



Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #110

September 3, 2025

9:00 am – 11:30 am

Virtual Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Richard Whipple (Chair), County of San Diego
Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association
Bronti Cash and Tim Murphy, City of Oceanside
Brook Sarson, San Diego Sustainable Living Institute
Charlie de la Rosa and Kelly Craig, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
Chris Trees for Mike Thornton, San Elijo JPA
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society
Erica Ryan, San Diego Water Board
Erika Wolski, Ramona Municipal Water District
Kimberly O'Connell, UCSD Clean Water Utility
Oscar Romo, Alter Terra
Patrick McDonough, San Diego CoastKeeper
Rob Hutsel, San Diego River Park Foundation
Tina Tran for Tory Walker, Floodplain Management Association
Toby Roy, RCAC
Wbaldo Arellano, City of Imperial Beach

RWVG Staff and Consultants

Andrew Funk, City of San Diego
Annica Ly, City of San Diego
Arthella Vallarta, Woodard & Curran
Ernesto Rios, City of San Diego Public Utilities Division
Katie Huston, City of San Diego
Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority
Neil Searing, County of San Diego
Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran
Samantha Chaidez, City of San Diego
Sarah Favrot, County of San Diego
Summer Adleberg, San Diego County Water Authority

Interested Parties to the RAC

Aaron Cook, Fallbrook Public Utility District
Alisa Nichols, Valley Center MWD

Amanda Flesse, City of Carlsbad
Bri Martin, NV5
Camilla Bobroff, Rincon Consultants
Deanna Moore, Public
Daniela Mejia, Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego
America Aceves, County of San Diego
Jessica Cleaver, San Diego County Water Authority
John Sisco, Johnson & Johnson EHS
Julia Chase, City of San Diego
Julia Richards, Public
Julia Varnergardner, Sweetwater Authority
Katie Hentrich, City of Carlsbad
Liam Wolski, Public
Luis Carmona, Public
Marissa Westerfield, City of San Diego
Mark Stephens, Public
Maureen Hand, California Air Resources Board
Meghan Kelly, County of San Diego
Merina Addonigio, Woodard & Curran
Nia Johnson, Public
Norman Pelak, Hydrologic Research Center
Sophia Bejarano, Public
Tom Hamilton, Public
Peejay Tubongbanua, Padre Dam Municipal Water District

Welcome, Introductions, & Land Acknowledgement

Mr. Richard Whipple, County of San Diego (County), welcomed everyone to the virtual RAC meeting. Ms. Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran, reviewed the virtual meeting process, including how to use the virtual controls and chat feature. Meeting participants were encouraged to enter their name and organization into the chat for roll call and to update their names on Zoom.

Mr. Whipple read the Tribal Land Acknowledgment to the group, which was written to be delivered in a virtual setting:

We acknowledge that this virtual meeting of the San Diego IRWM Program Regional Advisory Committee is taking place in the traditional lands of the Kumeyaay and Luiseño people. As we begin this meeting, we acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of our region. A land acknowledgment is a critical step toward working with native communities to secure meaningful partnership and inclusion in the stewardship and protection of their cultural resources and homelands. We respect these ancestral grounds where we are collectively gathered and support the resilience and strength that Indigenous people have shown worldwide.

RAC members, Charlie de la Rosa, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, and Oscar Romo, Alter Terra, each provided brief introductions about themselves and their respective organizations.

Climate Change and Resiliency Panel

Ms. Maureen Hand, California Air Resources Board (CARB), presented on California's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality. California's greenhouse gas (GHG) targets and goals are set by Legislation and Executive Orders. The Scoping Plan lays a cost effective and feasibility path to achieving targets that align with the state's targets and goals. The state's goal is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. Some of the actions to reduce GHG include increasing the number of electrical vehicles on the road, increasing electric appliances in residences, increasing hydrogen supply, installing wind or solar power, and increasing acres of Natural and Working Lands climate actions. Additionally, fossil fuel combustion reduction will reduce air pollution by 71%, resulting in \$200 billion in health cost savings from decreased fuel combustion.

Ms. Meghan Kelly and Ms. America Aceves, County, presented on the County's 2024 Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CAP was adopted on September 11, 2024, and its purpose was to reduce GHG emissions, increase co-benefits (e.g. improved air quality and reduced utility bills), and streamline housing development. The CAP implemented an outreach process that obtained feedback from diverse stakeholders, through public workshops, community events, surveys, and public comment periods. The CAP includes several measures and actions that are designed to reduce GHG emissions, resulting in equity-based outcomes and benefits. For example, a measure for energy reduction is to increase renewable energy and an action to accomplish that measure is to streamline solar permitting, resulting in reduced utility bills and improved access to clean technology. Following adoption of the CAP, the County will begin an annual monitoring report, update GHG emissions inventory, and update the CAP every five years.

Ms. Julia Chase and Ms. Marissa Westerfield, City of San Diego, presented on the City of San Diego's CAP and Climate Resilient SD (CRSD). The CAP and CRSD are similar, but the CAP focuses on mitigation while the CRSD focuses on resilience. Mitigation aims to reduce GHG emissions and resiliency aims to help the City of San Diego prepare for, respond to, and recovering from climate change events. Many strategies can provide both climate resilience and climate mitigation benefits. The 2022 CAP has a communitywide goal of net zero emissions by 2035, which was developed in collaboration with community partners. The CAP prioritizes communities of concern, supports clean air and green jobs, and maintains California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining. There are six strategies that aim to reduce GHG emission; water-related actions are included in Strategy 4 (Circular Economy and Clean Communities) and Strategy 5 (Resilient Infrastructure and Healthy Ecosystems). Strategy 4 maintains a 90% waste diversion rate and captures methane from our landfill and wastewater treatment facilities. It also includes actions to increase healthy food access and food recovery. Strategy 5 will help the City of San Diego thrive in the face of impacts of climate change through a greater focus on the greening of the City of San Diego, starting with communities of concern. It also includes targets for the restoration of salt marshland for carbon sequestration, as well as increasing our local water supply through Pure Water San Diego. The City of San Diego also has a CAP Dashboard to enhance transparency and offer timely updates on the progress of GHG emission reductions. The CRSD addresses the City of San Diego's vulnerabilities to climate change and outlines strategies to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The CRSD focuses on key hazards such as extreme heat, flooding, and sea level rise through nature-based solutions, infrastructure improvements, and community engagement. It is also integrated into infrastructure planning and the City of San Diego tracks implementation of the strategies.

Ms. Katie Hentrich, City of Carlsbad, presented on the City of Carlsbad's CAP. The CAP was updated in November 2024. It includes 23 measures in six strategies and annual reporting to City Council. The GHG inventory uses 2016 as the baseline year, which is 981,000 metric tons of GHG. The City of Carlsbad is currently meeting its target and is expected to meet its 2045 GHG reduction target (85% below the baseline). The CAP includes two water measures, which include wastewater system improvements and water system improvements. The City of Carlsbad launched a CAP Dashboard in July 2025 to make reporting more

accessible. The City of Carlsbad has no comprehensive adaptation plan, but adaptation planning is included in the Five Year Strategic Plan.

Questions/Comments:

- Are any of the County's services, such as the waterscape rebate program, available to Tribes?
 - The CAP's programs are specific to residents and businesses in the unincorporated area. Not all County services are limited to the unincorporated area, those programs are available countywide.
 - Thank you. All Tribes in San Diego are within unincorporated areas, but Tribes have been told that County services aren't always available due to tribes being sovereign nations.
 - The distinction is that some County programming is directed only to where the County has land use jurisdiction, this is commonly referred to the "unincorporated area", but the County does not have jurisdiction in Tribal, State, nor federal lands.
 - Unfortunately, the SoCal WaterSMART rebate program is not available to Tribes through the County, but may be available through the Water Authority or Eastern Municipal Water District, depending on from whom they receive water.
 - Recommend excluding reservations on the eligibility map then.
- Given that the current Federal Administration does not acknowledge climate change as an issue, and this perspective is likely to continue, how is this being addressed?
 - The City of Carlsbad is leaning more heavily on state and regional funding, but that was limited and oversubscribed previously and will only get worse. The CAP is a mitigation measure for our General Plan Update so there's no risk of it going away within the City of Carlsbad.
 - Similar to the City of Carlsbad, the County's CAP is mitigation for the General Plan, so the County will continue implementation as outlined in the document.
 - The City of San Diego is due for a CAP update and the City of San Diego will be relying on state actions. The calculations for the federal actions would need to be re-done. The goals of the CAP will not change, but the City of San Diego would need to adapt their actions.
- How is the MS4 system addressed in the CAPs?
 - For the City of San Diego, the stormwater infrastructure falls under resilience and adaptation work.
 - The CAP focuses on GHG emissions, and generally, stormwater infrastructure does not impact GHG reductions, so it is not included in the CAP.
 - Because the County's CAP is focused on mitigation, stormwater is included in the County's green infrastructure actions that encourage the development of green infrastructure projects.

Project Completion Report

Ms. Julia Varnergardner, Sweetwater Authority, presented on the Sweetwater Reservoir Wetlands Habitat Recovery Project. The goal of the project was to re-establish and enhance black willow forest and wetland habitat via both passive and active restoration, which involved ceasing reservoir bottom mowing, planting black willow, and removing invasive plant species. The project spanned approximately 10 years, largely due to multiple amendments that significantly altered its original scope. The project restored willow woodland and wetland habitat within the 67-acre habitat recovery site and improved overall ecological conditions of the 250-acre Sweetwater Reservoir Habitat Management Program (HMP) preserve for the Least Bell's vireo and other riparian habitat-associated wildlife. In total, over 3,300 willow cuttings were planted and the Least Bell vireo's and riparian habitat increased by 14.5 acres. The project also increased water storage potential through removal of a long-standing restriction on receiving imported water.

Visit us at www.sdirwmp.org

Increased imported water storage can be realized when regional imported water sources are plentiful and available.

Some of the challenges were permitting timelines, high waters, and outcomes from the well siting study. The well siting study was added through an amendment and it aimed to conduct testing to see where it was feasible to obtain an easement or purchase land to construct a well. Negotiations with the property owner did not move forward and the selected location was ultimately deemed unfeasible.

Questions/Comments:

None.

Federal and State Updates

Ms. Samantha Chaidez, City of San Diego, presented federal and state updates. President Trump released his proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and he is proposing to eliminate all funding for WaterSMART programs next year. The President's budget proposal is rarely approved and WaterSMART programs are popular in Congress. There may be more updates available in mid-September. The California Legislature rejected the Governor's proposed spending for Prop 4, which will delay some appropriations for funding. The Legislature may also shift priorities for funding in the current and future budgets. There may be more updates available later this month. The RWMG is actively tracking Prop 4, and we will share any updates with the RAC as more information becomes available.

Governor Newsom signed SB 131 and AB 130 into law with significant reforms to the CEQA. Changes included streamlining CEQA processes for housing development projects that would qualify for a CEQA exemption except for a single disqualifying issue, allows for limited CEQA review of the single "near miss" issue, and waives requirements for analysis of alternatives, cumulative impacts, or growth-inducing effects. Several CEQA sections were added or amended to expand exemptions for environmentally beneficial and community-serving projects. New sections include §21080.48, supporting grant-funded water facilities with long-term climate and biodiversity benefits; §21080.49, exempting fuel reduction projects to reduce wildfire risk; and §21080.57, covering public parks and trails funded by Prop 4. Amendments to §21080.47 extend the exemption timeline, while changes to §21080.51 broaden eligibility for infrastructure projects.

Questions/Comments:

None.

Grant Administration

Ms. Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority, presented updates on grant administration. Total grant funding awarded to the San Diego IRWM Program is \$132.8 million for 84 regional projects. To date, \$108.4 million has been billed to and reimbursed by DWR, while \$24.3 million in grant funding remains to be allocated. One project is already complete in Proposition 1, Round 1, while five projects are more than 70% complete. Two projects have requested additional time to complete work, and an amendment request to extend the program and minor project changes has been submitted. Two active projects remain in the Urban and Multi-Benefit Drought Relief program. The Department of Water Resources recently approved an amendment for the Project 1: San Pasqual Tribe Duro Community Waterline to complete all work on Tribal land. There are six active projects under Proposition 1, Round 2. One project is over 76% complete. Four projects have recently requested additional time to complete work.

Questions/Comments

None.

State and Federal Funding Opportunities

Ms. Johnson presented a list of upcoming state and federal funding opportunities. They have been included in the table below.

Project Types	Timing	Website
CalEPA: Environmental Justice Action Grants Program	Second round due: February 28, 2025	https://calepa.ca.gov/ejactiongrants/
California Financing Coordinating Committee: CFCC funding fair	TBD Fall	https://www.cfcc.ca.gov/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
SWRCB: Prop 1 Technical Assistance Funding Program	Open: rolling	https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/proposition1/tech_asst_funding.html
California OPC: Sea Level Rise Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program	Open: rolling quarterly basis Full proposal due September 12, 2025	https://opc.ca.gov/sb-1-tribal-funding
CalOES: Hazard Mitigation Grant Program	Sub application due September 15, 2025	https://www.caloes.ca.gov/office-of-the-director/operations/recovery-directorate/hazard-mitigation/hm-grant-opportunities/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
U.S. EPA: Midsize and Large Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Program	Applications due October 6, 2025	https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/midsize-and-large-drinking-water-system-infrastructure-resilience-and-sustainability
USBR: Small Storage Program	Second round due July 15, 2025	https://www.usbr.gov/smallstorage/index.html
USBR: WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Program Reclamation and Reuse Projects for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024	Second round due March 11, 2025	https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/ewrp/index.html
USBR: Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grants	Paused	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350845

Project Types	Timing	Website
USBR: WaterSMART Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program	Paused	https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/aquatic/index.html
USBR: WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Program	Paused	https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/ewrp/index.html
DWR: Proposition 4 - Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024.	Paused	https://water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices/2025/Jul-25/Prop-4-Grant-Funding-Update?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Questions/Comments

None.

Public Comments

None.

Summary and Next Steps

The next RAC meeting is tentatively scheduled in November and is planned to be in-person.

2025 Meeting Schedule

- November TBD

Regular meetings to be held quarterly in 2025, alternating between virtual and in-person meetings.