

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

**June 6, 2022
Zoom Conference Call**

RWMG Entity Attendees:

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Beth Febus – Big Sur Land Trust
Emily Gardner – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Alex Henson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Bridget Hoover – Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Erik Lundquist – Monterey County Housing and Community Development
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water
Ileana Miranda – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
John Olson – California State University Monterey Bay
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Rachel Saunders – Big Sur Land Trust

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Sherry Lee Bryan – Ecology Action
Doug Dowden – Environmental Compliance Specialists
Adam French – Amah Mutsun Land Trust
John Hunt – UC Davis
Greg Jaquez – MNS Engineers (for City of Soledad and City of Greenfield)
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director
Jake Smith – Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions. Ileana Miranda introduced herself as the new General Manager and new RWMG representative for San Jerardo Cooperative.

2. Salinas River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP): This agenda item was shelved due to a last-minute conflict.

3. Multibenefit Land Repurposing Grant Award: The California Marine Sanctuary Foundation was recently awarded a \$10 million grant from the Department of Conservation on behalf of the Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG), Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), the Greater Monterey County IRWM region, and other partners. Ross Clark stressed that this success owed a lot to the IRWM partnership, through RWMG members' input into the project, letters of support, and willingness to act as project partners. They requested \$8.2M and \$10M was awarded! CCWG and team will work with landowners interested in participating to identify less productive, flood-prone land that can be acquired and transitioned to other beneficial uses, including floodplain, habitat, infiltration. Goal is to repurpose the land to reduce groundwater pumping and establish natural watershed processes.

Several local land trusts and related organizations were brought together to serve as a Land Acquisition Team. Approximately 70-120 acres of land will be repurposed along the Gabilan drainages, from the foothills to Castroville. The grant provides about \$7M in funding for acquisition. The first step will involve drafting a Land Repurposing Plan, which will provide a strategy and transparent process for selecting lands to repurpose.

Sherry Lee Bryan asked how the Group can support this effort in terms of outreach to growers. Ross noted that CCWG will be meeting with Norm Groot from the Farm Bureau soon, will be presenting to growers through Preservation Inc. and to industry reps. Also, the Watershed Coordinators (Jenny Balmagia and Susan Robinson) will be working to get the word out. Emily Gardner added that the intent is to engage growers early on and get their input in structuring the process. Mike McCullough asked if they had a sense of per acre cost yet. Ross said he wasn't sure but they've heard about \$50K - \$75K/acre. CCWG is looking to acquire 30-60 meters of land along drainages. The land will need to go through an official appraisal (want to pay fair market value to the landowners).

4. IRWM Implementation Grant - Round 2: Susan provided a brief overview of the process and timeline for the Round 2 project solicitation. The Greater Monterey County Region's application is due to the Department of Water Resources by February 1, 2023. The project solicitation to get projects into the IRWM Plan (so that they are eligible for this round of IRWM grant funds) was launched on June 1 and project proposals are due to Susan by July 15.

Susan asked for volunteers to serve on the Project Review Committee. A question was raised as to whether non-RWMG members could serve on the Project Review Committee. Some RWMG members (including Paul Robins and Bridget Hoover) spoke up to say that any stakeholder in the IRWM Region should be allowed to weigh in on projects. Sherry pointed out the benefit in obtaining different viewpoints. Others agreed that non-RWMG members should be allowed to serve on the committee.

The Project Review Committee for Prop 1 Round 2 is:

Emily Gardner
Ross Clark
John Olson
John Hunt

Also available to serve on the committee, if additional assistance is needed:

Bridget Hoover
Mike McCullough

RWMG members and stakeholders were then invited to share their preliminary project ideas for Round 2.

Monterey One Water: Mike McCullough noted that drought conditions result in less water being used, and less wastewater therefore coming into the treatment plant – resulting in less source water for recycling. M1W is working on strategies to bring in more water for recycling. They are considering various options, including: Offsite storage for stormwater; infrastructure improvements to address issues that occur during low flows; and more reliable power generation. Mike will talk with Ross (CCWG) about project ideas to explore possible synergies with offsite storage.

Ecology Action: Sherry described Ecology Action's work in landscape and water efficiency in urban areas. Ecology Action would like to support their Monterey Bay Green Grower Gardner Certification course for landscape professionals in Salinas Valley. There is currently a water efficiency landscaping training course being held in Watsonville; they would like to be able to offer that course in Salinas. This seems especially relevant now with Governor Newsom's declaration this week prohibiting watering of nonfunctional turf. Sherry would also like to bring Ecology Action's Climate Victory Garden program to Salinas. Greg Jaquez said he would like to talk with Sherry about some possible project ideas (in Greenfield and/or Soledad).

Monterey County Water Resources Agency: Alex Henson said MCWRA will be seeking funds for a flow control outlet project for the Nacimiento Dam. The current 24" diameter outlets are not designed to meet the minimum flow of 60 cfs. MCWRA has 30% design for a new outlet that is togglable, from 1 – 100 cfs.

Central Coast Wetlands Group: Ross said CCWG has been working with Paul Robins (RCD) and Sarah Lopez (Preservation Inc.) to develop a pilot project in the Alisal Creek area to construct off-channel treatment wetlands. They expect these treatment wetlands would take care of a significant portion of nutrient loading coming out of that drainage.

Salinas Valley Basin GSA: Emily said there are several projects in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan that could be good candidates for Round 2, including stream channel maintenance, Arundo removal, floodplain restoration, groundwater recharge projects. Emily and Donna are working with Paul Robins (RCD) to explore potential project ideas along the 90 miles of the Salinas River.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary: Bridget Hoover said she is exploring potential food safety-related projects (rodents near farm fields). She doesn't envision this as a stand-alone project, perhaps piggyback on another project.

5. Other Business: There was no other business.

*The next RWMG meeting will be held on **Wednesday, August 17, 2022, 1:30PM – 3:30PM.***