

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
November 16, 2016
Location: Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency, Monterey, CA**

RWMG Attendees:

Horacio Amezcua – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Gabi Estill – Elkhorn Slough Foundation
Tom Harty – Monterey County Resource Management Agency
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA)
Heather Lukacs – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Mike McCullough – Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA)
Christina McGinnis – Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office
Heidi Niggemeyer – City of Salinas
Gary Petersen – City of Salinas
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Michael Goymerac – Kennedy/Jenks Consultants
John Hunt – UC Davis
Sachi Itagaki – Kennedy/Jenks Consultants
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Salinas Area Storm Water Resource Plan: Sachi Itagaki provided an update on the process of developing a Storm Water Resource Plan (SWRP) for the Greater Salinas Area. She said the planning team had reached out to project proponents to allow them to update their project proposals for the purposes of project ranking. They met with some of the project proponents (City of Salinas, MRWPCA, Central Coast Wetlands Group, and MCWRA) and based on those conversations, they revised the project ranking criteria as well as the project scoring. The primary changes in scoring criteria are: 1) In “scoring category 1” (project funding and land availability), they have weighted the scores so that rather than a “yes” response receiving 1 point, a “yes” response now receives 5 points for each question; 2) In “scoring category 2,” instead of using IRWMP objectives, they are now using objectives based more directly on the Storm Water Resource Plan Guidelines. There are five main categories: Water Supply, Water Quality, Flood Management, Environmental, and Community; these are further broken out into 8 main benefits and 9 secondary benefits, where each main benefit addressed receives 5 points and each secondary benefit addressed receives 1 point; 3) “scoring category 3” is the quantitative scoring analysis, which now can receive between 0-4 points.

There was discussion about the new criteria and the resulting project scores. Christina asked who did the scoring, and who was invited to do the scoring. Sachi responded that the planning team discussed the scoring with the project proponents, and the final scores were a reflection of those conversations. Susan asked whether the project proponents had input into the scoring, noting that the Regional Water Management Group has always been careful in scoring IRWM Plan projects to avoid conflicts of interest by not allowing any Project Review Committee member to weigh in on the scoring of his/her own projects. Sachi replied that the project proponents together with the planning team decided which objectives were addressed by their project. Christina commented that the prioritization criteria seemed

somewhat arbitrary. Susan raised a question about the objectives “ticked” for one of the projects, as an example, saying the scoring seemed generous. She asked, who will approve the final scoring? Sachi responded that approval of the project prioritization would be rolled into the overall approval of the Storm Water Resource Plan.

Susan suggested that everyone spend some time reviewing the spreadsheet, and that the RWMG revisit the scoring at the December meeting (which the RWMG decided to schedule for December 14 rather than the usual third Wednesday, due to holidays). Sachi said the planning team was open to recommended changes. Heather requested that Sachi and team put the project scoring criteria in writing, and send it to the group. Someone asked for project descriptions as well, and Sachi offered to include those.

Sachi said they are still waiting for feedback from the RWMG on the other sections as well. Susan will upload all draft chapters on the website for RWMG review (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 plus the project table).

3. RWMG Spotlight -- City of Soledad: Frank Lopez, with Harris & Associates, provided a short summary of the City of Soledad’s current projects. He reported that the City has had good water levels; they have not seen drops in levels since the drought. They have five operating wells. One well is currently offline, and will be undergoing treatment for iron and manganese. Their wells are approximately 800 feet deep. The City is in the process of programming funds to rehabilitate their water system to include wells, pumps, and storage facilities. They have begun the process this year, and will continue into the next couple of years.

The City has a tertiary treatment wastewater plant, which was constructed in 2010. The City was awarded Prop 84 funds to construct a Reclaimed Wastewater Transmission Pipeline from the treatment plant to the City; this project will break ground in January 2017. The study will also look into servicing the correctional facilities with reclaimed water and the school district open space. There is broader interest in receiving reclaimed water. This planning effort will include a rate study for reclaimed water.

The City prepared a Storm Water Master Plan in 2015, which identified over \$11M needed for improvements for the storm drain system. They have about \$3.5M available toward that goal (i.e., a sizeable shortfall). The City submitted an Implementation Grant application for Prop 1 funds in July. Since the City is considered a disadvantaged community, they were exempt from the requirement to submit a Storm Water Resource Plan. The proposed project basically takes an existing detention basin offline, turns it into a park, reroutes the stormwater to an infiltration facility and increases conveyance capacity for the existing system. It is a \$4.5M project.

4. Groundwater Sustainability Agency: Gary Petersen gave an overview/update on the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) formation process that has been taking place for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin. Basins at risk (such as the Salinas Valley basin) have been given until 2017 to identify or form an agency to manage the groundwater basin for sustainability. “Sustainability” means, essentially, that in 20 years the basin will have the same quantity and quality of water. In Monterey County it was decided that the best solution was to develop a new agency. He noted that the Marina Coast Water District is intending to form its own, separate GSA.

Eighteen months ago, a small working group (consisting of the City of Salinas, the County, ag representatives, and others) identified a facilitator – Gina Bartlett – to lead the GSA formation process. They have formed a 25-member stakeholder team. It was decided that a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) would be created, comprised of a number of groups thought to be most widely impacted. There will be a Governing Board with 11 Directors:

- City of Salinas
- South County Cities

- GSA Eligible Agency (for example, Monterey County, MCWRA, MRWPCA, Castroville CSD, FORA, etc.)
- Disadvantaged Communities including Small and Public Drinking Water Systems
- PUC Regulated Water Company
- Agriculture will have four seats
- Environment
- Public Member (primary preference for a rural residential well owner; secondary preference for interest not otherwise represented on governing board; third preference for industrial processor or mutual water company)

The GSA is allowed to establish its own funding mechanism. Gary discussed how each of the seats on the JPA would be selected. He noted that both ag and environmental are forming their own respective caucuses to make their recommendations. He also noted that if they fail to form a GSA by June 2017, the State will “run the show”; likewise, if the GSA becomes dysfunctional, the State will step in. By 2020 they will need to produce a Groundwater Sustainability Plan, and implement it within three years. Gary noted that every meeting for the GSA formation process is open to the public.

Mike asked Heather whether she felt the constituents that EJCW represents will have a voice. Heather responded that she didn’t know, and noted that there was very little funding for staff to participate in the process, and that much of their time would be volunteered. She called attention to the demography in the room, remarking that she would like to see others represented.

Christina wondered how the GSA would address issues such as climate change. She wondered what “current level” (of groundwater quantity/quality) meant, commenting that it seemed to be a moving target. Gary emphasized the need to look at water comprehensively, and the need to understand and collectively manage stormwater, recycling, extraction, etc.

Mike noted that some would prefer to adjudicate the basin, but he didn’t think that would produce satisfactory results. He said adjudication wasn’t democratic; those with more senior rights would take a bigger cut. Gary said they were hoping to avoid “ag vs. city” through the GSA.

Susan wondered why the MCWRA didn’t have its own seat on the Governing Board. The short response was “long-standing politics,” though Gary noted that MCWRA will definitely have a significant role in the development of the plan.

Susan asked about the Paso Robles basin in South County. The portion of the Paso Robles Basin in Monterey County is part of the area to be managed by the Salinas Valley GSA, though the GSA’s management responsibilities would end at the County line, and have a cooperating agreement with the San Luis Obispo County GSA. Gary said the Monterey County GSA will be required to have a cooperative agreement with any adjacent basin, and noted that representatives from San Luis Obispo attend all of their meetings.

5. RWMG Spotlight – Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency: Mike McCullough provided a very brief overview of MRWPCA projects, noting that he would like to present a fuller report again at a later date after certain projects have been implemented.

The MRWPCA provides secondary and tertiary treatment for wastewater. For secondary treatment there is an outfall to the ocean. The agency built a tertiary treatment plant in the late ‘80s that meets Title 22 requirements. The treated wastewater is reclaimed for irrigated cropland. Growers purchase the reclaimed water (apply for loans and pay the agency back); the water costs about \$400/AF.

MRWPCA generates a lot of its own power at the treatment plant. They installed solar 7-8 years ago; this helps run the tertiary treatment plant. In the future, biogas will run the advanced treatment process. The agency is currently going through a Capital Improvement Plan process, and is in the process of installing retrofits in the buildings for increased energy efficiency.

One exciting project that the agency is currently involved in is a low-income farmworker housing complex on Hitchcock Road (which Heather referred to as “Toro Camp”). The housing complex is considered to be a “severely disadvantaged community” with about 200 residents. Since the late ‘40s the community has been on septic. MRWPCA is applying for a grant to connect the housing complex to the agency’s wastewater treatment facility. Gary added that this project is in partnership with the City of Salinas.

Mike said that MRWPCA is looking at expanding its sphere of influence and constructing smaller regional treatment plants in order to provide small communities, such as (potentially) Spreckels and Chualar, with wastewater treatment. They have identified numerous disadvantaged communities to bring in under this umbrella. He noted, wastewater has more value than it used to have, so MRWMPCA is looking at where the opportunities are. He emphasized that expanding their sphere of influence is not about “growth” for the agency but a better way of “using water.”

6. Other Business. There was no other business.

The next RWMG meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2016, 1:30PM – 3:30PM, location TBD.

NOTE: The meeting date has been changed from December 21 to December 14 to accommodate for the holidays.