



Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #99

October 5, 2022
9:00 am – 11:30 am

Zoom Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Ann Van Leer, The Escondido Creek Conservancy
Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association
Anne Middleton, ECOLIFE Conservation
Beth Gentry, City of Chula Vista
Brook Sarson, San Diego Sustainable Living Institute
Charlie de la Rosa, San Diego Zoo Global
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society
Elizabeth Lovsted for Kelly Gage, San Diego County Water Authority
Grant Sharp, Orange County Public Works
Jennifer Hazard, RCAC
Joey Randall for Kim Thorner, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Julia Chunn-Heer, Surfrider
Julia Escamilla, Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District
Justin Gamble and Tim Murphy, City of Oceanside
Kimberly O'Connell and Amanda Loeper, UCSD Clean Water Utility
Leslie Cleveland for Jack Simes, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Marisa Soriano, City of Chula Vista
Mark Seits, Floodplain Management Association
Michelle Berens, Helix Water District
Mike Thorton and Chris Trees, San Elijo JPA
Oscar Romo, Alter Terra
Rob Hutsel for Phil Pryde, San Diego River Park Foundation
Sandra Jacobson, California Trout

RWMG Staff and Consultants

Andrea Araujo, County of San Diego
Arthella Vallarta, Woodard & Curran
Chelsea McGimpsey, County of San Diego
Jacob Pickett, City of San Diego
Jane-Marie Fajardo, City of San Diego
Julie MarLett, City of San Diego
Lesley Dobalian, San Diego County Water Authority
Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority
Mark Stephens, City of San Diego

Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran
Vanessa De Anda, Woodard & Curran

Interested Parties to the RAC

Alex Aguirre, Tetra Tech
Andrew Funk, City of San Diego
Anna Shepherd, Naval Base Coronado
Bethany Bezak, City of San Diego
Carlos Quintero, Sweetwater Authority
Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority
Inken Mello, Woodard & Curran
Jamie Milani, County of San Diego
Jimmy Smith, San Diego Waterboard
Karen Falk, City of Del Mar
Kimberley Greene, County of San Diego
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego
Lori Pfeiler, Building Industry Association of San Diego County
Mariah Mills, City of San Diego
Mark Stadler, Public
Mick Cothran, Fallbrook Public Utility District
Mina Ziaei, Department of Water Resources
Tory Walker, Tory R. Walker Engineering, Inc.
Vicki Quiram, Carlsbad Municipal Water District
Wenda Alvarez, WSA Marketing
Zaida Cholico, Larry Walker Associates

Welcome, Introductions, & Land Acknowledgement

Ms. Elizabeth Lovsted, San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), 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.

Ms. Lovsted 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.

City of San Diego Stormwater Funding Strategy Update

Ms. Bethany Bezak, City of San Diego (the City), presented the City's stormwater funding strategy. Underfunding stormwater has had serious consequences. Challenges and needs continue to increase due to climate change, aging and failing infrastructure, urbanization, and Clean Water Act requirements. Stormwater failures are impacting livability in San Diego. There are more than 2,000 known pipe failures

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and three pump stations with critical infrastructure needs. Many areas are unable to manage flooding which can cause unsafe conditions and often results in significant property damage. The failure to meet the Clean Water Act also significantly impacts public health and the environment. Approximately 99% of the stormwater system goes to a degraded waterbody with 101 impairments. There have also been 586 beach advisories and 55 beach closures per year.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 funding and resources have improved, but a funding gap and backlog remain. The average annual funding gap is approximately \$274 million. Some near-term funding and financing options include the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund and State Budget Allocation, cost recovery through stormwater inspections, street sweeping citations, stormwater enforcement, and other grant and loan programs.

The City has received funding from WIFIA, and the loan program will fund essential upgrades to chronically underfunded projects and programs. In total, the City received \$733 million, which will allocate \$551.9 million to fix failing infrastructure, \$54.5 million for a pump station and other stormwater feature upgrades, \$35.9 million for green infrastructure, and \$90.8 million for restoration and revitalization projects. However, WIFIA does not fund operations and maintenance activities, water quality programs, water quality improvement projects, and stormwater harvesting.

A probable funding measure design for stormwater has many complementary components, which include a strategic program design, research-driven decision-making, resource commitments, stakeholder engagement, and compelling communications. The overall goals of the funding measure are to improve and protect water quality, safeguard from flooding, prioritize green infrastructure, modernize infrastructure, revitalize our waterways, and capture stormwater for local supply. The potential funding measure may fund capital investments, operations and maintenance activities, compliance planning, debt and issuance of bonds, and administration.

The City has conducted public opinion research regarding stormwater. In a December 2020 survey, there was a strong perceived need for additional stormwater funding where respondents identified that there was a great or some need for maintaining an existing storm drain system and cleaning and protecting local water quality. San Diego residents also value the outcomes that could be achieved by funding stormwater, which include improving and protecting water quality, protecting marine life, reducing trash and pollution, capturing stormwater for use, preventing flooding, and preventing damage from failed stormwater infrastructure.

The City has also tested various funding mechanism scenarios, which included impermeable area and property type, as well as variable rate amounts. Typical ratepayer impacts and estimated revenue were estimated for each scenario. The impermeable area was recommended as the basis for a stormwater funding measure as it is more equitable and is the most common basis for stormwater charges nationwide. Commercial and industrial ratepayer impacts vary widely based on impermeable area.

Ongoing education and engagement for stormwater are essential. Stormwater issues and services are not well understood, but the outcomes are valued. In FY 2022, the City launched the Think Blue San Diego educational campaign. The City will continue to educate and engage the public through this educational campaign where they plan to target new partnerships and hard-to-reach communities.

Questions/Comments:

- When a developer is required to do habitat mitigation, they are also required to set aside an endowment to make sure land is maintained in perpetuity. Is there an equivalent for new storm drain systems or does the City take on the long-term operations and maintenance when systems are turned over?

- If it is intended to be City infrastructure, the City will take it over. Typically for the public, there is an easement, and infrastructure will be set aside in the easement.
- Is the cost allocating just for build and not operations and maintenance?
 - Yes.
- Can there be options for low-income exclusions for the charge per square foot?
 - Yes, we can apply for discounts. This will be part of the measure development (i.e. to reduce impervious area or to reduce the bill).
- I understand that this is a citywide effort, but is there a specific approach for disadvantaged communities?
 - Yes, the City is looking at providing discounts or incentives to reduce overall cost.
- I would like to get in touch with you about future federal funding to help offset the costs. I have several funding opportunities that some of your projects could fit. Reach out to me at lcleveland@usbr.gov.
- Stormwater is critical for the environment as well. Are there any talking points for allowing water to reach the ecosystems?
 - Los Angeles passed Measure W and there is a focus on environmental water in that region. It is important to ensure that there is water for the environment.
- Water and sewer are subject to Proposition 218, which means agencies cannot offer discounts to some communities and not others. Is this going to be subject to Proposition 218?
 - Stormwater falls under a different category because it was not called out like sewer and water. This would be part of the development of the measure.
- Is there any coordination with school districts?
 - Not at this time, but as part of the funding measure, the City is looking at what would be excluded from the fee. Typically, schools are excluded.
- Is stormwater treated before being discharged to environmental areas?
 - No, it is not treated. Only 40-45% of the City's population understands that stormwater is discharged into the ocean.
- It is my understanding that Senate Bill 231 looped stormwater into the traditional Proposition 218 categories of sewer, but no agencies in the region have tried this approach yet. Is that correct?
 - Yes, that is correct.

Drought and Climate Change Panel

Mr. Tory Walker, Building Industry Association of San Diego County, was the first panelist on the Drought and Climate Change panel. The term, "one water," recognizes that water should not be considered or managed in silos. The region needs to look at climate and geology at a local scale, and then examine the opportunities. The San Diego region has a Mediterranean climate, which means that the region cannot apply the same solutions from other climates. Generally, the region receives most of its precipitation during periods when it does not need water and receives less precipitation during periods when it needs water the most. Most of the San Diego region is comprised of rock, with only narrow bands of alluvium where the river and creek channels have deposited sediments over the millennia. The geology and soil conditions pose significant infiltration challenges and risks.

There are five levels of stormwater management: floodplain criteria, flooding criteria, erosion criteria, water quality criteria, and infiltration criteria. If one category receives more focus than the others, stormwater management will fail. The region needs to look at stormwater as a resource and there are many opportunities, which include design capture volume, capture/divert at storm drain inlets, capture/divert at the end of pipe or in channel, hydromod volume, regional storage, dry weather flows, more water in sewer systems, and addressing total maximum daily loads. However, there are also many challenges in stormwater. Those include existing

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regulations and prohibitions, existing infrastructure, current perceptions and frameworks, infrequent precipitation, and geotechnical considerations. Additionally, there are many questions about infrastructure and operations and maintenance. Corrugated pipes need to be replaced with reinforced concrete pipes, which have a 100-year life.

Ms. Anne Middleton, ECOLIFE Conservation, was the second panelist. Conservation is critical and the region needs to continue to bring conservation to the forefront of discussions, but there are still some challenges around water conservation. Water agencies have done a good job in diversifying the region's water portfolio, but there is more work that can be done quickly. Regulations and policies can be changed, and the region needs to start facilitating those discussions. SDCWA is financing a \$1.9 billion long-term debt. The region needs to discuss if it can continue debt-servicing if water sales go down without a high cost for ratepayers. The region also depends on the Colorado River, but given the severe drought in the Colorado River Basin, the region needs to give more accurate demand forecasts. The problems are solvable, and some proposed solutions are media campaigns encouraging the public to save water and educating them about incentives and programs, changing the water ethic, emphasizing that drought is an opportunity for lasting improvements, removing turf, harvesting rainwater, and using greywater. Finally, the region needs to have more realistic conversations on drought and climate change.

Ms. Jamie Milani, County of San Diego (County), was the final panelist and she presented on the County's Waterscape Rebate Program. There are four main benefits of rebates and incentives programs, which include cost-effective water quality benefits, multibenefit outcomes, partnership opportunities, and public awareness and engagement. The County offers many incentives in its Waterscape Rebate Program, which is currently a pilot program. The County will modify the incentives as they are implemented and adapted. Currently, half of the offerings directly incentivize conservation and encourage stacking incentives. Some of those incentives include turf rebates, rain-friendly pavement rebates, and smart-irrigation controller rebates. Ms. Milani emphasized that individual changes result in big impacts. Currently, the County has verified 253 projects and 142 projects are in construction, which have installed 93,020 gallons of storage capacity and converted about 171,643 square feet of turf.

Questions/Comments:

- I would like to see water use be broken down by region and would like these numbers by the next RAC meeting.
 - SDCWA does not have that information available because it is a wholesaler. Retail agencies have that information, and it is available electronically from the State.
 - The information is also available in Urban Water Management Plans where water use is broken down. As part of the annual reconciliation of SDCWA, they have to provide the breakdown of categories.
- There are a lot of problems, but few answers on how to solve those problems. One of the conversations was to see how water is treated around the world, particularly in Israel and Australia. I have reached out to Seth M. Siegel, author of Let There Be Water, and he is willing to present at a RAC meeting. Are there other models out there? People do not understand why conservation can still result in high water bills. Perhaps we are in a situation where things need to be done differently.
 - Let There Be Water should be a required reading for anyone who wants to be part of the solution. It would be great to have Seth attend a RAC meeting.
- Is there any discussion about meeting in person? It is difficult to have robust discussions virtually.

- The RWMG has discussed about meeting in-person again. There are pros and cons about meeting virtually, but more people are able to participate if it is online. Due to the pandemic, the SDCWA is still closed to the public.
- The water rates are tied to Proposition 218, which makes it difficult to lower the fixed charges.
- In Ms. Middleton’s presentation, she mentioned wastewater infrastructure “projects not owned by SDCWA.” Can she clarify this statement?
 - Yes, this statement was from San Diego Coastkeeper, but they are not present at today’s RAC meeting. However, we wanted to ask if it is possible to talk about economic issue outside of SDCWA? Are there other organizations or authorities that can fund these projects, so it is not solely under SDCWA?
 - It also comes from ratepayer ownership debt. The SDCWA may be more incentivized if they have authority.
 - SDCWA does not own any wastewater treatment plants and the rates are highly regulated by Proposition 2018.
 - If there are political and regulatory barriers, how can they be changed? How can we start discussing this?
- Public Health Alliance released two documents for greater use of nonpotable water in the San Diego region as well as a blueprint document to advance decentralized nonpotable water use in the San Diego region. They investigated regulatory barriers and provided other barriers. The document is available here: https://catchingh2o.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Discovery-Document_2019-05_final-compressed.pdf
- Today’s diverse perspectives and information shared were extremely valuable.
- I really enjoy the broad conversation on the challenges of water supply, water quality, sustainability, and fiscal responsibility. There are no easy answers, but diverse thinking from intelligent people is a great start.
- Fixed costs might be part of the answer, which should accommodate disadvantaged communities.

Statewide Updates

Ms. Chelsea McGimpsey, County, presented statewide updates. The California Water Plan (CWP) 2023 update will include a water resilience initiative goal, which will increase regional climate change resilience through integrated water management at watershed scales. The watershed resilience initiative-related products include a statewide climate change risk and preparedness assessment, a watershed resilience framework and toolkit, a watershed performance tracking hub, and a watershed resilience chapter in the CWP update. The objectives of the water resilience initiative are to better understand where and what types of risks exist in California’s watersheds, improve understanding of the state of resilience preparedness statewide, and inform scoping of the watershed resilience initiative and how the state can best coordinate, support, and partner with local or regional partners in improving their climate resilience. The CWP team is hosting a content preview workshop on October 27 from 9:00 am to 12 pm. If interested in attending, please register at <https://kearnswest.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctduCrrjMsG9ek6gG7wmuvkupkCWK6Z7ea>.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) released the draft Guidelines and Proposal Solicitation Package (GL/PSP) for the 2022 Urban Community Drought Relief Grant Program on August 16, 2022. The purpose of the grant is to provide water to communities that face the loss or contamination of their water supplies, address

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immediate impacts on fish and wildlife resources, and protect fish and wildlife resources. Approximately \$285 million is available in this solicitation, and there is \$85 million set aside for underrepresented communities (URCs) and Native American Tribes (Tribes). Projects must provide at least 50% of primary water management-related benefits to URCs or Tribes. There is a minimum cost share of 25%, but this can be waived for URCs and Tribes. There is also a minimum award amount of \$5 million, so smaller projects are encouraged to bundle to meet this requirement.

Projects must be complete by December 2026 and information on eligibility is available in the draft GL/PSP. Funds will be awarded to the highest priority projects that respond to critical human and/or wildlife emergencies, especially for emergency projects that benefit communities, particularly URCs facing a Human to Right to Water Challenge and urban water suppliers that have activated a higher stage of their water shortage contingency plan. The application is expected to open in October and will be submitted on a rolling basis.

Questions/Comments:

None.

RAC Membership

Ms. Lesley Dobalian, SDCWA, presented updates on the upcoming RAC membership 2023-2026 term turnover. Every two years, approximately half of the RAC seats turnover to facilitate broader stakeholder participation and ensure that all stakeholders have an equal opportunity to serve on the RAC. 15 seats are currently open and solicitations to join the RAC Member Selection Workgroup (Workgroup) will be sent in October. All caucus members will have a say in who to nominate from their caucus to form the Workgroup.

The RAC member application and nomination period will close in November and the Workgroup will meet to appoint new members to be reviewed by the RWMG. New members will be announced in December and the membership will be in effect from January 2023 to December 2026. More information on the attributes and general duties of RAC members can be found online. For questions about the process or to submit a completed application, please contact Lesley Dobalian, IRWM Program Manager, at L.Dobalian@sdewa.org.

Questions/Comments

None.

Grant Administration

Ms. Loisa Burton, SDCWA, presented updates on grant administration. In total, the San Diego IRWM Region has billed DWR \$87.3 million for ten grant programs, equating to 73% billed. 53 projects are now complete out of the 78 projects funded, which equates to 68% completion. The total reimbursements received by local project sponsors (LPSs) to date is \$87 million, accounting for retention. To date, \$29.4 million in grant funding remains for all active programs. Proposition 84, Round 3 is almost complete (6 out of 7 projects complete). The remaining project under Proposition 84, Round 3 is Project 6: Rincon Customer Driven Demand Management Program (98% complete). While the project is scheduled to be completed in December 2022, the entire program is expected to close out by February 2023. There are 11 projects remaining in Proposition 84, Round 4. Most projects are over 80% complete and the program is scheduled to end by March 2024. There are only two remaining projects for Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant Program. Both remaining projects are on schedule to complete before the program ending date of August 2023. Proposition 1, Round 1 is ongoing and two projects are about 80% complete. This program is scheduled to end on March 31, 2026. The Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief grant funded four implementation projects within underrepresented communities in the San Diego Funding Area. A kickoff meeting was held on August 31 and the funding agreement with the State was executed on September 21. The grant administration team is currently developing

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sub-agreements with the four LPSs. Project 4: Reservoir Rehabilitation is nearly complete and expects to submit all deliverables and a final invoice by the end of 2022.

Questions/Comments

None.

Public Comments

- I suggest the RAC host one to two in-person meetings in a year, which can be dependent on agenda items so we can still maintain our online presence.
 - Thank you for your comment. The RWMG will consider this.

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
DWR: Urban Community Drought Relief	Expected in October	https://water.ca.gov/Water-Basics/Drought/Drought-Funding/Urban-Drought-Grant
DWR: Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Round 2	Expected in October	https://water.ca.gov/work-with-us/grants-and-loans/sustainable-groundwater
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:

- December 7, 2022 – 9:00-11:00 a.m. via a virtual platform.

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

- February 1, 2023
- April 5, 2023
- June 7, 2023
- August 2, 2023
- October 4, 2023
- December 6, 2023

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