

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

**January 19, 2022  
Zoom Conference Call**

**RWMG Entity Attendees:**

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.  
Beth Febus – Big Sur Land Trust  
Rich Hamilton – Big Sur Land Trust  
Alex Henson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency  
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water  
Donna Meyers – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Heidi Niggemeyer – City of Salinas  
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust

**Non-RWMG Attendees:**

Tim Carson – Regional Water Management Foundation  
Jocelyn Curran – Downtown Streets Team  
John Hunt – UC Davis  
Tina La Perle – Consultant, City of Salinas  
Natalie LaVan – Regional Water Management Foundation  
Sarah Lopez – Preservation, Inc.  
Jennifer Morales – Department of Water Resources  
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director  
Roxanne Wilson – Coalition of Homeless Services Providers

**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Brief Introductions.**

**2. Panel on Homelessness in the Greater Monterey County IRWM Region:** Susan Robinson provided brief background: The needs assessment of people experiencing homelessness in the Greater Monterey County IRWM region was performed as part of the overall needs assessment for the IRWM Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant. The needs assessment focused primarily on access of homeless individuals to drinking water and sanitation services, as well as the impact of homelessness on riparian areas and surface waters. As part of the needs assessment, Susan interviewed eight individuals at agencies/organizations that address homelessness in some way, and Downtown Streets Team was hired to conduct peer-to-peer surveys of people experiencing homelessness. The results are outlined in a final report. The panel consisted of three of the “agency” individuals interviewed for the needs assessment.

**Jocelyn Curran – Downtown Streets Team:** Jocelyn is Downtown Streets Team’s (DTS) Director for Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. Jocelyn described DST and its services. DST hires people experiencing homelessness to work Monday – Friday, from 8am – 12pm, to pick up trash and beautify the community. In exchange they receive stipends to businesses like Arco, Walmart, Target. DST provides case management support to these “Team Members” to help them find work and access housing.

California has the largest unsheltered population in the US. Jocelyn noted that 78% of the homeless population is unsheltered. Homelessness affects everyone: tourism, police services, hospital services, the environment. Jocelyn noted that lack of access to services such as laundry and showers leads to greater single-use among the homeless: dishes, clothes, etc. are thrown away when they can't be taken care of. When asked what the worst part of being homeless is, many homeless individuals respond, "The way people look down at me" – lack of acknowledgement of their humanity. DST emphasizes, "homelessness is an experience, not an identify." DST focuses on the individual – their individualized goals, and barriers to reaching those goals.

Jocelyn emphasized the need for increased case management services, expanded service hours (ideally 24/7), greater access to hygiene services, including mobile showers and laundry, and more frequent removal of trash from dumpsters and trash cans where they fill up quickly. DST typically spends \$5,000 per Team Member per year (there are 35 Team Members per year).

**Roxanne Wilson – Coalition of Homeless Services Providers:** Roxanne is the Executive Officer of the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers (CHSP). CHSP is the Continuum of Care organization for Monterey and San Benito Counties, funded by both the federal and state governments. CHSP brings providers and stakeholders to the table, and is a policy-making organization rather than a service provider per se. CHSP is responsible for conducting the annual Point In Time Count; they submit the data to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Roxanne presented on CHSP's plan to reduce homelessness in Monterey and San Benito Counties by 50 percent over the next five years. She noted that the Baseline Year, 2019/20, was undercounted due to severe weather the day of the count:

HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION TARGETS						
Measure	Target					
	Baseline 19/20	Year 1 21/22	Year 2 22/23	Year 3 23/24	Year 4 24/25	Year 5 25/26
<b>Population Size Targets</b>						
Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness (PIT)	2,704	3,623	3,218	2,696	2,164	1,297
<b>By County</b>						
Monterey County	2,422	3,245	2,882	2,414	1,938	1,162
San Benito County	282	378	336	282	226	135

Roxanne commented that transitional housing is no longer considered a best practice; it is extremely expensive and not ultimately effective at transitioning individuals into permanent housing. The housing market, she said, is the #1 indicator for homelessness. There is an extreme housing shortage in Monterey County. CHSP takes a "Housing First" approach. CHSP is focusing on permanent housing placement, including new construction of 450 housing units in Monterey County within five years.

Strategy #1 is to increase participation by leaders and key stakeholders. To that end CHSP will be hosting a Homelessness Summit this summer. Strategy #2 is to provide more pathways to housing. This includes focusing on homelessness *prevention* (keeping people in housing through case management and problem solving), expanding mobile outreach, and expanding housing solutions. Strategy #3 is to expand services to unsheltered people, including hygiene, safety, temporary shelters, and connecting them to

“low-barrier” housing. CHSP has provided 28 hygiene stations in the community at a cost of about \$250K – “worth it!”

**Tina La Perle – Consultant, City of Salinas:** Tina serves as the City of Salinas’s Homeless Service Interventionist. Tina emphasized that the homeless individuals living in Salinas are “residents,” noting that many of these people have deep ties to Salinas. She sees homelessness as a public health issue. She emphasized the vulnerability of this population – mental health issues, substance abuse, many are aging. An outcropping of the pandemic, she said, has been the “globalization of permissibility.” Homelessness service providers have noted an uptick in substance abuse, an increased sense that “I don’t need to try as hard...” Also an increase in environmental degradation, more solid waste, more frequent honey bucket use; the latter due largely in part to the closing of public restrooms during Covid.

The City is challenged to meet their NPDES requirements. Heidi Niggemeyer added that the City is required to contribute zero trash to receiving waters by 2030, which is challenging when many homeless individuals live alongside creeks. Many jurisdictions that had been conducting planned cleanups ceased those cleanups during the pandemic. Tensions have spiked during Covid. Contributing to the tension is the common public perception that “all homeless are crazy and dangerous.” Yes, many have mental problems. Tina attributes that in part to de-institutionalization policies.

So what are they doing to address this in Salinas? Tina named several existing and pending housing options, including the Chinatown Navigation Center Sprung Shelter (will accommodate up to 55 beds) and the new SHARE Center (housing navigation services), the Salinas motel project (Project Homekey), and Project Roomkey (temporary, emergency shelters during Covid). The City has increased street outreach, with assistance from Downtown Streets Team. Tina also mentioned supplementing the housing stock, including a tiny homes village. Local service providers collaborated to open Moon Gate Plaza, providing permanent supportive housing with about 90 units. Tina mentioned several programs under consideration, including a supportive parking program. She emphasized the need for more affordable housing, as well as the need for wide-scale policy changes: A lot of progress can be made when the community accepts that this is a shared public health issue. Tina advocated for “soft enforcement” of overnight sleeping on the street, along with a caring approach for cleanups (respect).

Tina then briefly described an Encampment Resolution Grant that the City has recently applied for. They are proposing a cross-agency approach, with a plan to re-locate individuals from Natividad Creek Park, and from along Alisal, Gabilan, and Natividad Creeks. This will be followed by cleanup and some restoration (from CSUMB’s Return of the Natives). Tina said they are still looking for partners!

Bridget Hoover asked Jocelyn about “Team Members.” Jocelyn explained that DST provides part-time work and stipends to help individuals get out of survival mode, so they can focus on employment. Helps increase their confidence, skills, accountability. There is a wait list to become a DST Team Member. Horacio Amezcua asked about federal and state funds for extremely low-income housing, adding that most houses in the area cost upwards of \$600K. He noted that San Jerardo Cooperative was constructed through a federal anti-poverty housing program in the 1970s. Roxanne emphasized that housing and homelessness are two separate crises. Roxanne doesn’t see opportunities currently for cooperatives per se, though there is lots of money for purchasing motels. The motel programs are extremely beneficial. Roxanne applauded the many ag businesses that are now building employer-sponsored housing for farmworkers.

John Hunt brought up restoration projects, noting that many members of the Regional Water Management Group have interest in that. He wondered about the panelists’ thoughts on what a restoration project in a riparian area might look like when it’s implemented to accommodate homeless

people living in that area. Tina explained that the homeless won't be living there; they will be moved out entirely, hopefully on the pathway to permanent housing. The restoration, however, might include targeted planting to discourage or prevent people from moving back into certain areas. Jocelyn noted that in Santa Cruz, groups are working on rehabilitation around the San Lorenzo River, including plantings and education for homeless individuals living in the encampments.

Jennifer Morales posed a question (as a citizen, rather than as a DWR employee): Given that many homeless individuals are mentally unstable, and some are aggressive or even violent, how can one walk that line between protecting themselves while also treating homeless individuals with respect and kindness? Tina fully acknowledged the problem (a fallout in part, she said, of de-institutionalization), while also recognizing that the entire homeless population often gets "lumped in" with the segment of individuals who are marginal. She advised, protecting yourself comes first; and if a homeless person appears non-threatening, then offer a smile. Both Jocelyn and Roxanne concurred, safety first – while underscoring the importance of humanity. Mike McCullough commented on the issue of de-institutionalization, noting Monterey One Water's occasional encounters with homelessness.

**3. Prop 1 IRWM Implementation Grant – Round 2:** Susan briefly reviewed the amount of funding available in Round 2 for the Greater Monterey County region: \$3,560,341 in total, with \$492,517 allocated specifically for disadvantaged community projects and \$3,067,824 for general implementation.

Susan said that DWR had originally proposed two options for application due dates: either March 2022 or September 2022. This Regional Water Management Group originally selected September 2022 for its preferred application due date. Susan said that DWR will be changing those deadlines. She described two possible timelines for the Round 2 project solicitation, one with a September application deadline and one with a December application deadline. Mike commented that the December deadline would be more realistic for Monterey One Water. Susan agreed it was a more realistic timeline overall. With no one else providing comment, Susan said she will proceed as if the application deadline is December, and then wait to see what the Final Guidelines say when they are released (probably in April).

**4. Other Business.** Susan suggested that the RWMG meetings be bi-monthly beginning *February* (not January), because of a conflict otherwise with the bi-monthly Roundtable of Regions meeting. All agreed.

*The next RWMG meeting will be held on February 16, 2022, 1:30PM – 3:30PM.*