relatively small pots of funding that would be available in each individual round – and how these small pots of funds were not conducive to funding a large project such as the Interlake Tunnel Project (for which the Agency is depending on IRWM funds).

There were also questions about the DAC funding portion of IRWM Prop 1 funds, as part of the Central Coast funding strategy. Rob noted that the Monterey Peninsula region doesn't have any DACs (or very few); how would a funding strategy work in that case? Susan said she thought Kevin and Ross had a good idea in suggesting that the DAC funds be allocated according to the DAC population in each region; though she agreed, this wouldn't exactly work in the Monterey Peninsula region's favor.

Susan pointed out that in signing on to a Central Coast funding strategy, we would be removing the competition from between Central Coast IRWM regions – but essentially transferring that competition to within our own region. Are we sure we want to do that?

Michael wondered, what if we had a funding agreement in place but DWR didn't approve a region's project list in a particular round? What would happen with those funds? Susan responded that presumably under such an agreement, DWR would "have to" approve a region's project list as long as those projects met all the requirements of the guidelines and the PSP. Though someone else commented that DWR doesn't really "have to" do anything... Susan asked, rather than spending our time trying to decide on which funding strategy alternative makes the most sense, should we try to get assurance from DWR first? Rob said emphatically, yes – we need their assurance in writing. He expressed concerns about the "liquidity of the rules." Rob emphasized that if we want to continue discussing this issue, we also need more members of RWMG to be present for the discussion.

There was some question about the Prop 1 IRWM Round 1 funding: all DAC? According to DWR's presentation slides (for the next day's webinar), Elizabeth said it appeared that \$4.3M would be available for DAC involvement, \$4.3M would be available for DAC implementation projects, and \$5M would be available for Planning Grants. There was some discussion about the definition of "DAC" and the challenges San Jerardo Cooperative has had with their DAC status. Vicente described briefly EJCW's proposal to conduct a DAC assessment for the entire Central Coast Funding Area, for Prop 1 Round 1 funds. Susan commented that we are already in the process of conducting such an assessment for our IRWM region, and so a Central Coast-wide assessment wouldn't really help our region all that much; but Karen noted that we haven't assessed all areas (like South County hills, Big Sur), and Susan agreed, adding that we do need money for additional MHI surveys and for project development.

A decision was made to postpone the discussion about a potential Central Coast funding strategy until some assurances could be obtained from DWR that they would honor such an agreement, and until all (or most) RWMG members could be present at the table.

4. Other business. There was no new business.

The meeting date for the next RWMG meeting has not yet been established.