



Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #101

April 5, 2023
9:00 am – 11:30 am

Zoom Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Richard Whipple (Chair), County of San Diego
Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association
Brook Sarson, San Diego Sustainable Living Institute
Chris Trees for Mike Thornton, San Elijo JPA
Connor Leone for Anne Middleton, ECOLIFE Conservation
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society
Elizabeth Lovsted for Kelly Gage, San Diego County Water Authority
Erica Wolski, Ramona MWD
Eylon Shamir, Hydrological Research Center
Jimmy Smith, San Diego Waterboard
Joey Randall for Kim Thorner, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
John Flores, San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians
Julia Escamilla, Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District
Justin Gamble for Tim Murphy, City of Oceanside
Keli Balo, City of San Diego
Kimberly O'Connell and Amanda Loeper, UCSD Clean Water Utility
Mark Seits, Floodplain Management Association
Oscar Romo, Alter Terra
Patrick McDonough, San Diego CoastKeeper
Rob Hutsel, San Diego River Park Foundation
Sandra Jacobson, California Trout
Toby Roy, RCAC
Tory Walker for Wayne Rosenbaum, Building Industry Association
Wbaldo Arellano, City of Imperial Beach

RWMG Staff and Consultants

Arthella Vallarta, Woodard & Curran
Ayden Zielke, County of San Diego
Chelsea McGimpsey, County of San Diego
Ernesto Rios, City of San Diego
Gail Patton for Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority
Julie MarLett, City of San Diego
Lesley Dobalian, San Diego County Water Authority
Mark Stephens, City of San Diego

Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran

Interested Parties to the RAC

Alicia Appel, Encina Wastewater Authority
Amelia Kim, Rainbow Municipal Water District
Bill Luksic, San Diego County Water Authority
Catherine Rom, City of San Diego
Cristina Torres, Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians
Debby Dunn, San Diego County Water Authority
Elisa Marrone, City of Oceanside
Elise Ruiz, County of San Diego
Heidi Brow, Pala Band of Mission Indians
Inken Mello, Woodard & Curran
Jacob Boerboom, County of San Diego
Jamie Kennedy, City of San Diego
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego
Lisa Prus, San Diego County Water Authority
Luis Valdez, Helix Water District
Mariah Mills, City of San Diego
Mia Gil, Viejas Tribal Government
Page Copenhaver, Public
Wenda Alvarez, WSA Marketing

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 name 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.

Mr. Whipple announced the retirement of Mr. Mark Stephens from the City of San Diego. Mr. Whipple and the rest of the RAC thanked Mr. Stephens for his service and contributions to the San Diego IRWM Program.

Regional Water Equity Report

Ms. Elise Ruiz, the County, presented the Regional Water Equity Project (RWEP). On September 14, 2022, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors directed the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice to analyze drought management and water sustainability practices to proactively address the challenges of the Region's reliance on water sources. This effort includes a comprehensive regional

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assessment to identify recommendations that equitably address the drought crisis. The proposed recommendations will be aligned with California's Water Supply Strategy.

The scope of work includes three main categories: water sustainability, affordable stormwater capture, and financial risks and investments. Water sustainability will identify opportunities for stormwater capture, water diversion, greywater reuse, and sustainable agriculture. Affordable housing stormwater capture will research available incentives to integrate and install stormwater capture and reuse systems. Finally, risks and investments will explore risks caused by extreme weather and identify investments needed for resilience.

The County will host the first Water Assembly on April 26, 2023. The Water Assembly will allow stakeholders and community members to participate in a regional assessment of current drought management and water sustainability practices. It will be a hybrid in-person event with Zoom as an option. For more information about the RWEP, please visit <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/osej/>.

Questions/Comments:

None.

Project Completion Report

Mr. Oscar Romo, Alter Terra, presented a project completion report about the Smuggler's Gulch Floating Trash Booms (Smuggler's Gulch). Smuggler's Gulch is a subproject under the Rural Disadvantaged Community Partnership Project Phase II sponsored by the Rural Community Assistance Corporation. The Smuggler's Gulch is one of seven vital projects addressing water treatment infrastructure and environmental clean-up issues in the San Diego Region's disadvantaged communities. This subproject is partly funded under Proposition 84, Round 4.

For more than four decades, cross-border trash flows originating in Tijuana have been a major concern for the environmental health of the Tijuana River Valley due to pollutants, which include floating plastics, small and large containers, demolition debris, vegetation, animal carcasses, car parts, toxic fluids, sediment, and hospital, industrial and domestic waste.

Trash that flows into the tributaries needs to be collected and extracted. Alter Terra designed upcycle trash booms, which are massive strainers that collect trash and prevent it from flowing downstream. Alter Terra has previous experience in designing trash booms in Guatemala. The trash booms were designed in consultation with experts in glacial movements because flowing trash shares some common characteristics with flowing ice. Other experts helped to create the trash boom hardware. Alter Terra created prototypes used to test and ensure performance and repurposed materials commonly found in domestic and industrial waste to construct trash booms.

The trash booms are constructed of high-density plastic trash collected throughout the watershed. The trash is then grounded into small flakes, cleaned, sorted, and melted into 4 by 8-foot panels. To give them buoyancy, Alter Terra added food-certificated repurposed containers and metal scraps. During storms, trash booms rise to the water level and collect trash, and metal mesh screening frames work by gravity to capture trash flowing under the surface. The trash booms are also wildlife friendly because the gaps are large enough to prevent wildlife from getting caught.

IRWM project implementation began in 2016 with the process of acquiring permits, reviewing hydrological models, and designing trash booms. This was followed by planning logistics for trash removal and disposal in close partnership with San Diego Urban Core and San Diego County Parks and Recreation. During implementation, community outreach and education occurred organically, and watershed clean-up jobs were created in low-income neighborhoods.

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The first trash boom deployment materialized during the 2019/2020 winter storm season. Late-season dredging performed by the County of San Diego delayed the proposed deployment schedule. By the time Alter Terra received authorization to install the trash booms, continuous water flows and siltation from dredging altered the channel's geometry. Dredging had reshaped the canyon into a wide and shallow channel. To adapt, modifications were made to the configuration of the booms. These two conditions produced a smaller expected yield of floating trash. During the 2020/2021 storm, the trash booms were deployed as scheduled. The coordination with the County of San Diego's dredging contractor helped to obtain improved channel geometry, which allowed the trash booms to be deployed in better configuration. This resulted in 1,200 cubic yards of recovered trash.

The 2021/2022 rain season presented a new set of challenges imposed by the COVID-era budgetary adjustments. Those restrictions impacted the amount of silt and cobblestone extracted during the dredging process, exposing a geometry outline of the creek, which was much deeper and narrower. Adjustments were made to the new conditions and adaptations worked efficiently to collect trash. Alter Terra was able to deploy trash booms for the 2022/2023 rain season, and good communication with the County of San Diego and the dredging contractor led to a more appropriate channel geometry and better configuration of the trash booms, which resulted in the best performance of the subproject.

Questions/Comments:

- Were there any lessons learned?
 - There needs to be more effective coordination and communication with all parties involved in the project. Each agency and organization have different priorities and budgets. Additionally, there needs to be more emphasis on checking each agency's schedule. Also, repurposing material was a good decision. The project collected high-density plastic and repurposed it. Trash is a resource that the Region needs to use. Lastly, it is important to leverage volunteers to spread the word.

Drought Resiliency Workgroup

Ms. Ayden Zielke, the County, presented updates on the Drought Resiliency Workgroup (Workgroup). The goal of the Workgroup is to develop a regional drought project or program to address ongoing drought conditions in the San Diego IRWM Region. The project or program should address drought resiliency, provide regional benefits, and be competitive for future funding opportunities.

The Workgroup is comprised of seven volunteers, representing a diverse group of public agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The Workgroup has met twice, and the third meeting is scheduled for late April. The fourth and last meeting is scheduled for August. The first meeting identified regional drought priorities and selected types of regional drought projects or programs. The second meeting developed and refined regional drought projects or programs. The third meeting will incorporate RAC input on the prioritization criteria and the preliminary drought projects or programs. Based on input from the RAC, the consultant team will draft a Regional Drought Response Technical Memorandum (TM) and distribute the TM for public comment. The last Workgroup meeting will review comments and finalize draft recommendations for the Regional Water Management Group (RMWG).

The Workgroup has refined the evaluation criteria that would be used to assess potential drought projects or programs. There is a total of nine criteria, which are drought reliability, realization of benefits, cost efficiency, water quality, institutional independence, underrepresented communities (URC) consideration, implementability, adaptability, and multibenefit.

The Workgroup has also developed five priority project concepts, which are conservation, water loss control, water recycling/reuse, stormwater capture, and water storage. These categories are not necessarily exclusive and may overlap. The Workgroup has determined that conservation, water loss control, and water

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recycling/reuse are the top three project concepts and have started to identify opportunities for their regional value add and potential projects or programs. Please refer to the Drought Resiliency Workgroup Handout for a complete list of regional value add and potential projects or programs.

The RAC discussed and provided input on the evaluation criteria, regional value add, and potential projects or programs.

Questions/Comments:

Proposed Evaluation Criteria

- How are URCs defined in the Region?
 - URCs have flexibility in how they are defined. In San Diego IRWM, the definition is based on DWR's definition, which includes household income and population density. It also includes tribal communities and communities facing environmental justice concerns based on CalEnviroScreen mapping tool. Projects that benefit URCs tend to be more competitive.
 - The URC definition also varies regionally.
 - For the County of San Diego, it is a combination of Healthy Places Index and CalEnviroScreen. Can the consulting team distribute San Diego IRWM's URC definition?
 - Yes.
- Did the Workgroup discuss fire risk?
 - It was not part of the discussion, but it could be bucketed under Multibenefit. Should the Workgroup consider fire risk?
 - Yes. Rural communities have significant fire risks, and they need water to extinguish fires.
 - Fire risk could be something the Workgroup could consider. Either clarify or add a new criterion.
- Is shortage depth during a single-year and multiple-year droughts referring to multiple sources?
 - Yes, it is the gap between supply and demand and how well a project can address them.
 - Does this look outside of this region?
 - Yes, it looks at where the shortage is coming from.
- For impact on water quality, is that within the San Diego Region or outside of the region? For example, Orange County has a robust recharge program and the San Diego Region has limited availability for imported water recharge. The criterion is not clear on recharging with imported water.
 - This is just an example. Recharging with imported water would not impact the local resource. Additionally, the criterion is not limited to imported water recharge.
- Since there have been great projects through San Diego IRWM, how about encouraging agencies to repeat some of their successful projects? Recommend including a criterion that is based on other projects that have provided proven benefits/savings.
 - The Workgroup will take that into consideration.

- Ensure that watersheds, natural resources, green infrastructure, climate change, and all that impact the health of ecosystems are included in the criteria. Is a commitment to do no harm and improve the health of water systems embedded in the criteria?
 - Watershed health could fit within water quality.
 - The Workgroup will consider these recommendations.

Regional Value Add

- Recommendation to add a concept to foster the wildfire/water nexus.
- How do those in the region on wells that may experience dry wells or water quality problems fit into the prioritization?
 - It could fall under drought reliability, URC consideration, or local resources. If it is not adequately addressed, it could be added for consideration.
 - It could also be water quality or multibenefit.
- The Workgroup needs to look at the natural system, such as minimum flows and minimum levels required.
 - Is this a recommendation for prioritization?
 - Not sure.
 - The Workgroup will look to where it can fall under the prioritization criteria.
- Water for the environment and fishing flows for scouring urban rivers are essential. Need to ensure that Region is leaving enough water behind so systems can function correctly.
- Water agencies have done a lot of work in conservation. Agencies have knowledge about the accessibility of rebates. What does the ethics of water use mean?
 - It is the discussion of cultivating a culture of conservation.
- For water loss control, would this be technology for the individual water user? The focus seems to be on individual users.
 - This would target customers for water loss control
- These seem to be the right categories. What does value add mean? Additionally, there are great regional programs for conservation, but they are focused in urban areas because the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) implements them. It would be beneficial to expand regional programs to include nonurban areas.
 - Project concepts would focus on areas with the most value add.

Priority Project Concepts

- Greywater programs would not be realistic to implement because permitting through the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) is too difficult. There needs to be significant reform for this to happen. The DEH should not remove all obstacles, but a discussion on these barriers needs to happen because greywater programs have been done in other parts of the world. Also, water loss control would require support from homeowners and Homeowner Associations. Implementation would also require education. However, water loss control would be difficult to implement because it has been handed off between city/county/agencies.

- The Workgroup did discuss how difficult it is to implement greywater because rules differ regionally. Additional coordination on reform is needed. In terms of water loss, there also needs to be more coordination and collaboration. Perhaps a group is needed within the Region to take responsibility.
- Native vegetation under conservation should be “native vegetation/fire resistive” partnerships. It is frustrating to see turf being sold at Home Depot. It would be nice to see cooperative partnerships regarding native vegetation and not selling turf, but rather selling native vegetation.
- Agree with referring to native vegetation as drought tolerant. Regarding greywater systems, consider adding an element about policy and regulatory aspects. Greywater systems must be tested and inspected, which can be a burden to homeowners.
- Recommendation to not use non-native vegetation. It is important to use native vegetation because some are fire-resistant, and most are drought resistant.

Future of San Diego IRWM

Ms. Lesley Dobalian, SDCWA, presented on the future of San Diego IRWM. Since 2020, San Diego IRWM has been hosting virtual RWMG and RAC meetings, established the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workgroup, the URC Outreach Workgroup, and the Drought Resiliency Workgroup, implemented the 2021 and 2023 RAC membership turnover, completed the 2021 Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Grant Program application and the Proposition 1, Round 2 Grant application, and have had ongoing engagement in the Roundtable of Regions.

Planned activities in 2023 include continuing to host RAC meetings with some meetings in a hybrid setting, providing additional grant administration support for URCs, and begin preparing for the 2024 IRWM Summit.

State funding for IRWM may not be available in the future. The Proposition 1 IRWM funding has been fully allocated, and no other designated IRWM funding is currently available. IRWM funding is not explicitly included in recent water bonds, though there is potential for the upcoming Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparation, Flood Protection, Extreme Heat Mitigation, and Workforce Development Bond Act of 2023. The priority of this bond is to finance projects for safe drinking water, wildfire prevention, drought preparation, flood protection, extreme heat mitigation, and workforce development. Under this bond, IRWM is allotted \$200 million. If passed, voters would need to approve the bill in the November 2024 statewide general election.

There are three main current and historical IRWM drivers. The first driver is IRWM Plan compliance, but it is no longer always required for state funding eligibility. If there is IRWM funding in a future water bond, the IRWM Plan may need to be updated. The second driver is designated IRWM funding. IRWM participation tends to spike around funding opportunities. The third driver is fulfilling reporting requirements through 2029. Projects are required to complete post-project reporting for three years after project completion.

The RWMG discussed potential San Diego IRWM ideas beyond 2023, which include maintaining the RAC and focus on partnerships, continuing URC and Tribal support with an increased focus on partnerships with URCs, exploring other funding sources, working collaboratively on climate resiliency, continuing advocacy with the State, and continuing Grant Administration Program through 2030.

Questions/Comments

- Project selection and application preparation have been helpful, and the simplicity of that process has been beneficial. It would be beneficial to continue to bring funding to the region even if there is no dedicated IRWM funding. Additionally, San Diego IRWM should continue advocacy with the State.
 - Agree. Inclusivity, expanded regional perspective, and operational efficiency are key to San Diego IRWM.
 - Agree. San Diego IRWM has been successful in bringing diverse groups together and should continue to work collaboratively to obtain future funding.
- The project selection and review process are clear and identifies the competitive projects. Recommend keeping this process.

Grant Administration

Ms. Gail Patton, SDCWA, presented updates on grant administration. Total grant funding awarded to the San Diego IRWM Program is approximately \$133 million for 84 regional projects. About \$90 million has been spent to date. Actual funding reimbursed to the local project sponsors totals \$85.7 million in payments received and disbursed. Proposition 84, Round 3 is now complete with the Department of Water Resources’ (DWR) approval of the Grant Completion Report and retention invoice. Plans are now underway for a presentation of the overall program at a future RAC meeting. Eight projects remain in Proposition 84, Round 4 and the program is scheduled to end by March 2024. Two projects remain in Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant Program, which are both scheduled to be completed by June 2023. Four projects in Proposition 1, Round 1 are more than 70% complete, and Project 5: Pure Water Oceanside and Project 4: Lower Santa Margarita River IPR Pilot Project are expected to be complete soon. An amendment request is currently pending with DWR to revise Project 1: 2020 Regional Water Use Efficiency Program (Project 1) and Project 6: North County Recycled Water Project (Project 6). Project 1 is revising its scope to offer WaterSmart landscaping classes online, and Project 6 is revising its scope to rehabilitate an existing 3 million gallon (MG) storage tank instead of constructing a new 0.25 MG water storage tank. Three projects remain in the Urban Multibenefit Drought Relief, and Project 2: Ballard Well Connection and Transmission Pipeline was approved to receive advance funding for \$432,000 from DWR. DWR is now circulating the Proposition 1, Round 2 Agreement for internal review. The San Diego IRWM will move forward with preparing agreements with local project sponsors and planning a program kick-off.

Questions/Comments

None.

Public Comments

None.

Summary and Next Steps

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

Project Types	Deadline	Website
EPA: Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program	April 10, 2023	https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-collaborative-problem-solving-

Project Types	Deadline	Website
		cooperative-agreement-5#applications
EPA: Environmental Justice Government-to-Government Program	April 10, 2023	https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-government-government-program
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

Next RAC Meeting:

- June 7, 2023 – 9:00-11:30 a.m. via a virtual platform.

The meeting schedule for 2023 is included below. Please add them to your calendar:

- October 4, 2023