

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

**February 17, 2021  
Google Meet Conference Call**

**RWMG Entity Attendees:**

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.  
Oscar Antillon – City of Soledad  
Jenny Balmagia – Central Coast Wetlands Group  
Shandy Carroll – Monterey County Housing and Community Development Department  
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group  
Beth Febus – Big Sur Land Trust  
Emily Gardner – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water  
Zane Mortensen – Rural Community Assistance Corporation  
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County  
Brian True – Marina Coast Water District  
Eric Tynan – Castroville Community Services District

**Non-RWMG Attendees:**

Rick Diaz – Member of the Public  
Adam French – Amah Mutsun Land Trust  
John Hunt – UC Davis  
Diana Jimenez – North Monterey County League of United Latin American Citizens  
Kelli McCune – Sustainable Conservation  
John Mukhar – MNS Engineers  
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director  
Tiffany Wise-West – City of Santa Cruz

**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Brief Introductions.**

**2. Central Coast Climate Collaborative:** Susan Robinson introduced Dr. Tiffany Wise-West from the City of Santa Cruz. Tiffany is the former chair and current steering committee member of the Central Coast Climate Collaborative (4C), a six county, multi-sector collaborative network initiated around 2017. The counties are: Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. The mission of 4C is to engage communities throughout the region to help ensure a resilient and low-carbon Central Coast prepared for the impacts of climate change. There are 27 member organizations, including local governments, non-profits, environmental justice organizations, and Tribes. 4C meets on a quarterly basis. Their work includes: convening a network of climate leaders, distributing a monthly newsletter, preparing collaborative grant proposals, providing letters of support, surveying the region's needs, providing tools and resources, and matchmaking academic collaborators with agencies. Resources produced include a Regional Resilience workbook and toolkit, and a Plan Alignment Compass for planners who need to ensure alignment of policies, etc., across various plans (e.g., General Plan). The Adaptation Clearinghouse can be accessed at: <https://resilientca.org/>

4C conducted a regional survey two years ago and is getting ready to launch the next survey. Results showed drought and declining water supplies to be amongst the top three hazard concerns, along with wildfire and erosion/mud slides/debris flow. Tiffany briefly showed results related to critical socioeconomic issues, and assets at risk from natural hazards (drinking water infrastructure and wastewater infrastructure were amongst the top six

assets). She highlighted the fact that vulnerability assessment has been included as part of the development of several IRWM Plans on the Central Coast. Tiffany emphasized the need to overcome silos and the potential opportunities for collaboration in resilience planning and implementation. 4C is focusing currently on equity; there are potential opportunities for collaboration with the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) in terms of outreach to disadvantaged communities. 4C will be offering equity and inclusion training; RWMG members are welcome to participate. 4C has also been in dialogue with federal agencies and county leaders about possibly conducting a Case Study, targeting federal resources to focus on climate. Finally, 4C serves as a pipeline to ARCCA (the state umbrella agency), the California Resilience Network, California Stewardship Network, and Legislative Tracker (<https://arccacalifornia.org/2021-legislative-tracker/>).

Ross Clark said he's interested in knowing how other counties on the Central Coast are identifying risks and establishing programs to address them. Tiffany suggested that the next 4C survey could include this as a question. Bridget Hoover wondered how the RWMG might be able to partner with 4C on the upcoming IRWM Round 2 Implementation Grant application. Climate change is always a focus. Perhaps Tiffany could review project proposals and offer insight/suggestions? Tiffany offered her assistance. Eric Tyan added that Castroville Community Services District would be a supporting player, if this develops.

**3. SGM Watershed Coordinator Grant:** Susan announced that the Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG) was recently awarded a \$300K Sustainable Groundwater Management Watershed Coordinator grant from the California Department of Conservation (DOC). Only 5 out of 26 applications were awarded. The SGM Watershed Coordinator Grant Program was developed in coordination with the Department of Water Resources, and has the dual purpose of improving watershed health and meeting sustainable groundwater management goals. The purpose of CCWG's Watershed Coordinator grant is to increase coordination and collaboration between the Greater Monterey County RWMG and the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), and to coordinate implementation of multi-stakeholder projects prioritized within the IRWM Plan, Storm Water Resource Plan (SWRP), and Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plans. Jenny Balmagia will be taking the lead as SGM Watershed Coordinator, with support from Susan (as co-Watershed Coordinator).

Jenny introduced herself to the RWMG. Jenny has a master's degree from the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at UCSB, where she specialized in water resources management. At the Bren School, Jenny worked as part of a team to develop a customizable decision support tool to locate optimal sites for groundwater recharge projects in the Central Valley that have the potential to produce benefits to communities and ecosystems while increasing local water resilience. Prior to the Bren School, Jenny worked for the Central Coast Wetlands Group for three years assessing the health of riparian and riverine areas using CRAM and RipRAM, building and maintaining woodchip bioreactors and treatment wetlands near the Moro Cojo Slough, and developing and implementing water quality monitoring studies to assess the effectiveness of these projects in reducing nitrogen loads entering the Moro Cojo Slough.

Jenny described the SGM Watershed Coordinator grant project. The project focuses on the lower Salinas, Gabilan, and Moro Cojo watersheds and the three groundwater subbasins that overlap with that area. The five main tasks are:

1. Increase public awareness and engagement in watershed improvement and groundwater sustainability efforts with a focus on increasing engagement of disadvantaged communities.
2. Facilitate coordination, collaboration, and exchange of information within the watershed among local and regional stakeholders, including the Salinas Valley Basin GSA, RWMG, agricultural representatives, water resource and disadvantaged community NGOs, and others.
3. Assess surface and groundwater dependent ecosystems to provide an understanding of the baseline condition of these ecosystems within each of the three groundwater subbasins.
4. Support and facilitate project siting and estimating benefits for multi-benefit projects identified within the GSPs, SWRP, and IRWM Plan. The project will begin by focusing on two projects identified in the SWRP.
5. Identify supplemental and long-term funding to support watershed improvement and sustainable groundwater projects and long-term watershed coordination.

Emily Gardner (GSA) expressed excitement about the project, applauding its intent to make the connection between watershed and groundwater basins.

**4. SWRP Implementation – Getting Multi-benefit Projects Developed and Ready for Funding:** Ross Clark recognized the support that CCWG received from partners in developing the SGM Watershed Coordinator grant application, including Paul Robins (RCD), Diana Jimenez with the North Monterey County League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the Salinas Valley Basin GSA. He showed a map that was produced for the Greater Monterey County SWRP through modeling, highlighting opportunity areas for multi-benefit projects, including groundwater recharge/infiltration, water retention/detention, water quality enhancement, habitat and community benefits. Implementing all of the possible projects in these opportunity areas would result in real benefits, including the potential to capture over 5,000 AF of storm water, with potentially 132 acres of detention. The purpose of the SGM Watershed Coordinator grant is to move these hypothetical projects from concept, to design, to implementation.

The grant will focus on two SWRP projects in particular. The first project targets storm water capture in the Upper Gabilan watershed, with the intent to keep water in the upper watersheds for potential infiltration in the East Side and Langley subbasins and reduced flooding downstream. The second project is located in the lower Salinas Valley along the Tembladero/Rec Ditch: “Castroville to the Coast” has the potential to provide many benefits, including flood risk reduction, improved water quality, habitat restoration/protection, recreation, and coastal access. The farmland in the project area is threatened by periodic flooding, exacerbated by king tides and future sea level rise. The storm water management system was designed in 1906; since then there has been a great deal of hydromodification and intensified agricultural practices, and Monterey County Water Resources Agency lacks site control. The initial steps will be developing partnerships with stakeholders and figuring out how to get past numerous hurdles. Ross said the SGM Watershed Coordinator grant is providing resources to help the region move from concepts to funding proposals. CCWG will be reaching out to RWMG partners to assist them in implementing their projects.

Mike McCullough commented that Monterey One Water definitely supports this project, noting the importance of everyone working together. Eric added his support both for the project and for the collaboration.

**5. Anticipated Timeline for Round 2 IRWM Implementation Grant:** Susan reviewed a tentative timeframe for the IRWMP/SWRP project solicitation in anticipation of DWR’s Round 2 IRWM Implementation Grant. This will be a combined project solicitation for both the IRWMP and the SWRP. Susan noted that any storm water or dry weather runoff capture projects must also be included in a SWRP in order to be eligible for IRWM grant funds (and for any other grant funds from a State bond approved after January 1, 2014).

DWR is expected to release Draft Guidelines/PSP this summer, and Final Guidelines/PSP in December 2021. Susan said the IRWMP/SWRP project solicitation will begin immediately following release of the Round 2 Draft Guidelines/PSP. Project proponents will have about 6 weeks to submit their project applications. A Project Review Subcommittee will be convened, and will have 2+ weeks to rank projects. The RWMG will vote to approve the ranked project list at the subsequent RWMG meeting, and then will have 3-4 months to select the projects to go forward in Round 2. The goal is to have projects selected for Round 2 by the time the Final Guidelines/PSP are released (anticipated in December 2021).

Susan noted that the ranking criteria from last time (Round 1) worked pretty well, so she will suggest that the RWMG use those again. She said the project application form will probably be very similar to Round 1, but that depends on what the Round 2 Guidelines/PSP look like. Susan promised to do her best to streamline the project application form as much as possible.

**6. Other Business.** Ross provided a brochure for the “Castroville to the Coast” project.

*The next RWMG meeting will be held on April 21, 2021, 1:30PM – 3:30PM.*