

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting
January 17, 2018
Location: Moss Landing Marine Labs, Moss Landing, CA**

RWMG Entity Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Brian Frus – City of Salinas
Brenda Granillo – California Water Service
Sarah Hardgrave – Big Sur Land Trust
Tom Harty – Monterey County Resource Management Agency
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Alison Imamura – Monterey One Water
Elizabeth Krafft – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water
Moises Moreno-Rivera – Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW)
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Sarah Stevens – Monterey One Water

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Kate Giberson – Harris & Associates
Gary Petersen – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA)
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Climate Change Chapter Update: As part of the IRWMP update to meet requirements of the 2016 IRWM Guidelines, the Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG) has been updating the Climate Change chapter of the plan. Ross Clark presented the results of their work, including key findings of their vulnerability study, an updated prioritized vulnerabilities list (with additional review of high risk vulnerabilities), and recommended adaptation options that could be integrated into future IRWMP projects. He also briefly described CCWG's revisions to the chapter, noting that they will be making additional revisions within the next two weeks.

Ross explained that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has provided additional guidelines since the chapter was originally written in 2011. In response, CCWG updated the prioritized vulnerabilities list and reviewed the adaptation options. In 2011 they had reviewed potential impacts and established a prioritization based on risk factors. For the 2018 plan update they added impact measurement and strategy evaluation. They focused on three vulnerabilities:

1. Sea level rise and higher groundwater extraction will lead to increased rates of saltwater intrusion.
2. Natural creeks and managed conveyance will see higher flow rates leading to increased erosion and flooding
3. Coastal levees and control structures will be undersized to manage the combined influences of higher river flows and sea level rise.

For the 2018 update, CCWG looked more extensively into each of these vulnerabilities. They focused first on groundwater vulnerability. For urban uses, they referred to the 2015 Urban Water Management Plan for Cal Water's Salinas District, which concluded that any climate change impacts over the planning horizon could be addressed by current management actions. For agricultural risks, CCWG reviewed the latest saltwater intrusion maps and concluded that predicted coastal flooding would exacerbate seawater intrusion and affect numerous ag wells in the lower Salinas Valley. Ross then discussed possible response options including:

- Support regional collaborations and planning efforts (e.g., storm water planning, and Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency), and provide information to the public regarding potential climate change impacts and status of response planning.
- Encourage the retrofit or relocation of water infrastructure that is vulnerable, and evaluate changes to water management strategies that are likely to be less effective due to climate change.
- Prioritize the protection of drinking water resources and sensitive water supplies and aquatic ecosystems that support a sustainable region.

Ross then focused on natural creeks and managed conveyance systems. These are predicted to see higher flow rates leading to increased erosion and flooding (due to higher intensity rain events and higher ocean levels). CCWG modeled impacts based on "medium" and "high" emission scenarios and sea level rise conditions, and three different future time frames (2030, 2060, and 2100). Ross then discussed possible response options including:

- Improve flood attenuation through creek and wetland restoration in the upper watershed.
- Realign roads and utility infrastructure.
- Establish managed retreat policies to support future adaptation within the most vulnerable areas.

Finally, Ross reviewed the predicted scenario of coastal levees and control structures being undersized to manage higher river flows and sea level rise. He discussed compromised tide gate functions under those future conditions, and the importance of the natural dune system for protecting inland areas. CCWG is currently working with the State to re-establish natural dune function. Possible response options include:

- Evaluate tide gate upgrades to improve flood release.
- Identify priority areas for future protection accounting for costs, feasibility and secondary impacts. Protections may include:
 - Tide gate upgrades
 - Hard armor protection
 - Natural habitat restoration along vulnerable edges
 - Expand dune restoration
 - Implement managed retreat strategies

Regarding managed retreat strategies, Ross said the focus would be on natural areas and maybe ag lands (rather than populated areas like Castroville), which can more easily accommodate flooding. The next step would be to develop integrated strategies. He noted that is beyond the scope of the IRWMP chapter, but it could be the focus of future RWMG discussions, leading to IRWM project development.

CCWG conducted a high-level inventory of existing infrastructure within the lower Salinas Valley, identified assets and updated land uses, including when they may be vulnerable to what hazard, and in which time horizon. CCWG also identified recommended actions, feasibility, level of cost, and key

partners for addressing potential hazards to water and utility infrastructure and to natural resources. Ross noted that this list deserves additional scrutiny and asked for input from the RWMG. He then gave some project examples, including: dune restoration, integrated tide gate/flood control management, and managed retreat strategies for agriculture. Ross noted that the Elkhorn Slough Foundation and others have made acquisitions of ag land in the coastal zone to return to natural function, however this tends to occur in a parcel-by-parcel, haphazard manner. CCWG would like to work with Elkhorn Slough Foundation, Big Sur Land Trust, and others to manage that process more systematically.

Ross concluded with a list of possible projects, emphasizing opportunities for flood attenuation in the upper watershed (e.g., LID in the City of Salinas) and the importance of a resilient, naturally functioning dune system. Someone asked whether an economic analysis had been performed on ag lands in the coastal zone, and Ross responded that an initial analysis had been performed; CCWG is interested in better quantifying economic implications associated with the different types of adaptation strategies. Gary stressed the need for communication with the GSA, as they will need to evaluate water resource hazards and needs associated with climate change. Susan suggested setting up a future RWMG meeting to focus specifically on strategies and projects.

3. AB 1249 “Plan of Action”: AB 1249 requires IRWM regions with nitrate, arsenic, hexavalent chromium, and/or perchlorate contamination to describe: 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. Since March 2017, Susan and Karen Nilsen have been meeting with a Technical Advisory Committee to identify the extent of contamination within the region and to determine a “plan of action” for the purposes of meeting AB 1249 requirements for the IRWM Plan. Susan had presented a recommended “plan of action” at the previous month’s RWMG meeting, but that plan was not approved. At today’s meeting, Susan presented a revised strategy based on comments received from the TAC.

Susan began by summarizing some “assumptions” that resulted from last month’s RWMG meeting, including: the County is well aware of the public health crisis but may feel it is already “at capacity” for addressing the issue; the JPA idea is no longer on the table; asking the Board of Supervisors to establish a whole new County department, or a program within an existing department, seems like too big of an ask; the GSA may be willing to sponsor grant applications for disadvantaged communities in the future, but has its hands full currently. Susan then presented for discussion a more simplified strategy:

- a. Schedule an informational presentation to the County Board of Supervisors, and possibly the Regional Board and State Board staff. The presentation will highlight data and key conclusions from the Salinas Valley Disadvantaged Community Plan and results of the AB 1249 work.
- b. Ask the Board for: 1) the County’s support in coordinating a “Coalition of Entities” (i.e., working group) that would seek ways to address the problem; and 2) a modest amount of funds to convene the working group and support them in developing a general strategy for addressing the issues. Suggested entities for a Coalition of Entities include:
 - Monterey County Environmental Health staff member
 - Monterey County Public Works staff member
 - State Board staff member
 - Regional Board staff member
 - Groundwater Sustainability Agency
 - Municipalities
 - Water Purveyors
 - Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW)
 - Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)

Gary Petersen asked whether anyone had already spoken with County staff, and Susan responded that Cheryl Sandoval (County Environmental Health) is a member of the TAC. Cheryl had inquired within her department whether Environmental Health might potentially act as a “champion” for the idea before the Board of Supervisors, but the response was negative. Gary suggested talking with the County Public Health Officer, Edward Moreno. Elizabeth Krafft clarified, perhaps it would be a good idea to begin with Dr. Moreno, get traction, then take it to the Board of Supervisors. Sarah Hardgrave added, possibly talk with other department heads as well. Gary said he would be willing to approach Dr. Moreno, but wanted to know who would speak on behalf of the RWMG. Sarah also suggested contacting the entities listed above to determine their level of interest. Brian Frus suggested that one task of the working group could be to investigate State funding possibilities (since the County apparently has little to spare).

Gary asked for a list of TAC members, and Susan suggested that she and Gary talk offline to determine possible next steps.

4. Land Use Planning Chapter Update: Susan noted that one task of the IRWMP update includes facilitating discussions between the RWMG and regional land use planners regarding land use and water management planning, particularly with regard to anticipated climate change impacts. Susan asked the RWMG how they would like to approach these “land use planning” meetings. Tom Harty emphasized the importance of contacting the right people at the County and bringing them together with the GSA, surface water folks, water quality folks. There was a suggestion to begin with Ross’s climate change presentation and results. Ross said CCWG had presented already to County planners, so they are familiar with it. He said he would be interested in following up on that, however, and learning about their thoughts moving forward. There was also a suggestion to hold a second, separate meeting with agencies whose infrastructure may be vulnerable to the effects of climate change (e.g., Castroville CSD, City of Salinas, County Public Works).

Sarah Hardgrave suggested inviting planners who are responsible for developing the general plan (long-range planning); do we have information that can help inform the next general plan update? Gary underscored the importance of linking future development to water supply. It would be an interesting exercise to look at where future growth might occur in relation to water resources. Paul Robins suggested inviting regional planning agencies, such as AMBAG (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments) and TAMC (Transportation Agency for Monterey County).

5. DWR Visit in February or March: Susan said that the IRWM Chief Art Hinojosa and Financial Assistance Branch Chief Carmel Brown will be in the Monterey Bay area in February or March. They are interested in attending or presenting at our RWMG meeting, or participating in a site visit in the region. Susan asked for ideas for site visits. Moy mentioned two disadvantaged communities that are in need of drinking water improvements (Johnson Road and Apple Avenue). Someone mentioned the Monterey One Water storm water project. Susan asked RWMG members to email her their suggestions.

6. Other Business: Two items of business:

Susan announced two new potential funding opportunities:

- a) The State Coastal Conservancy may have future funding for multi-benefit ecosystem and watershed protection projects in the Salinas area, such as projects that improve water sustainability and quality, urban greening, and community resilience to climate change. They will be having an informational webinar about their Prop 1 grant round; the RFQ is due to be released any day. Susan promised to forward the announcement when it is released.
- b) Harris & Associates is working with the County on a road repair project in Big Sur. They have an opportunity for riparian tree planting. A minimum of 33 and maximum of 61 riparian trees will

need to be planted. Locations close to the project site (Big Sur) are preferred, but other locations within Monterey County would be acceptable. Planting locations must be within the 100-year flood elevation. Kate Giberson, with Harris & Associates, briefly described the funding opportunity and responded to questions.

Sarah Hardgrave said that the Monterey Peninsula IRWM region has been inactive the past couple of years, and is facilitating the possibility of reactivating that group. She asked, for those members who serve on both RWMGs, to think about whether it was worth putting in time on the Monterey Peninsula region. She also raised the question of whether there should be just one IRWM region in Monterey County. Susan responded that the question had been raised on numerous occasions, and in all cases it was decided to maintain the three separate IRWM regions. The decision has been based on the different ways in which water is managed in each of the three regions, the very different issues that each region faces, and in a sheer practical sense, the effort and cost it would take to merge the three regions and develop a new, single IRWM Plan. Susan said we could explore the matter again, though she suspected the outcome would be the same. Sarah commented that expanding the region and developing a new IRWM Plan would likely be worthwhile only if the State were committed to funding IRWM in the long run.

The next RWMG meeting will be held on February 21, 2018, 1:30PM – 3:30PM, at Moss Landing Marine Labs.