

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting**

May 16, 2018

Location: Monterey County Government Center, Salinas, CA

RWMG Entity Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Monique Fountain – Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
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
Anthony Karl – City of Soledad
Karen McBride – Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water
John Olson – California State University Monterey Bay
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Monterey County
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust
Don Wilcox – City of Soledad

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Nicki Fowler – Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau
John Hunt – UC Davis
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen and Associates
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions.

2. Monterey County's New LAMP Program: Nicki Fowler with the Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau was invited to present on the County's new Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) for Onsite Wastewater Treatment (septic) Systems (OWTS). The goals of the LAMP are to reduce potential impacts from onsite wastewater treatment systems on groundwater, surface water, and public health.

Nicki began by describing what an OWTS is and how it works. She also described the difference between conventional septic systems and alternative (or supplemental) systems; in the latter, wastewater treatment occurs before distribution of the effluent in the soil (via an aerobic treatment unit, or a media filter or packed filter bed with a dispersal system). The alternative systems are more expensive to install and to maintain. Under the LAMP, the County can make determinations as to which is the most appropriate system, on a case-by-case basis.

Nicki then described the State Water Board's OWTS Policy, which is a statewide, risk-based, tiered approach for the regulation and management of OWTS installations and replacements. The policy sets the level of performance and protection expected from new OWTS and repairs/expansions to existing OWTS. Monterey County's new LAMP is the County's response to the State's new policy. The LAMP was approved on May 10, 2018 after several years of stakeholder meetings; if the LAMP had not been approved, the State's Tier 1 standards would have been put into place.

Under the new LAMP, no changes will be required for existing OWTS as long as the system continues to function properly (except for cesspools, which must be properly destroyed). Liquid waste haulers will be

required to report all septic tank pump outs in Monterey County. Failed or surfacing OWTS must be repaired or replaced. Nicki described minimum lot size requirements for single family dwellings, based on average annual rainfall. She also described minimum lot size requirements for new developments and for additions to single-family homes, and described site evaluation requirements when repairs to existing OWTS are performed or for new OWTS. LAMP standards for all systems, generally, include: 10' maximum dispersal field depth unless supplemental treatment is installed, no impermeable surfaces over dispersal field without supplemental treatment, variable application rate based on percolation rate of soil, and OWTS must be designed by a qualified designer. In potential groundwater recharge areas, new OWTS cannot be installed any deeper than 5' total depth, which may necessitate the use of alternative OWTS. The intent of the LAMP is to limit nitrogen loading in areas with small lots (must install nitrogen reduction to septic system or hook in to a public system).

Mike McCullough asked about system costs. Nicki responded that some have cited costs as high as \$50K or \$60K to install a new system, while manufacturers quote a cost of about \$12K for the system itself. Bridget asked how many requests the County gets each year for permits. Nicki responded about 175 septic permits each year (75% replacement, 25% new); there will be about 200 systems/year that will need to be evaluated against the new LAMP requirements. Bridget wondered whether a map was available to show existing sewer lines. Nicki responded that they are in the beginning stages of compiling that information. Mike commented on the time-consuming process involved in getting LAFCO approval for connecting a home that lies outside of a service boundary, and Nicki said the Environmental Health Bureau will often write a letter of support to help fast-track that process, if a public safety issue is involved.

Nicki then highlighted some geographic areas of special concern within the County, which include Carmel Highlands, Carmel Valley, El Toro, and North County (the latter references the Salinas Valley/Greater Monterey County IRWM Disadvantaged Community Plan in the LAMP). Susan asked whether County staff decide whether conventional or alternative treatment is required, or is it up to the homeowner. Nicki responded that the County will bring in a team of qualified designers (geologists and engineers), and that team will put forward a design that meets the requirements of the LAMP. The County will make a decision on the design. She said that County staff is struggling with how those decisions will impact the homeowners. She mentioned the limitations of funding sources, such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which funds projects at a community level but not at an individual level. Susan commented on the potential impact on disadvantaged communities (DACs), and that as the DAC project team will keep the new LAMP requirements in mind as they begin the IRWM DAC Involvement grant project. Nicki noted the need for a county-wide comprehensive groundwater monitoring program. Mike suggested she talk with Gary Petersen about the Salinas Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) process.

Karen McBride, noting that pumpers are called out more often for “crises” than for preventative maintenance, asked whether the County was considering any type of self-monitoring program for OWTS owners. She added this would be especially important for alternative treatment systems, to know that they are performing as designed. Nicki noted that as a good point, and added that the County will require annual operating permits for those systems and maintenance of a contract with a service provider. There will also be deed restriction requirements. Pointing to DACs and areas that are unable to hook into sewers as a long-term solution, Karen asked whether the County would be supportive of establishing local management entities to help keep systems maintained, for example, providing oversight of ongoing inspection and monitoring for all septic systems within a geographic area. Nicki said that idea has not been specifically addressed, though she would be interested in discussing it further with Karen. Karen added that this is an especially good time for the Regional Water Management Group to be able to support the LAMP through outreach and training to DACs, via the IRWM DAC Involvement grant.

3. Prop 1 Implementation Grant Round and the Next IRWMP Project Solicitation: On May 4th at the IRWM Roundtable of Regions meeting, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) presented “draft concepts” regarding the upcoming solicitation process for Prop 1 IRWM Implementation Grants. Susan discussed this latest information, and how it impacts the RWMG’s timeframe for the IRWMP project solicitation. DWR’s proposed timeframe for Round 1 is as follows:

- End of June: Draft PSP released

- September (or Fall): Final PSP released
- DWR will then begin scheduling workshops with each Funding Area: from early November 2018 through April 2019
- DWR will ask for information on proposed projects *at least two weeks prior* to the Funding Area's workshop.
- After workshop, DWR will get back to regions with comments within 2-4 weeks.
- Application deadlines are anticipated 4-6 weeks after DWR returns comments. DWR will work with each Funding Area to determine the application date.

Susan provided a summary of the amount of funds available for the Greater Monterey County region, based on DWR's current proposal on how to divide funds between Rounds 1 and 2:

Round 1: 50% of Implementation allocation, 30% of DAC allocation

Implementation: \$3,239,438

DAC: \$266,255

Round 2 (2020): 50% of Implementation allocation, 70% of DAC allocation

Implementation: \$3,239,438

DAC: \$621,262

Susan asked the RWMG if they had a preference on when to schedule the workshop with DWR. She suggested February, noting that representatives from two other IRWM regions in the Central Coast expressed a preference for January/February. Several voiced agreement with that general timeframe.

Susan then pointed out the State's requirement for projects to address "the most critical water resource needs of the region" and asked whether the RWMG had interest in prioritizing the IRWM Plan's goals and objectives. Ross responded no, that the unprioritized objectives helps the RWMG develop projects that are integrated. He added that priorities in one part of the region may be different from priorities in another part of the region. Mike disagreed, referencing the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and the new emphasis on groundwater. Bridget commented, however, that because SGMA does exist now with its strong emphasis on groundwater, IRWM doesn't necessarily also need to emphasize groundwater. Rachel suggested that the RWMG should be cognizant of "critical needs" in terms of the package of projects that it puts forward, but not necessarily issue a "statement" of critical needs. There was general consensus to not prioritize the IRWM Plan goals and objectives, and to not put forward a statement of critical needs.

4. Climate Change Chapter Update: Susan had sent the revised Climate Change chapter of the IRWM Plan to RWMG members for their review on April 12. She noted that Mike McCullough/Monterey One Water had provided some good comments regarding the risk of sea level rise to wastewater infrastructure in the coastal zone. Ross Clark and his team at the Central Coast Wetlands Group are currently responding to those comments. Sarah Hardgrave commented on the references in the chapter to the Pacific Institute study, and wondered if there were other studies that should be referenced. Ross said he would look into that. Susan will send the revised chapter to the RWMG when these additional revisions have been completed.

5. IRWM Round Robin: Mike McCullough briefly described two projects that Monterey One Water had submitted for inclusion to the Greater Monterey County Storm Water Resource Plan (SWRP): 1) Salinas Area Flood Enhancements and Reuse (SAFER) Project, submitted with the City of Salinas, which consists of improvements to the City's Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility. The project will provide additional flood protection and will also enable increased diversion of city storm water to the recycled treatment facility for reuse. 2) Improvements to Monterey One Water's land/ocean outfall pipeline, which will help protect the outfall from impacts of sea level rise.

Sarah announced that Big Sur Land Trust has obtained private funds for initial work at Carr Lake. They have hired a consulting team to develop a minimum of three conceptual design alternatives, with input from the community. They aim to develop a final design by next year. John Hunt encouraged Sarah and Rachel to submit

a concept proposal to the SWRP.

Paul announced that the RCD of Monterey County is participating in a multi-county grant, called the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program. They are lining up projects for streamlined design and permitting. The RCD will be sending out a notification about the project. He said they are also looking to submit a proposal for Prop 1 Drinking Water grant funds, proposing to work with growers in the areas with compromised drinking water quality to provide technical assistance. Bridget pointed out potential overlap with the DAC Involvement grant work.

Monique reported that the Elkhorn Slough Foundation is making great progress with the marsh restoration project, which was awarded IRWM Implementation Grant funds during Prop 84 Round 1. That work should be completed within the next couple of months. She offered to provide a field trip for RWMG members for the next RWMG meeting.

Bridget said that the Monterey Bay Sanctuary is wrapping up their Prop 84 Round 1 Santa Rita restoration project, which included working with growers to reduce or eliminate pollutants through irrigation evaluations and actions to address pollutant loading of nutrients, pesticides, and sediments, plus restoration, monitoring and other components. She reminded everyone about the Central Coast Action Tracker, the online web portal that tracks monitoring results of the region's implementation projects. She offered to give a demonstration of the CC Action Tracker for the RWMG at a future RWMG meeting. Bridget added that the RCD had recently received a 319h grant for work in Blanco Drain, and that the Monterey Bay Sanctuary is helping with permit streamlining.

Sarah announced that the Monterey Peninsula RWMG will soon start regular monthly meetings. The next meeting will be held on May 21 at 1:30pm, at the Monterey Peninsula Water District office.

John Hunt reported that the SWRP project team will be re-initiating the project solicitation process for the SWRP, with a more detailed "long" application for project proponents based on requirements of the SWRP Guidelines. He urged interested project proponents to contact him or other members of the SWRP project team for help with the application process.

6. Other Business. Susan announced that the July RWMG will (most likely) be cancelled.

The next RWMG meeting will be held on June 20, 2018, 1:30PM – 3:30PM, location TBD.