



Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #107

November 6, 2024

9:00 am – 11:30 am

Hybrid Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Richard Whipple (Chair), County of San Diego
Amanda Loper, University of California San Diego Clean Water Utility
Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association
Brook Sarson, San Diego Sustainable Living Institute
Charlie de la Rosa, San Diego Zoo Global
Chris Helmer, City of Imperial Beach
Chris Trees, Sann Eiljo Joint Powers Authority
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society
Eylon Shamir, Hydrologic Research Center
Jimmy Smith, Regional Water Quality Control Board
Joey Randall, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Julia Chunn-Heer, Surfrider Foundation
Leslie Cleveland, United States Bureau of Reclamation
Marissa Potter, Santa Fe Irrigation District
Patrick McDonough, San Diego CoastKeeper
Sandra Jacobsen, California Trout
Rob Hutsel, San Diego River Park Foundation
Tim Murphy, City of Carlsbad
Tory Walker, Building Industry Association
Wbaldo Arellano, City of Imperial Beach

RWMG Staff and Consultants

Andrew Funk, City of San Diego
Annica Ly, City of San Diego
Arthella Vallarta, Woodard & Curran
Aydel Zielke, County of San Diego
Bill Luksic, San Diego County Water Authority
Elizabeth Lovsted, San Diego County Water Authority
Ernesto Rios, City of San Diego Public Utilities Division
Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority
Katie Huston, City of San Diego
Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority

Ruth de la Rosa, County of San Diego
Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran
Samantha Chaidez, City of San Diego

Interested Parties to the RAC

Aaron Cook, Fallbrook Public Utility District
Claire Griffiths, Woodard & Curran
Inken Mello, Woodard & Curran
Katie Huston, City of San Diego
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego
Luis Valdez, Helix Water District
Mark Stephens, Public
Megan Otto, Geosyntec
Richard Harmon, Woodard & Curran
Sloane Viola, California Natural Resources Agency
Soleil Develle, Fallbrook Public Utility District

Welcome, Introductions, & Land Acknowledgement

Mr. Richard Whipple, County of San Diego (County), welcomed everyone to the hybrid 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 hybrid setting:

We acknowledge that this hybrid 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.

Climate and Community Resiliency Panel

Ms. Sloane Viola, California Natural Resources Agency, presented on California's Climate Adaptation Strategy which is a comprehensive, evolving framework aimed at addressing climate impacts and resilience. The document was first created in 2018 and has been updated every three years since. The 2024 update was aimed at improving the metrics and timing of strategy implementation and focused more on equity and engagement. The integrated climate action plan includes a summary of climate change impacts in California, a scoping plan for achieving carbon neutrality and mitigating the impacts of climate change, an adaptation strategy for those mitigation measures, and plans for future research. Ms. Viola highlighted that the 2024 draft strategy includes a range of procedural improvements reflecting progress and integrates key actions from California's latest climate adaptation plans. The draft strategy is organized based on the following six priorities:

- Strengthening Protections for Vulnerable Communities: Equity-focused practices to safeguard climate-vulnerable populations.

- **Bolstering Public Health and Safety:** Addressing the impact of climate change on food security, drinking water, and incorporating new data collection methods to enhance resilience.
- **Building a Climate-Resilient Economy:** Focus on workforce development, economic transition, and agricultural viability.
- **Nature-Based Climate Solutions:** Expanded focus on watershed-scale restoration projects for natural systems resilience.
- **Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Decisions guided by the best available climate science.
- **Collaboration and Resource Leveraging:** Partnerships to address threats like extreme heat in vulnerable communities.

The plan's success is to be ensured by tracked outcome metrics and is moving away from time-based goals.

Mr. Chris Helmer, City of Imperial Beach (City), presented the City's green infrastructure adaptation strategies to address climate-related sea-level rise. Mr. Helmer shared that a 2016 vulnerability assessment identified flooding risks in several neighborhoods, with one-third of the city at risk, particularly the Bay Side neighborhood. About 75% of the funding for these projects comes from Federal Emergency Management Agency grants. The Bayshore Bikeway resiliency project, a key initiative, includes a living levee, a multipurpose detention basin, tidal gates, and bikeway upgrades, providing low-impact infrastructure to mitigate sea-level rise. Additionally, the City is developing a community resilience plan to protect against a projected 3 feet of sea-level rise, focusing on beach nourishment, ecotone slopes, and wetland restoration. Key areas like Seacoast Drive, which must remain accessible for U.S. Border Patrol operations, are prioritized for storm surge protection. Mr. Helmer also emphasized ongoing research with Scripps Institution of Oceanography and San Diego State University, and highlighted concerns over the Tijuana River pollution crisis, expressing hope that the upcoming Climate Bond will help address this issue.

Questions/Comments:

- According to the United States Geological Survey, every dollar spent is \$6 in recovery. I would like to see the board pursue these types of projects being presented with future funding efforts.
 - Agreed, it would be worth seeing how the Climate Bond can fund the IRWM.

Lower Santa Margarita River IPR Project Completion Report

Mr. Aaron Cook, Fallbrook Public Utility District (FPUD), highlighted the IPR project funded by the IRWM and conducted in partnership with United States Marine Corps Camp Pendleton (CPEN). The project objectives included connecting recycled water supplies with recycled water demand within CPEN, FPUD, and Rainbow Municipal Water District, creating win-win situations for all regional organizations, and forging partnerships and collaborations with local communities. The project's scope involved groundwater modeling and the piloting of a treatment train, as well as the conceptual design of the IPR facility and the proposed piping alignment. This was funded by the grant awarded in June 2020 and provided \$687,500 to the project's development. The next steps are to discuss the potential implementation and secure federal funding to advance design and construction. Mr. Cook concluded by highlighting the benefits of collaboration achievable via IRWM.

Questions/Comments:

- How many million gallons per day (MGD) will you be able to produce?
 - 2 MGD, which would be very helpful to the region, especially in drier years as the river is dependent on hydrological conditions.

State and IRWM Updates

Ms. Elizabeth Lovsted, San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), presented updates regarding U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grants Program. The SDCWA is requesting approximately \$3 million in funding from Reclamation's WEEG Program to continue the installation of toilets in disadvantaged communities. Mr. Andrew Funk, City of San Diego, presented on Proposition 4, which if passed will provide \$10 billion towards safe drinking water, wildfire prevention, drought preparedness, and clean air projects. Mr. Funk noted that \$3-4 billion will be set aside for water-related projects, and that IRWM will be allotted \$100 million for statewide programs. The San Diego IRWM Program will be able to seek funding if passed, and the measure is currently at 57% in favor. Ms. Johnson presented triggers for change of the San Diego IRWM structure, the goals of the San Diego IRWM evolution, and highlighted the desire to incorporate feedback from today's discussion in the strategic roadmap. Ms. Johnson also explained that the RAC Membership Term is ending and the RWMG proposes extending the expiring terms to ensure a smooth transition during the RAC structure evolution period. She also presented an overview on the evolution of the grant process, and asked what specific aspects of the grant application process local project sponsors are willing to financially support, and what elements would be dealbreakers.

Questions/Comments:

- Is there enough capacity to continue the structure we have now?
 - Currently seeing if that's feasible, but the intent of evolution is to strengthen and continue the program.
- There is huge value in sitting in the meetings and building relationships. I am concerned about people only showing up for votes for grant funding with a more informal structure and would appreciate more commitment of time.
- I like the idea of making things simpler but do not want to see the harm of the assistance with grant funding.
- Could we reduce the meeting structure/schedule by making meetings more efficient and streamlined? Could we make the meetings more focused on educational engagement?
 - Concerned about the limited funding provided by Proposition 4. The Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) wants to continue San Diego IRWM even with limited funding. We are working on structure that brings more topics to the meetings and do not want to reduce the number of meetings.
- I approved of the San Diego Association of Governments educational engagement type of structure. If the new RAC format is open, what's the difference between that and a townhall? I also would prefer more "hot topics" to encourage more public engagement.
 - I anticipate the RAC still needs to be able to advise on decision making.
- Because IRWM is a statewide entity, how is that affecting the evolution of the RAC?
 - The RAC is a unique part of the San Diego IRWM Program and has no tie to what happens statewide.
- I hope to make sure that people talking on discussion topics are qualified, but strongly encourages more public engagement.
- I am concerned about "pay to play" exclusions to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for grant applications.
 - The RWMG is aware of this barrier and will work on details regarding the applications costs.

Grant Administration

Ms. Loisa Burton, SDCWA, 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, \$105 million has been billed to and reimbursed by the Department of Water Resources, while \$27.6 million in grant funding remains to be allocated. The Lake Morena Oaks Shores Mutual Water Company halted work on the Ballard Well Connection and Transmission Pipeline due to difficulties in acquiring the Ballard Well and the surrounding project land. The original grant award was \$1,730,000, and no viable alternate scopes of work have been identified. This has triggered the SDIRWM Funding Reallocation Policy. Two active projects have been invited to request, and one request was received from Ramona Municipal Water District. The amount available for reallocation is estimated to be \$1,680,749.

To ensure timely amendment process and fund usage, the Project Selection Workgroup cannot reconvene. The RWMG proposed to reallocate the unused grant funds.

Vote for RWMG to reallocate funds and notify RAC via email of funding allocation process:

Yes: 17

No: 0

Abstain: 5

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
USBR: Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grants	Third round due: January 14, 2025	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350845
USBR: Small Storage Program	Second round due: April 30, 2025	https://www.usbr.gov/smallstorage/index.html
SWRCB: Prop 1 Technical Assistance Funding Program	Open: rolling	https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/proposition1/tech_asst_funding.html
DWR: Water Desalination Grant Program	Open: rolling	https://water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices/2020/Sept-2020/Water-Desal-Grant-CAP

Questions/Comments

None.

Public Comments

- It is often hard for NGOs to staff this meeting process, and the grant application fees is a strong barrier.

Summary and Next Steps

2025 Meeting Schedule

- February 5
- May 7
- August 6
- November 5

Regular meetings to be held quarterly in 2025.