



**Regional Advisory Council
Meeting #18 Notes**

August 25, 2008, 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
San Diego County Water Authority
4677 Overland Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123

Attendance – RAC Members

Kathleen Flannery, County of San Diego
Susan Varty, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Doug Gibson, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy
Rob Hutsel, San Diego River Park Foundation
Craig Adams, San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy
Judy Mitchell, Mission Resource Conservation District
Karen Franz, San Diego Coastkeeper
Rick Alexander, Sweetwater Authority
Kirk Ammerman, City of Chula Vista
Marsi Steirer, City of San Diego
Shelby Tucker, San Diego Association of Governments
Katherine Weldon, City of Encinitas
Toby Roy for Ken Weinberg, San Diego County Water Authority
Michael Bardin, Santa Fe Irrigation District
Neal Brown, Padre Dam Municipal Water District
Linda Flournoy, Planning and Engineering for Sustainability
Eric Larson, Farm Bureau of San Diego County
Mark Weston, Helix Water District

Attendance – RWMG Staff

Jon Van Rhyn, County of San Diego
Sheri McPherson, County of San Diego
Mark Stadler, San Diego County Water Authority
Maria Mariscal, San Diego County Water Authority
Jeff Pasek, City of San Diego
Cathy Pieroni, City of San Diego

Attendance – Interested Parties to the RAC

Bruce Posthumos, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Mike Hastings, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation
Norman Shopay, Department of Water Resources
Anna Aljabiry, Department of Water Resources
Tom Richardson, RMC Water and Environment
Roselyn Stewart, RMC Water and Environment
Persephene St Charles, RMC Water and Environment
Amanda Schmidt, RMC Water and Environment

Kim Wehinger, City of San Diego
Mark Corcoran, City of San Diego
MaryAnne Skovpanich, County of Orange
Mark Umphres, Helix Water District
Mandy Rodriguez, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Bill Hunter, Santa Fe Irrigation District
Jill Terp, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Kelly Craig, San Diego Zoological Society
Laurie Walsh, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Meleah Ashford, Ashford Engineering
Kimberly O'Connell, University of California, San Diego
Ulysses Panganiban, City of San Diego
Todd Snyder, County of San Diego
Lawrence O'Leary, unknown
Bill Simmons, unknown

Introductions

Ms. Kathleen Flannery welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ms. Flannery introduced Ms. Katherine Weldon of the City of Encinitas, who is replacing Meleah Ashford on the RAC; Ms. Shirley Inniken of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (not present), who is replacing Megan Johnson on the RAC; and Ms. Rosalyn Stewart of RMC Water and Environment, who is providing consulting services while Alyson Watson is on maternity leave. Introductions were made around the room.

San Diego IRWMP Updates

Ms. Rosalyn Stewart provided an overview of San Diego IRWM Updates.

Ms. Stewart discussed the planning region boundary options for the Proposition 84 IRWM grant program. The San Diego Funding Area includes portions of southern Orange and Riverside counties and all west-draining watersheds in San Diego County (concurrent with the RWQCB Region 9 boundary). Ms. Stewart presented four planning region alternatives the RWMG and Regional Partners are discussing. The Regional Partners will develop a matrix of advantages and disadvantages for each alternative to present to the RAC. Ms. Stewart also noted that the Regional Partners are now invited to RAC meetings as interested parties. The RAC will have to make the final decision on the planning region boundary.

Ms. Stewart discussed ways to extend outreach about the IRWM program to new forums. Both the RWMG and the Workgroup have discussed outreach and ideas include: encouraging all project proponents to issue a press release announcing kick-off of their project; encouraging all project proponents to include a banner/link to the San Diego IRWM website from their websites; planning a regional 'ribbon-cutting' event with DWR in the Fall; and including a contact on the IRWM website to request a presentation. No other forums of extending outreach were identified by the RAC members.

Ms. Stewart reported on the recent Workgroup meeting. At the June RAC meeting, the Workgroup was directed to recommend what to do if the watershed coordinator positions are not funded. DWR has indicated that they are not fundable as written, but that DWR would be willing to accept work plan revisions that meet the Proposition 50 Guidelines. The Workgroup

convened on July 31st to discuss the revision of two projects: Item 17 – San Dieguito River Watershed Management Plan Implementation, and Item 18 – San Diego River Watershed Management Plan Implementation.

- The San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy proposes to reformulate this item as an implementation of a key action item in the WMP – development of a conceptual plan for natural treatment wetlands in the Lake Hodges watershed. The revised budget would reflect the same final grant request total as in the original application
- The San Diego River Park Foundation proposes to delete Item 18 from the project list, build stakeholder and disadvantaged communities outreach asks into the El Capitan Reservoir Watershed Acquisition and Restoration Program. The revised budget for item 8 would be increased to include the grant request amount from Item 18.

Conclusions/Actions

The RAC approved the revisions to Items 17 and 18.

Update on La Jolla Shores Integrated Coastal Management Plan

Ms. Meleah Ashford provided an update on the La Jolla Shores Integrated Coastal Management Plan and Agua Hedionda Lagoon Watershed Management Plan. Ms. Ashford described the protection program developed for two Areas of Biological Significance (ASBS) at La Jolla Shores, including implementation actions. She further described the scientific analysis used to develop watershed priorities in the Agua Hedionda Watershed Management Plan. She requested guidance from the RAC to how to align priorities and how to be included in the San Diego IRWMP.

RAC Member Comments and Responses:

- How will this program continue on since Meleah will be leaving the state? *Kathy Weldon has taken Meleah's spot on the RAC and will bring local knowledge of the coastal watersheds.*

Watershed Panel

Ms. Persephene St. Charles introduced all of watershed panel members. She indicated that each speaker has a limit of 5 minutes to talk about planning, objectives, and issues in the watershed. Comments from each person's presentation are provided below.

Bruce Posthumos – San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (State Perspective)

- The “watershed approach” has lost steam at the State (RWQCB) level.
- California is still trying to figure out the watershed approach. The hope is that local agencies will implement the watershed approach before the State requires it (for funding purposes or legislation).
- San Diego should implement the watershed approach because it is an important way to think.
- A critical component of watershed planning is to have an active watershed council and defensible science.

Sue Varty – Olivenhain Municipal Water District (Agency Perspective)

- IRWM comprises the future of grant funding (Props 50, 84, 1E, etc).
- Agencies need to focus on better integration at the project level; the real goal should be to make San Diego a better place.
- Suggests that all agencies (water districts, sewer agencies) would benefit from the watershed approach and should be included in the process.
- Suggests that the RAC be reformulated to include representation from all watershed councils in the planning region (*handout distributed*).

Doug Gibson – Carlsbad Watershed

- The Carlsbad Watershed consists of 7 sub-watersheds that all have their own characteristics. Cross watershed issues have been explored, including invasive species, stream buffers, etc. However, individual watershed management plans have also been developed.
- Agreements need to be strengthened to continue work. Water supply/distribution has been added to the list of planning needs, and it should be formalized under the MOU.
- Bi-monthly meetings are held to discuss issues, clarify goals and objectives, and determine actions.

Rob Hutsel – San Diego River Watershed

- The watershed planning group was launched after a 34 million gallon sewage spill in the San Diego River in 2000. Twelve people came together to form the group and discussing issues facing the watershed. Now, 72 organizations are participating to give the San Diego River a voice and to educate people about the River.
- The Coalition was formed as an advocacy group; the Foundation was formed to facilitate meetings and project implementation. The Coalition has 2 chairs: one from the County and one from the community. The group continues to work as a forum, to come together on discuss issues and hammer out ideas.
- Workgroup committees develop the annual work plan. The Conservancy is a state agency formed to fund the annual work plan.

Craig Adams – San Dieguito River Watershed

- The San Dieguito River watershed is approximately 350 sq mi, and includes Lake Hodges and San Dieguito Lagoon. A number of watershed planning efforts are underway – such as the multi-jurisdictional river park.
- San Diego County's watershed program is a major supporter of the watershed council.
- The Watershed Management Plan is multi-objective; it is weak on prioritization. The program identifies projects but does not rank them. They do not want projects ranked lower on the list to be thrown out, when the project can fulfill a need in the watershed.
- It is very important to develop a watershed council along with the watershed plan. The council will keep the plan alive by implementing projects and reevaluating needs of the watershed.

Mike Hastings – Penasquitos Watershed

- The Pensaquitos watershed has three sub-watersheds that feed into the Penasquitos Lagoon, and each has a unique set of issues. Salt water intrusion, sedimentation and erosion, and stream channelization are key issues throughout the larger watershed.

- The Lagoon Foundation was formed in 1983 to support and provide help to the Lagoon. The Foundation conducts biological monitoring, sediment surveys, and lagoon mouth openings.
- A draft version of the Los Penasquitos Watershed Enhancement Plan is in place, but there are no management level activities. The Enhancement Plan will be updated in 2009-2010 and should include stakeholder outreach.

July Mitchell – San Luis Rey Watershed

- The San Luis Rey watershed has the smallest population, but the largest area and includes five Native American reservations. The population is expected to increase in the future; therefore a need for watershed management is apparent.
- A watershed council was established with University of California. This council discusses watershed issues including water quality, hazardous materials, land use patterns, invasive species management, and habitat restoration.
- The fledgling program has a number of goals: develop a consensus on what the group should achieve, get everyone to work together, and develop a MOU.

Karen Franz – Pueblo, Otay, and Tijuana Watersheds

- The Pueblo watershed is highly developed; it contains a half a million people and only 25% open space. No management plan is prepared for this watershed, but stakeholders feel it is important to develop a plan. Funding is needed to establish a watershed council.
- The Chollas Creek Enhancement Plan directs work in that sub-watershed, but needs funding for a complete Drainage Study before daylighting can be considered.
- Stakeholders participation is critical. A big disadvantaged communities (DAC) population in the watershed focuses on health concerns (i.e., vagrant population camped in creek channels).
- The Otay watershed has a programmatic advisory document, adopted by the County and planned for adoption by the City of San Diego. The City of Chula Vista did not approve the document. Again, funding is needed to establish a watershed council.
- The Tijuana watershed has a set of guidance documents developed by NOAA in 2004, and a biodiversity document. Key issues include sewage spills and sedimentation in urban runoff.
- There is an active Biodiversity Council in Mexico. Again, funding is needed to establish a watershed council.

Rick Alexander – Sweetwater Watershed

- The Sweetwater watershed has great biodiversity; it contains California State Park lands, a large National Wildlife Refuge, national forests, and Native American reservations. Sweetwater Authority owns 6,000 acres between two major reservoirs.
- Local water supplies are key to source profile; an urban runoff diversion system has been developed.
- No watershed plan or council is in place. An initial effort was made seven years ago, but was not pursued further. As above, funding is needed to establish a watershed council.

Open Forum

The panel was then asked what challenges agencies are facing in watershed planning, and how can the IRWMP and watershed planning collaborate and work together for a common goal. Responses from the panel members are provided below.

- If watershed planning was intertwined with grant funding, the plans would be developed.

- IRWM could also fund watershed coordinator positions (Editorial note: Funding of watershed coordinator positions was not allowed under Proposition 50.)
- IRWM could also formally recognize watershed planning with the regional plan.
- It is important to work through issues and focus on integration of projects at the watershed scale. IRWM should force engagement at the watershed level.
- Funding for land acquisition and mitigation is key for watershed planning.
- Watershed planning provides an opportunity for people to come together for a beneficial purpose. Watersheds without an existing council need to learn from successful existing groups.
- Grant funding needs to be less time restrictive for watershed planning and implementation, however, because council decision-making can be slow.
- The IRWM could support development of a coordinated process for restoration permitting.
- Can the region establish a standardized watershed plan/process under the regional plan?
- There are many different ways to conduct watershed planning and governance. It may be a challenge to adapt unique watershed issues into a standard IRWMP process; it needs to allow for the diversity within each basin.
- If the region is just chasing grants, then we are missing the point. Need to work on more regional issues and planning, not focus only on grant requirements.
- Watersheds are worth protecting and watershed planning will solve multiple problems. Need to do good planning, and then chase grants to implement our projects.
- Suggests using watershed as the building block for IRWM planning. People get involved at the local level!
- It is critical to develop clear goals for watershed councils and develop benchmarks for performance.

Watershed Planning Q&A

The discussion opened to questions and answers from the RAC and members of the public to bring forth any additional insight from the panel.

RAC Member Questions and Discussion:

- What is key impetus for formation of watershed panel?
 - *Funding and a group of active stakeholders. Funding agencies won't fund single agencies; multiple stakeholder/agencies are needed.*
 - *Collaboration to get work done.*
 - *Advocacy regarding water quality and open space concerns.*
 - *Recognition that the watershed and its resources are valuable.*
- How are sub-watersheds included in the process?
 - *Stakeholder workgroups or subcommittees address sub-watersheds.*
 - *Many times the lack of resources prevents planning to reach the sub-watershed level.*
 - *Varies by hydrologic basin, as needed. It can be beneficial to work on a smaller level; it can be easier to get things done.*

- What does it take to sustain a watershed council?
 - *Important people involved in the planning process. Participation of elected officials in order to develop “policy.”*
 - *Open meetings to jurisdictional partners and/or elected officials; it keeps progress moving.*
 - *NGOs need to work with local governments as well as working with state and federal officials.*
 - *Support a council of sub-watershed representatives to garner involvement.*
 - *IRWM allows for collaboration between water agencies and watershed groups.*

Public Questions and Discussion:

- Bill Simmons – Chair to San Dieguito Watershed Council. Based on experience from San Dieguito Watershed Council, NGOs must be a part of the Council and staff support is critical. Staff support keeps the plan alive gets projects implemented.
- Lawrence O’Leary. What is the biggest issue in watershed and/or ocean management?
 - *Key watershed issues vary by basin, year, etc. However, issues that surface repeatedly include water quality impairments (via RWQCB), invasive species, and habitat enhancement. Over-fishing is key ocean threat.*
 - *Very difficult to pinpoint the biggest issue in watershed management, but one important factor that links all the issues together is “providing value” to the watershed.*
 - *Solutions should address inter-related issues!*

Other Updates

No other updates were discussed.

Future Agenda Items

The next RAC meeting will be held on October 15, 2008 from 9:00 am to 11:30 am at the San Diego Water Authority to discuss the Proposition 84 planning boundaries and regional priorities.

Public Comments

Public comments were received during the Watershed Planning Q&A. Please see above.