

Overarching Challenges and Conflicts in Water Management and How IRWM Can Help Address Them

Challenges and Conflicts in Water Management	How the IRWM Program Can Address Challenges
<p>1. Regulatory Process/Administration:</p> <p>Regulatory constraints or disconnects – namely as they relate to the administration of regulations – can cause water management conflicts. This is particularly true for implementation of un-funded mandates, instances where there are conflicting priorities between entities, permitting or implementation of new/cutting-edge technology, and inconsistent regulatory requirements. Specifically, current regulations may be infeasible to implement from a cost and technology perspective, and implementation requirements may not yield desired benefits.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program provides a unified regional approach for identifying and assessing regulatory compliance issues. Implementation of the recommended action items will represent first steps in improving coordination between regulators and water managers. Because IRWM funding can be leveraged to increase scientific knowledge and fill data gaps, the Program can potentially provide the data and information necessary to address regulatory compliance issues.</p>
<p>2. Water Quality Objectives and Beneficial Uses:</p> <p>There is widespread concern that beneficial uses are not properly defined. This may result in unnecessarily strict or unrealistic water quality standards for surface waters. Such restrictions impact the Region’s ability to effectively and affordably manage water, including imported and reuse supplies. There is concern that because beneficial uses are not prioritized, management is not realistic as every use is considered equally.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program provides a forum for collaboration between water managers and the regulatory agencies which establish water quality standards, including potentially redefining beneficial uses. The IRWM Program provides a forum through which regulated entities, non-governmental organizations, and others can collaborate on potential solutions to current issues associated with water quality objectives and beneficial uses.</p>
<p>3. Integrated Planning:</p> <p>There are numerous entities involved in water management in the Region, including water agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other entities. Due to the number of entities in the Region, there are also conflicts with beneficial uses as different entities may not agree on which beneficial uses are most important from a water management point of view. Conflicts between jurisdictional and interested parties as well as beneficial uses are unavoidable, and demonstrate a need to integrate planning efforts in order to increase the ability to move forward in addressing water management issues. Disconnects between land use and water management planning can result in conflicts, particularly as related to land use encroachment on floodplains. Although communication between water suppliers and land use jurisdictions has improved, ongoing disconnects may result in water quality, flooding, natural resources, and other water-related issues.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program provides a forum to bring different entities together to potentially resolve or avoid conflicts resulting from overlapping jurisdiction. It is also possible that the IRWM Program can help eliminate duplicative efforts by increasing cross-pollination of water management efforts in the Region. The IRWM Program can also bring together water managers from different disciplines, and therefore can help resolve management disputes regarding various beneficial uses. In addition, the IRWM Program provides a regional forum for water managers to engage the land use community. Implementation of the recommended action items will represent first steps in improving coordination between land use planners and water managers.</p>
<p>4. Stakeholder Involvement:</p> <p>Stakeholder involvement in the IRWM Program is a concern, particularly given the complex nature of the program and the number of entities involved. There is particular concern that due to the number of entities, all entities may not be involved in a meaningful way. There have been identified barriers for participation of various entities, particularly those that may not participate due to funding or regulatory restrictions (e.g. non-governmental organizations, tribal entities, and disadvantaged communities).</p>	<p>The IRWM Program’s outreach efforts have attempted to resolve participation barriers to the maximum extent feasible. Specific efforts have been made to create solutions that will resolve participation barriers, such as partnering non-governmental organizations with tribal governments and disadvantaged communities (DACs) for grant-funded projects to resolve grant contracting and implementation issues that the tribal governments and DACs may have with the State of California. In addition, the IRWM Program has commented to DWR on behalf of stakeholders in an attempt to resolve regulatory and programmatic complexities that may bar or discourage certain entities from participating in the IRWM Program.</p>
<p>5. Funding:</p> <p>Given the limited amount of funding available through DWR’s IRWM Program and the increasing amount of resource limitations for public agencies, there is a need for affordable solutions to manage water and address water-related issues. In addition, limited funding makes prioritization of water management needs imperative. Lastly, given the uncertainty of</p>	<p>The IRWM Program brings entities together to prioritize projects for IRWM Program funding. The Region’s project prioritization process specifically takes cost-effectiveness into consideration when evaluating projects and the online project database that has been developed for the IRWM Program can also increase cost-effectiveness by allowing stakeholders to learn about similar projects, and potentially coordinate efforts with other entities to</p>

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<p>DWR's future IRWM grant program, there is a need to determine how the Region will augment future IRWM planning efforts.</p>	<p>reduce duplicative or redundant projects. The Regional Water Quality Control Board has also experienced interest in working with the San Diego IRWM Program and potentially using the online project database to prioritize supplemental environmental projects (SEPs). In addition, the IRWM Program keeps track of other (non-IRWM) grant opportunities that are available, and announces those opportunities to stakeholders during regular meetings and email announcements.</p>
<p>6. Public Awareness and Education: Regional awareness of water management issues is a concern, particularly given that the public and elected officials may be less inclined to support water management financing (e.g., bond or fee programs) if they are unaware of the need for these efforts. Public awareness and expectations of the IRWM Program need to be managed, especially as the State faces uncertainties regarding future water bond funding.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program allows for greater public understanding and acceptance of water management issues and the potential solutions (projects) to address those issues through extensive outreach and education efforts. The IRWM Program conducts outreach and education efforts in an attempt to educate the public on the potential future of the program.</p>
<p>7. IRWM Grant Administration: To-date there have been substantial concerns with IRWM grant funding delays by the State, as these delays affect the ability for the Region's local project sponsors to effectively implement projects and programs to manage water resources. Given the uncertainty of the IRWM Program's future, it is uncertain at this time if the Program will continue on its current path – that focuses on grant funding efforts – or become a larger, regional planning effort.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program has attempted to resolve grant funding issues through communications with DWR; however, these efforts have not resulted in substantial changes. The IRWM Program has not created a long-term plan for governance or a programmatic structure in the absence of a MOU between the RWMG agencies or State grant funding.</p>
<p>8. Affordability: The Region is pressed to find solutions that meet regulatory, outreach, IRWM Program, and other needs, while maintaining affordability for the Region's residents. Affordability is an issue that is considered to span across all six (6) of the above-listed issues as it pertains to all aspects of the IRWM Program and of regional water management.</p>	<p>IRWM grant funding can be used to offset project-related costs in the Region. In addition, because the IRWM project prioritization process encourages projects with multiple benefits, the IRWM Program aims to fund projects that represent up-front investments with holistic solutions that can prevent negative impacts (and associated costs) from occurring. However, there are still additional costs incurred due to program administration and other components, which are not reimbursed by grant funding. As affordability is a regional issue, it cannot be wholly resolved by the IRWM Program.</p>
<p>9. Political Coordination: Regulatory, awareness, conflicts, and other items listed above present challenges to the Region's water managers with respect to political coordination. Specifically, issues that arise may present difficulties associated with project approvals that are necessary for the Region's water managers to move forward with water management efforts.</p>	<p>To-date the IRWM Program has not focused on political coordination, but rather has focused on public and stakeholder outreach efforts. Additional outreach and coordination efforts with other regulatory agencies and political bodies may be possible through the IRWM Program.</p>
<p>10. Managing Water Rights and Compliance: There is a need to reconcile water rights and water quality management for a variety of beneficial uses. Specifically, addressing water quality compliance concerns can result in reduced water recharge/discharge, which can potentially impact downstream or adjacent uses that may have an existing "right" to water sources.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program provides a mechanism to bring different entities together to potentially resolve or avoid water rights conflicts, including the potential for funding for water supply and water quality projects.</p>
<p>11. Sustainability of Water Resources: There is a need to manage water sustainably throughout the Region, meaning that solutions to water-related issues and conflicts are economically and environmentally preferable, and also provide equitable resource protection for the entire Region. Sustainably managing the Region's water resources will help to ensure the long-term availability of water supplies for multiple beneficial uses.</p>	<p>The IRWM Program has adopted the concept of sustainability, and incorporated this concept throughout the IRWM Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives (refer to <i>Chapter 2, Vision and Objectives</i>). The project prioritization process also encompasses the idea of sustainability by prioritizing projects that provide multiple benefits (to the environment and to people) and are also cost-effective.</p>

