



Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #105

May 1, 2024

9:30 am – 11:30 am

Hybrid Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association
Bronti Cash and Tim Murphy, City of Oceanside
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society
Erica Wolski, Ramona MWD
Eylon Shamir, Hydrologic Research Center
Jimmy Smith, Regional Water Quality Control Board
Joey Randall for Kim Thorner, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Julia Chunn-Herr, Surf rider
Kelly Craig, San Diego Zoo Global
Kerri Denhalter, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Kimberly O'Connell and Amanda Loeper, UCSD Clean Water Utility
Leslie Cleveland, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mike Thornton, San Elijo JPA
Oscar Romo, Alter Terra
Patrick McDonough, San Diego CoastKeeper
Paul Oberbauer, Sweetwater Authority
Rob Hutsel, San Diego River Park Foundation
Wbaldo Arellano, City of Imperial Beach

RWMG Staff and Consultants

Andrew Funk, City of San Diego
Annica Ly, City of San Diego
Ariel O'Callaghan, Woodard & Curran
Arthella Vallarta, Woodard & Curran
Aydel Zielke, County of San Diego
Bill Luksic, San Diego County Water Authority
Chelsea McGimpsey, County of San Diego
Elizabeth Lovsted, San Diego County Water Authority
Ernesto Rios, City of San Diego Public Utilities Division
Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority
Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority
Jeff Stephenson, San Diego County Water Authority
Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran

Samantha Chaidez, City of San Diego
Summer Adleberg, San Diego County Water Authority

Interested Parties to the RAC

Alexi Schnell, San Diego County Water Authority
Alicia Appel, Encina Wastewater Authority
Brant Maxwell, Public
Cassandra Smith, City of San Diego
Christine Tolchin, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
Inken Mello, Woodard & Curran
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego
Jennifer Wong, Department of Water Resources
Joel Kramer, Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego
Noe Santos, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mahmoud Thahab, City of San Diego
Maureen Curran, UC San Diego
Max Dugan, Geosyntec Consultants
Michelle Haulcy, City of San Diego
Megan Hickey, City of San Diego
Pakiza Chatha, California Department of Water Resources
Reed Thornberry, City of San Diego
Salomon Miranda, Department of Water Resources
Soleil Develle, Fallbrook Public Utility District
Sophia Bejarano, Public
Travis Sims, Ramona MWD
Tricia Hypolite-Chares, Public
Victoria Rouse-Jones, California Department of Water Resources
Wenda Alvarez, WSA Marketing

Welcome, Introductions, & Land Acknowledgement

Ms. Elizabeth Lovsted, San Diego Water Authority (SDCWA), and Mr. David Gilling, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, welcomed everyone to the hybrid RAC meeting. Ms. Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran, reviewed the in-person and 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.

Ms. Lovsted read the Tribal and land acknowledgement to the group, which was written to be delivered in a virtual 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.

Colorado River Update

Mr. Noel Santos, United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) presented an update on the Current Conditions and Projected Operations in the Lower Colorado River Basin. 2023 was a wet year with 124% of average inflow into Lake Powell. Lake Mead also recovered 30ft in elevation. The monsoon allowed USBR to reduce their delivery and help conserve water in the Lake Mead. The Lake Mead Storage and Conservation Plan dictates how USBR operates Lake Mead and Lake Powell and its agreements with Mexico. The inflation reduction act funded by the federal government allowed for conservation in the basin with the addition of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023. The conservation volume is about 6.3 million acre-feet (AF) through 2023. Essentially, Lake Mead would have ended in 2022 about 90 feet lower than it did without all the various conservation actions.

Historical Hoover Dam releases from 1980-2024 show that 2023 was the lowest release since 1982. This low release was largely attributed to the large number of conservation agreements that have left water in the Lake Mead water system. 2023 was also a wet year in the Lower Colorado River Basin which resulted in a decrease in water demands. The executed system conservation agreements as modeled in April 2024 estimates a 1.63 million AF savings from 2023-2026 through various programs from the inflation reduction act.

The Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) shows projections for 24 months of study to project water conditions and plan for future operations in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Water year 2024 is projected to be the driest year since Lake Powell was created in 1964. Only 1971 and 2002 have been drier. The predictions show that around 80% of total inflows from Lake Powell come from the Upper Colorado River Basin with 2024 expected to be 84% of average.

Precipitation and snowpack forecasts for 2024 show that snowpack in the Upper Colorado River Basin is 114% of median, however this is still less than last year. There were some dry conditions in fall which correlated to the 84% inflow going into Lake Powell. In the Salt-Verde River Basin, there were storms that resulted in snowpack at 129% of median. This led to releases in the Gila River in the Lower Colorado River Basin. Precipitation in the lower basin was 99% of average. These statistics are based on data from 1991-2020. The historical range was updated for the new 10-year period and shows a 10% reduction on average. The Lower Colorado River Basin inflows for water year 2024 for Glen Canyon and Hoover Dam show there a decrease in 114,000 AF for water year 2024 based on a 5-year average. The observed inflow is 782,000 AF or 87% of average to date.

Lake Powell and operation conditions show that there is a mid-elevation release tier of 7.48 million AF in 2024 with Lake Mead operating a shortage condition and delivering 7.16 million AF. These operating conditions get triggered with elevations of 3,575 for Lake Powell and 1,057 for Lake Mead. The 2007 Interim guidelines, Minute 323, Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) and Binational Water Scarcity Contingency plan show that there are reductions in Arizona, Nevada, and Mexico totaling 38 thousand AF under the 2007 Interim guidelines and Minute 323. Additionally, there are DCP and Binational Water Scarcity contingency plan savings of 230,000 AF. These reductions are equivalent to about 8 feet reduction elevation in Lake Mead.

Elevation projects in Lake Powell show that conditions have improved to a point that USBR is no longer predicting elevation to fall below power pool for the next 2 years. There is still uncertainty where Lake Powell may operate going into 2025. The minimum may be 7.48 million AF release and the probably maximum resulting in an upper balancing tier with a 9 million AF release in water year 2025. Due to the higher water year release volumes from Lake Powell as well as overall tributary flows in the Lower Colorado River Basin, Lake Mead conditions have approved with 20 feet elevation gain over the past year. Uncertainty about next year will depend on the conditions. Based on projections, Lake Mead should end

the year at an elevation of 1059.16 feet. If this projection is accurate, the Lower Colorado River Basin would operate in Tier 1 shortage conditions with water contribution savings again in 2025.

In Summary, conditions in 2024 were variable and runoff projections are indicating below normal year. The record of decision for supplemental EIS will be signed in May and will govern near term operations through 2026. USBR is currently working on a post 2026 process web tool, which allows people to model different scenarios moving forward.

Ms. Alexi Schnell, SDCWA, presented updates on Colorado River activities. In 2022, there were persistent declining conditions that lead USBR to revise the 2007 Interim Guidelines. Commissioner Tuton implemented this reduction. California agencies were the only State to respond which led USBR to modify the guidelines in the near term. Also, a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) outlines that the lower basin plans to develop 3 million AF of voluntary conservation. The efforts to implement the Lower Basin Plan commenced in late 2023. The plan included 50 thousand AF from SDCWA's Quantification Settlement Agreement supplies to remain in the Colorado River. USBR funded these costs through the Inflation Reduction Act, leading to a \$20 million dollar saving for SDCWA. The Lower Basin Plan evaluates the system as a whole and the reservoirs across the Lower Colorado River Basin, while the Upper Colorado River Basin is focused on Lake Mead and Lake Powell.

Looking at the long-term planning for 2026 operations, USBR will be evaluating all proposals received. SDCWA participated in the 2007 Interim Guidelines and will continue to be a collaborative partner and ensure long term sustainability in the Colorado River Basin.

Questions/Comments:

- What is the blanket reduction needed for 2026?
 - Due to the long-term balancing needs overall there has been a request to conserve 2 to 4 million AF per year. This number seems accurate to make Lake Mead more sustainable for the entire system. This number includes evaporation losses in reaches, reservoirs and canal deliverables. USBR is trying to incorporate these shortages in our operations but need to see how it plays out.
- It seems these plans look at year by year. Are there any plans to look at the 20-year horizon for climate change?
 - USBR is considering climate change during their planning.
- How likely is it that all parties will negotiate and reach a consensus before USBR makes a decision?
 - USBR and all basin States are trying to negotiate. The SEIS for near term actions and the lower States are collaborating. It is doable, but States would need to give up something. USBR has set timelines for when decisions cannot be changed.
- SDCWA left 50,000 AF in the Colorado River system. Did SDCWA purchase the same amount from the Metropolitan Water District of California?
 - SDCWA was still able to save money with this deal even if it was a paper transfer of water.

Outcomes from the 2024 SDIRWM Summit

Mr. Andrew Funk, City of San Diego, presented the results of the 2024 San Diego IRWM Summit (Summit). The goal of the Summit was to highlight the evolution of the San Diego IRWM program and to solicit input from San Diego IRWM stakeholders about the direction of the San Diego IRWM program.

Ms. Deedee A'damo, from the State Water Resources Control Board, was the keynote speaker for the Summit. Ms. A'damo spoke on how to adapt to hotter and dryer climate conditions as the State plans future resiliency. She also highlighted the importance of the San Diego IRWM program. Mr. John Flores, San

Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, and Ms. Toby Roy, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, participated in a Underrepresented Community (URC) and Tribal Panel that highlighted water management issues that small systems are experiencing across the country.

The San Diego IRWM Strategic Roadmap (Roadmap) identifies Focus Areas and goals to the guide the next phase of the San Diego IRWM Program. There are three main focus areas of the Roadmap which are URC Support, Funding and Collaboration, and Information Sharing and Advocacy. The goal of Collaboration and Information Sharing and Advocacy is to strengthen and expand partnerships with State and federal agencies and facilitate RAC members and the San Diego IRWM program stakeholders with meaningful engagement with water management agencies and organizations in the region and Facilitate information sharing in the region that can lead to opportunities to address common challenges, share lessons learned, and advocate for common goals that impact water management.

The goal of funding is to identify and secure potential funding that supports the goals of IRWM and enhance IRWM's capacity to improve water resource planning in the region. This positions the region for success in funding endeavors. This established priority helped receive state bond funding. As some of you are aware there are uncertainties for the future of funding for Prop 1 and Prop 84. The main goal is to secure funding sources that enhance IRWM capacity in the future.

The goal of URC support is to increase and facilitate partnerships with URCs to provide resources and information that can support the needs of URCs in the region. UCR is a similar all-encompassing term that includes Tribal communities but is still slightly different from disadvantaged communities. Support can include information sharing, training resources, capacity building, and positioning for successful funding applications.

Attendees of the Summit broke out into groups to discuss the three Focus Areas and develop potential actions for a given Focus area. There were two groups for Collaboration, Information Sharing, and Advocacy, two groups URC Support, and one for Funding. After groups presented their ideas, attendees were asked to hypothetically "fund" the actions that they would prioritize.

For the Collaboration, Information Sharing, and Advocacy Focus Group, legislation/governmental affairs for shaping and implementing advocacy strategy received the most votes followed by removing IRWM participation barriers, and investing in good facilitation. For the Funding Focus Group, advocating at the State and federal level for political acceptance to support the recognition of water projects received the most votes. Funding water projects is an important part of IRWM, and the SDIRWM Program would like to continue this moving forward. The action that received the second most votes are building public-private partnerships for value engagements. For the URC Support Focus Group, the action that received the most votes was increasing technical assistance through the entire grant application process followed by developing Tribal- focused outreach and collaboration opportunities, training, workshops, and cross-collaboration efforts. The action that received the third most votes is developing training materials for environmental compliance grant applications.

The RWMG is soliciting feedback on the actions from the Summit, which will be incorporated into the Strategic Roadmap and considered for implementation.

Questions/Comments:

- How will the RWMG implement UCR actions other than voting? How will the RWMG interpret these focus area group results and implement them?
 - The RWMG is evaluating the actions at a conceptual level. Once we evaluate SDIRWM should focus on, we will then prepare an implementation plan and action items. The RWMG is here to support everyone.

- During the Summit, we discussed how IRWM has no more allocated funding. What is the process of receiving more funding for IRWM?
 - That processes usually begins with the California Legislature and then moves forward to bonds, which then gets distributed to the Department of Water Resources after the bond gets passed by voters. This requires action and engagement from the council and board members.
 - The SDIRWM Program has been working with the Roundtable of Regions (RoR), which is a perfect avenue to relay the results of the Summit. Individual member agencies push for legislation by developing fact sheets, documents, and white papers. The next step for the SDIRWM Program is to coordinate with local legislatures on our behalf. There is a need for funding and we need to figure out how to message that.
 - The SDIRWM Program already advocates for IRWM funding, and we are currently advocating for additional funding.
- One of the URC Support Focus Group discussed about facilitating in-person and virtual trainings.
- Progress has been made for URC Support, but not enough. URCs have a lack of information or capacity to apply for grant applications.
- Could you clarify the first action under Collaboration, Information Sharing, and Advocacy?
 - The RoR is a good forum for advocating for the SDIRWM Program. Another option is coordinating with the local and state representatives that are in charge for funding.
- Recommend evaluating successful past projects. This would add value to the future of the program.
 - The RWMG received similar comments and agree that we need to show the projects' value.
- What other funding options are out there? The value of collaboration on funding outside of state funding could be important.
 - The RWMG is evaluating the feasibility of actions to implement based on the Strategic Roadmap. The RWMG is considering going beyond State funding. One of the items we completed last year was a pilot project for drought funding for a potential conservation program. We want to use it as a test case to see what we can do to get funded.
- Is the SDIRWM program looking at climate change actions to reduce emissions?
 - Ms. A'damo mentioned this in her keynote address. For the City of San Diego, we are decreasing reliance on imported water and increasing local supplies, which is a great way to reduce emissions. I would defer to each local agency's climate action plan, and those documents should have specific focus areas for climate reductions.
 - The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) has many open funding opportunities. If any agencies are interested in applying for funding opportunities, you may contact me, Leslie Cleveland, or my staff.
 - Does USBR's funding conform with Justice40 Initiative?
 - That depends on the funding opportunity. There is a planning and water strategy grant open right now, which aligns with Justice40 Initiative.

Safari Park Drought Response and Outreach Project Completion Report

Mr. Pat McTigue, Mr. Chris Brzezicki, Mr. Raj Brown, Ms. Sasha Stallard, Mr. Michael Fanelli, and Mr. Make Tverberg presented on behalf of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance on the Safari Park Drought Response and Outreach Project Completion Report.

The Safari Park consists of 900 developed spaces with other open area spaces. One of the goals is to reduce water use at San Diego Zoo Safari Park (Safari Park). Every drop of water is used at least once and this allows the Safari Park to build awareness of water conservation. The project consisted of three main

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upgrades to help meet the Safari Park’s water conservation goals, which included Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) upgrades, turf and irrigation conversions, and education and outreach. The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance received approximately \$3.8 million in grant funding with almost \$1 million leveraging funding. Additionally, the Safari Park spent \$1.5 million to fund work outside of the scope of the grant.

Some challenges in completing the project involved relocating animals, such as elephants, and coordinating with third parties to operate the WWTP due to the new science and technology involved. The San Diego Wildlife Alliance will continue to coordinate with the third parties on operating the WWTP. The final challenge involved the irrigation systems and figuring out the filter adjustments, so the water can meet the needs of the end use.

The WWTP team oversees the delivery of capital projects. The upgraded WWTP is self-contained and 100% recycles all wastewater that can be used for irrigation. It is also a small system that can be remotely monitored. This new system allows the old aeration system to be used for additional storage for large rain events. The WWTP has a peak capacity of 150,000 gallons per day. Another large capital project at the Safari Park is converting 2.9 acres of turf to water-wise landscaping, which saved 14 acre-feet per year of water, and it is managed by a SCADA system. All treated wastewater effluent is stored in a reclamation pond which can be monitored remotely. This pond also captures stormwater to be utilized as irrigation. The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance also educated the community and guest about the Safari Park’s water conservation measures. The education program reached approximately 13 million people during 2011 to 2022. The Safari Park also initiated a drought outreach campaign.

Questions/Comments:

- What type of grant funding did you receive?
 - We received funding from DWR and also utilized some of our own funds.
- Due to the varying topography of the site, how much wastewater treatment is run by pumping versus gravity?
 - The WWTP is located one-third of the way up our site near the existing plant location. It is about 80% gravity driven. We also wanted to keep the location in the Safari Park to save pumping costs.
- Does the Safari Park use water from the City of Escondido or all well water?
 - The San Diego Safari Park still uses some water from the City of Escondido, but it is also supplemented by wells. We have a lot of wildlife around the Safari Park that drink a lot of water. We also use pools for the animals, but the WWTP reduces the footprint for potable water.

State and Federal Funding Opportunities

Ms. Lovsted encouraged attendees to review the list of upcoming state and federal funding opportunities. They have been included in the table below.

Project Types	Timing	Website
Cal OES: State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	Due: September 27, 2024	https://www.caloes.ca.gov/grant-announcement/2024-25-state-and-local-cybersecurity-grant-local-and-tribal-sl-cfo/

Project Types	Timing	Website
USBR: WaterSMART: Water and Energy Efficiency Grants	Second round due October 30, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350982
USBR: Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grants	Third round due: January 14, 2025	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350845
USBR: Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase 1	Second round due September 3, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=349783
USBR: WaterSMART: Title XVI WIIN Act Water Reclamation and Reuse Projects for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024	Second round due September 30, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350381
USBR: WaterSMART: Water and Energy Efficiency Grants	Second round due October 30, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350982
USBR: Planning and Project Design Grants for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024	Second round due: May 21, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/349785
USBR: Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase 1	Second round due September 3, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/349783
USBR: WaterSMART: Title XVI WIIN Act Water Reclamation and Resue Projects for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024	Second round due September 30, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350381
DWR: Pilot Program	Anticipated in 2024	TBD
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

None.

Summary and Next Steps

The next RAC meeting will be held virtually on August 7

2024 Meeting Schedule

- February 7
- May 1
- August 7
- November 6

Regular meetings to be held quarterly in 2024.