

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

April 16, 2025

Location: Moss Landing Marine Labs and Zoom Conference Call

RWMG Entity Attendees:

Jenny Balmagia – Central Coast Wetlands Group
James Durbin – Castroville Community Services District
Patrick Breen – Marina Coast Water District
Piret Harmon – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Carla James – City of Soledad
John Olson – California State University Monterey Bay
Ed Waggoner – City of Soledad, Interim Water Resource Manager

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Leah Lemoine – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Cora Panturad – Monterey County Sustainability Program
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator
Roger VanHorn, Monterey County Environmental Health

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions

2. Central Coast Regional Board's Stormwater Program: Leah Lemoine is a Senior Water Resource Control Engineer for the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's Stormwater and Recycled Water Programs. Leah provided a brief overview of the Regional Board's Stormwater Program.

In 2023 there was a budget change proposal to build in a stormwater program to help meet the Governor's water goals. Leah oversees stormwater capture initiatives, and has oversight of municipal stormwater permits, with a focus on getting medium and large-scale stormwater projects in the ground to help cities meet their existing NPDES requirements and support statewide urban infiltration policy.

Leah announced that there will be \$110M from Prop 4 from the State Water Board Division of Financial Assistance allocated across three years for stormwater projects; 40% must benefit lower income or climate vulnerable communities. No match required. They are considering a project maximum award of \$15M for projects that manage urban stormwater with multi-benefits, including flood control and/or environmental benefits. The guidelines should be out in September for public comment, with solicitation for projects likely Q1 2026. The call for proposals *may* only happen once!

3. Monterey County's Sustainability Program: Cora Panturad is the Sustainability Program Manager for the County of Monterey. Cora presented on the County's Community Climate Action & Adaptation Plan and Municipal Climate Action Plans, provided updates on the ongoing renewable energy projects at the County, and reviewed some Sustainability Program activities.

Community Climate Action & Adaptation Plan and Municipal Climate Action Plans: The County has conducted extensive community outreach, with plans to adopt this summer. Cora discussed the challenge of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In Monterey County, it is estimated that GHG emissions

come primarily from transportation (39%), agriculture (32%) and buildings (21%). Solid waste accounts for 6% of emissions, and off-road vehicles/equipment and wastewater treatment each account for 1%.

Comparing current emissions with state regulatory requirements, the County would need to reduce emissions by 28% by 2030, and by 66% by 2049 (big reduction!). Transportation, being the largest emitter of GHG, is a primary focus of the County's efforts toward meeting those reductions – aiming to reduce emissions from light-duty vehicles by 29% and from heavy-duty vehicles by 10%. The County's target for agricultural emission reduction overall is 32%, with a goal for a 17% reduction in emissions from fertilizer application, 9% reductions from livestock, 5% from agricultural offroad vehicles and equipment, and 2% from irrigation pumps. Other targets include a 21% reduction target from residential/non-residential building energy, and 6% reduction from solid waste. Electricity makes up less than 1% of GHG emissions, so most of the energy emissions are coming from gas; the County is targeting a 6% reduction from gas emissions.

Three big opportunities for GHG emission reductions:

1. Building electrification: Building energy makes up 21% of GHG emissions. Gas comprises most of that, so the strategy is to swap out gas with heat pumps, whole building electrification, etc. Community outreach focuses on benefits that people can easily relate to, such as better health from cleaner air, safer homes, cleaner living environment, energy independence, cost savings.
2. Vehicle trip reduction: The County is working with a multi-jurisdictional collaboration to encourage community members to walk, bike, use public transport. Their outreach approach emphasizes the cost savings for individuals from less (or no) car use, the freedom of spending less time in traffic, safety benefits ("make communities built for people!").
3. Electric vehicle adoption: The County is aiming to make EV ownership and EV infrastructure (charging stations) more accessible. Benefits emphasized are cost savings from gas cars, convenience of being able to charge the car from home, less maintenance.

The County is hoping to lead by example – finding ways for County employees to commute to work with fewer GHG emissions (biking, carpooling, public transport), adopting a clean fleet purchasing policy, installing charging stations, etc.

Renewable Projects: Cora described several major renewable projects that the County is implementing to reduce GHG emissions, which combined are estimated to produce \$32M in cost savings and 1,300 MTCO_{2e} GHG reduction:

1. Solar system and battery system at the County office (1441 Schilling Place in Salinas)
2. Solar system at the County Sheriff's office (1414 Natividad Drive in Salinas)
3. Solar system and battery system at the County Jail (1410 Natividad Drive)
4. Installation of 24 EV charging ports
5. Solar panels and 14 EV charging spaces at the County administrative building (168 W. Alisal)
6. Carports, shaded areas, 12 EV charging stations at the Information Technology Department building.

The County was able to implement the solar projects at the County buildings without upfront capital, through power purchase agreements with the power company. The other projects are being funded through capital reserves.

Sustainability Program Activities:

1. Formed the climate coalition, Pajaro Rising (Watsonville, Pajaro, CBOs) with funding support from a Transformative Climate Communities planning grant
2. Zero emissions shared mobility study (e.g., EV car shares, or bike shares)

3. 3CE (Central Coast Community Energy) Decarbonization Framework: Developing a framework with 3CE for how the County will track gas use in buildings
4. 3CE Plan Your Fleet (transition to electric)
5. Monterey Bay Adaptation & Resilience Plan Implementation Roadmap: Collaborating with the Monterey Bay Regional Climate Project Working Group (RCPWG) and the NOAA-funded Monterey Bay Climate Adaptation Action Network (MBCAAN)
6. CARB GreenZones: This is an upcoming grant from the California Air Resources Board through the RCPWG, that will install 196 EV charging stations, purchase 113 EVs, and support workforce development and a Community of Practice.

4. Round Robin

Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency: Piret Harmon reported that the SVBGSA is busy working on the following projects:

1. Brackish groundwater restoration project (aka extraction barrier): The GSA has been working on feasibility studies. There's a promising solution but it comes with a huge price tag, so they're exploring other options to address seawater intrusion.
2. Aquifer storage and recovery
3. Demand management is moving forward. Urban Water Management Plans all contain water shortage contingency plans. The GSA is exploring using that as a model: structuring a plan that includes certain levels of action based on certain conditions, from least impactful to most impactful, that would require the GSA restricting water demands.
4. Water use efficiency pilot program, focusing on rural residential: 1) providing resources on how to be more efficient, and 2) distributing a survey to understand residents' needs.

Castroville Community Services District: James Durbin reported that CCSD is in the process of trying to rehab Well 3. They'll be drilling Well 6 in about a month.

City of Soledad: Carla James reported that the City has awarded a contract for the next phase of work for the Recycled Water Conveyance Project, to bring recycled water in to parks and schools. Received the Title 22 approval letter. The City was successfully awarded a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant from the US Bureau of Reclamation to install AMI water meters throughout the city. They will get started with competitive bid soon. The City's Urban Water Management Plan is slated for five-year update this year. The City will be conducting a rate study as part of the UWMP update process.

Ed Waggoner noted that the City is continuing forward with its well abandonment and destruction program; destroyed two wells today! They are doing an assessment on the wastewater treatment facility, developing a 15-year plan. The City is also doing a study on a wetlands project. There's a stormwater percolation pond right next to the wastewater treatment facility. The project would divert wastewater flow and develop a wetlands area. Ed will be retiring September 5th – he says, at least!

California State University Monterey Bay: John Olson noted that one of his graduate students will be presenting results on microplastics across the Bay Area. John will be starting a project with the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation to better understand the effect of wetlands adjacent to farm fields on food safety. Note that this project is being funded with Prop 1 Round 2 IRWM Implementation Grant funds.

The next Regional Water Management Group meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2025, location TBD.