

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

August 16, 2023

Location: Big Sur Land Trust Office and Zoom Conference Call

RWMG Entity Attendees:

Jenny Balmagia – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Melanie Beretti – Monterey County Housing and Community Development
Patrick Breen – Marina Coast Water District
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group
Beth Febus – Big Sur Land Trust
Emily Gardner – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Brenda Granillo – California Water Service
Sarah Hardgrave – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Alex Henson – Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Ileana Miranda – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water
Heidi Niggemeyer – City of Salinas
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Eric Tynan – Castroville Community Services District

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Doug Dowden – Representing City of Marina
John Hunt – UC Davis
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions: During introductions, Patrick Breen introduced himself and announced that he will be the new representative for Marina Coast Water District, since Brian True is retiring.

2. Castroville Community Services District Project Update: Eric Tynan provided a progress report on the Emergency Deep Aquifer Supply and Storage Tank Project, which was funded through the Prop 1 Round IRWM Implementation Grant. Eric said it took three years for the lot line adjustment, which caused a delay. The Deep Aquifer is 1400' deep, replaces Well 3, which was salty. The project also installs a 640,000-gallon storage tank. The problem with deep aquifers is heat (99°) and arsenic, so the project also includes a treatment facility. The design includes plumbing since CCSD will need to blend the hot water from the Deep Aquifer with Well 2 water to cool the temperature. CCSD has completed CEQA, well permit, and is now at 60% design. Eric anticipates construction to be completed late 2024 or early 2025. They will use some of the IRWM funds, which were intended for design/planning, toward construction.

3. NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant: John Hunt described a Monterey Bay region-wide effort that is being proposed for NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant funds. The proposal, led by the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation (CMSF) on behalf of numerous agencies and organizations around the Monterey Bay region, contains climate adaptation projects to minimize

risks to coastal communities and ag from flooding and other climate-related impacts, and to support continued collaborative efforts related to climate adaptation in the Monterey Bay area. This is a very competitive grant – NOAA anticipates only about 12 awards nationwide. The program seeks regional scale collaboration to reduce risk and damage from weather and climate impacts, with “transformational” results. NOAA seeks nature based solutions, with hybrid grey/green projects acceptable (grey infrastructure by itself is not eligible).

There are two tracks – Track 1 for planning, capacity building, and developing “climate collaboratives,” with maximum award amount of \$2M; and Track 2 for implementing climate adaptation projects, with maximum award amount of \$75 million (average award \$25M - \$50M). CMSF will be requesting \$75M. The vision is to protect coastal communities, ecosystems, infrastructure, and prime agricultural lands around Monterey Bay from the impacts of sea level rise, storm surge, river flooding, and watershed wildfires. John noted that communities like Castroville and Watsonville are just 12’ and 18’, respectively, above sea level, with wastewater treatment plants, major transportation corridors, and other critical infrastructure at risk of inundation from sea level rise, storm surge, and fluvial flooding.

CMSF’s proposal will implement a coordinated suite of complementary adaptation actions, with a focus on wetland and floodplain restoration as buffers, and forest health. The proposal includes (dollar amounts subject to change still):

1. Grant Administration \$ TBD
2. Regional Climate Collaborative and Capacity Building \$ 6M
3. Workforce Development \$ 4M
4. Protecting Coastal Communities and Working Lands from Climate-related Flooding Impacts \$ 47M
5. Protecting Coastal Communities from Wildfire Impacts \$ 17M

The Regional Climate Collaborative and Capacity Building task will create the “Monterey Bay Climate Resiliency Network,” which will be administered by CMSF. The Climate Resiliency Network will work collaboratively with two existing groups, the Monterey Bay Regional Climate Project Working Group and the Monterey Bay Climate Justice Collaborative, plus AMBAG, and will include Tribal consultation and facilitation. That task will also include the establishment and administration of a Revolving Fund (suggesting \$5M to start) to help implement coastal climate adaptation projects. John displayed a map that showed the general location of the various projects being proposed as part of this regional proposal.

Ross Clark suggested, rather than write “protect from,” write “increase adaptive capacity...”

Mike McCullough noted that he hadn’t received notification of the regional proposal, and Heidi Niggemeyer said she hadn’t either. (Susan responded that they were both on the mailing list, and should have received two notifications each.) Mike wondered about the inclusion of wildfire projects, noting that to be less of a climate risk. Heidi announced that the City of Salinas will be submitting their own \$35M Track 2 proposal to address stormwater needs and to help transform the City from grey to green infrastructure. Susan noted that it may not be too late for the Monterey One Water and/or the City of Salinas to join the larger regional proposal, if they have interest in doing so; this is just the Letter of Intent phase, the application can be adjusted.

Emily Gardner asked whether the team had been in contact with Ruth Langridge at UCSC. Susan said yes; the proposal initially had a “resilient water supply” track, and Ruth was involved with that; but the

project team simply wasn't able to develop that task in time for the LOI deadline (due to busy/conflicting schedules on the part of Andy Fisher, Ruth and others).

4. Updates: Paul Robins announced that the RCD will be breaking ground on a fish passage project in Carmel Valley tomorrow, and the Arundo program for this year is getting underway.

Melanie Beretti announced that the County is in the process of conducting General Plan updates for the Housing, Environmental Justice, and Safety elements. [Community surveys are available here.](#)