

Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
January 18, 2017
Conference Call

RWMG Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
Walter Grant – City of Salinas (for Gary Petersen)
Tom Harty – Monterey County Resource Management Agency
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Heather Lukacs – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Karen McBride – Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Ari Neumann – Rural Community Assistance Corporation

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Jeff Condit – Monterey Regional Storm Water Management Program
John Hunt – UC Davis
Sachi Itagaki – Kennedy/Jenks Consultants
Michael Goymerac – Kennedy/Jenks Consultants
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director

Meeting Minutes:

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Greater Salinas Area Storm Water Resource Plan: Susan stated that only one public comment was received on the draft Greater Salinas Area Storm Water Resource Plan. The letter, from Jon Rohrbough with the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, had been forwarded to the RWMG members prior to the meeting. Susan said Jon had raised some good points about the definition of “storm water,” which will be important for the Greater Monterey County SWRP planning team to keep in mind as that plan gets started.

Sachi addressed Jon’s comments. She noted that Jon was using a very strict definition of storm water. She pointed out that the definition in the Storm Water Implementation Grant Guidelines is not necessarily that strict. She noted that if the strict MS4 definition of storm water, for example, is used, the benefits of capturing storm water will be extremely limited, since the goal of the MS4 program is focused on water quality rather than on water supply. LID projects, for example, are designed to capture first flush – and while that may address water quality issues, the benefits for infiltration and recharge are minimal since a relatively small volume of storm water is captured during first flush.

Regarding Jon’s comments about the Blanco Drain Diversion Project and Storm Water Return Facilities Project – namely, that diverting flows from the Blanco Drain and Rec Ditch (as “waters of the State”) may be in violation of the California Water Code and Basin Plan – Susan asked Sachi whether the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (PCA) and City of Salinas had discussed that with the Central Coast Regional Board. Sachi said she wasn’t sure whether the project had been vetted with the Regional Board per se, but that the PCA had water rights to divert the flows, and therefore the project is permitted. Sachi also said she wasn’t certain Jon was using the term “waters of the State” correctly. There was some discussion about that, with the suggestion that perhaps a separate phone call with Jon and the

Central Coast Regional Board is warranted.

John Hunt added that at the Storm Water Program workshops, State Board staff had defined “storm water” as “running off of surfaces,” and that once flow reaches a natural water body, it is no longer considered “storm water.” For example, on agricultural land, once the runoff reaches an ag ditch that is the remnant of a former stream, it would no longer be considered storm water.

Regarding Jon Rohrbough’s comments about project descriptions, Sachi agreed that the project descriptions could be clearer, and advised the Greater Monterey County SWRP planning team to pay special attention to that as they move forward. John Hunt noted that the issue of who owns the water right will also need to be considered for the Greater Monterey County SWRP. He also said he would also check with the State to clarify their definition of “storm water.”

Ag runoff from irrigation was mentioned, and Sachi thought this would fall under the category of “dry weather runoff.” John mentioned tile drains, and the distinction between ag return flows and flow from precipitation. There are waterbodies consisting entirely of ag tailwater from irrigation; is that considered “storm water”? Sachi said once it starts raining it’s difficult to distinguish which molecule is a “storm water” molecule; we’ll need to figure out a way to define terms that make practical sense.

Susan asked whether any changes should be made to the Greater Salinas Area SWRP project list in light of Jon Rohrbough’s comments. Sachi said she thought the Guidelines took a broader view of the definition of storm water project and suggested that the project list remain unchanged. However, she did offer to review the projects one more time and make clear the nexus with storm water. The group agreed that was a good idea. The group also concurred that Jon’s comments were very important to take into consideration in development of the Greater Monterey County SWRP. Sachi said she would write a formal statement that Jon’s comments were taken under advisement.

The RWMG will vote on accepting the SWRP and incorporating it into the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan at the February meeting (there wasn’t a quorum at this meeting). Sachi recommended that the definition of “storm water” be very clear during the project solicitation for the Greater Monterey County SWRP, but also suggested that the RWMG be inclusive rather than exclusive of projects, i.e., erring on the side of the “broader” definition of storm water rather than the strict definition.

3. DAC Involvement Proposal: Susan said that the Disadvantaged Community Involvement subcommittee had intended to send out a scope of work, budget, and schedule prior to the meeting but was unable to finalize those documents in time.

Bridget said that the subcommittee is sticking close to what they had presented to the group previously in terms of the major tasks, but are still working with EJCW, RCAC, and Nilsen & Associates on details. The application that goes to DWR will be general (high level), but they are working on a very detailed internal work plan and budget. The subcommittee is hoping to finalize those documents and send them to the RWMG for review hopefully by early next week. Bridget asked whether the RWMG needs to formally approve the final scope of work and budget. Susan suggested that the subcommittee send the scope of work and budget to the RWMG, and unless anyone objected, the subcommittee submit that to the other Central Coast IRWM regions as “final.” There was general consensus on that idea. Susan will be working on the final DAC Involvement application for the Central Coast Funding Area.

4. Other Business. There was no other business.

The next RWMG meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2017, 1:30PM – 3:30PM, location TBD.