Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #104
February 7, 2024
9:00 am – 11:30 am

Virtual Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association
Brook Sarson, San Diego Sustainable Living Institute
Bronti Cash and Tim Murphy, City of Carlsbad
Charlie de la Rosa and Kelly Craig, San Diego Zoo Global
Chris Trees for Mike Thornton, San Elijo JPA
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 Escamilla, Rincon de Diablo MWD
Leslie Cleveland and Kerri Denhalter, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Karen Jassoy and Alisa Nichols, Padre Dam/Metro JPA
Kimberly O'Connell and Amanda Loeper, UCSD Clean Water Utility
Marissa Potter, Santa Fe Irrigation District
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
Ashton Reynolds, City of San Diego
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
Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority
Lisa Prus, San Diego County Water Authority
Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority

Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran
Samantha Chaidez, City of San Diego

Interested Parties to the RAC
Aaron Cook, Public
Alexander Schriewer, NV5
Alicia Appel, Encina Wastewater Authority
Bob Leiter, Public
Chris Yamaguchi, NV5
Inken Mello, Woodard & Curran
Joel Kramer, Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego
Laurie Broedling, San Diego Green Infrastructure Consortium
Luis Valdez, Helix Water District
Mark Stephens, Retired
Maureen Cummings, Public
Megan Chery, Environmental Incentives
Megan Otto, Geosyntec
Mia Gil, Viejas Tribal Government
Sophia Bejarano, Public
Wenda Alvarez, WSA Marketing

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 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 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.*

Stormwater Harvesting Opportunities in San Diego

Mr. Tory Walker, Tory R. Walker Engineering, presented stormwater harvesting opportunities in the San Diego Region. Stormwater harvesting is the collection, accumulation, treatment purification, storage and, distribution of stormwater, primarily from surface runoff. There are five considerations to stormwater harvesting. The first consideration is end use, which is the intended end use of a capture system that will determine the level of treatment and processing needed. The second consideration is collection, which can be either online storage (acquiring stormwater directly via waterways or drains) or offline storage (weirs that divert stormwater into containment). The third consideration is treatment. The level of treatment depends on the intended use and catchment equipment, which is a great challenge for stormwater harvesting. The fourth consideration is storage,

which considers function, location, and capacity. The fifth consideration is distribution, which is open space irrigation or non-potable distribution.

Stormwater harvesting has several constraints and challenges. Generally, the highest priority is preventing drinking water contamination and health risk exposure. The constraints and challenges specific to San Diego include geology, regulations and policies, urbanization (infrastructure), climate, public perception of harvested water, and site constraints due to space and cost limitations.

San Diego is largely built out, and the most desirable land has been developed, and it is costly to develop lands that are considered "challenging." Some developed lands also get redeveloped, and new development is often adjacent to the existing built environment. When considering stormwater harvesting, all potential impacts on both the built environment and the natural environment should be considered. The urban environment is established communities that have grown around and adapted to environmental conditions and constraints. Building and development standards were established in recognition of environmental conditions and societal values in the area at the time.

San Diego's geology is dominated by a mixture of strong rock and clay, which limits the infiltration of stormwater. Additionally, San Diego's climate is seasonal. The region receives the majority of precipitation during the winter months and little to no precipitation during the summer months. However, the region has diversified its water supply sources, and water is still relatively inexpensive and reliable, but there is still more work to be done. The typical residential water budget is 50% to 60% for outside uses, and typical landscaping requires 50 inches of irrigation. Over-irrigation frequently leads to slope instability, settlement, mold growth, seepage through foundations, and undermining of roads and utilities.

To summarize, stormwater harvesting can be a complex system. There needs to be a discussion between diverse, multiple perspectives so that the entire spectrum can be considered.

Questions/Comments

- Thank you for this presentation. Stormwater is an important resource for ecological systems. This perspective should be considered.
    - This is such an important perspective. Wetlands, river systems, and creeks rely on stormwater.
    - Agree that the ecological perspective should be considered.
- There was a 2016 study that analyzed the potential for stormwater capture and reuse in San Diego. Costs of stormwater capture and reuse were very high, but it was more affordable compared to imported water and desalination. Are there similar studies?
    - There may be similar studies. My focus of this presentation was stormwater harvesting. It is assumed that the environment is being transformed and water is being implemented for environmental reasons. However, we have to ensure that we are not forcing water to where it should not go.
- Stormwater is an important resource, but it is a major risk to public health. The rate of flow is related to the amount of water captured upstream and can lead to property damage. What are ways to improve reservoir management and improve the coordination of releasing flow?
    - There are more people qualified to answer this question. Health benefits are a priority, which is related to the level of treatment. The Santa Ana Wastewater Treatment Plant is a good example of treatment. I would not be able to answer the question related to reservoir management.
- My church has incorporated pervious pavement in the parking lot and has a basin underneath to capture rainwater in major storm events. In the next phase, we are exploring a rainwater harvesting system.

These types of best management practices (BMPs) can reduce stormwater flows. Are any cities using alternative stormwater compliance programs and providing credits?

  - Unfortunately, alternative stormwater compliance programs became complicated. The City of San Diego does have a mechanism in place. We should make alternative stormwater compliance programs easier to implement.

- Pervious surfaces can become impervious in the long run due to dirt. How can stormwater be recycled for use?
  - Maintenance of pervious surfaces is an important aspect. Reusing stormwater is complicated because of existing infrastructure. There is a limited scale of the economics of stormwater, but it ultimately comes down to the question of "what is the cost of the water?" There are opportunities to integrate stormwater into Pure Water programs.
- Diversion of floods harm ecosystems that are dependent on floods. When floods are diverted, it causes long-term ecological impacts.
- I love the last slide. How does the concept of the Fatal Conceit inform how you are thinking about stormwater capture in San Diego Region?
  - There are more qualified people to answer that question.
- Do you know any watersheds in California or in the United States that are successfully capturing stormwater while addressing key concerns included in your presentation?
  - The Del Mar Horse Park was closed due to stormwater concerns. The new system is similar to a French drain system. The system is under the horse arenas and delivers water to the manifold system and has containment underneath. The water evaporates through the media.
  - Groundwater recharge is a common practice on farms in the Central Valley to manage excess flows.
    - Groundwater recharge is limited in San Diego due to the geology.
    - It is a strong opportunity for priority basins, such as San Pasqual and Pauma Valley.
    - That would work in drier years. However, in wet years, basins may already be full and there is no room in the ground.
  - Are there opportunities to send runoff downstream to recharge the agricultural preserve in San Pasqual?
    - Not sure. County of San Diego has jurisdiction over stormwater, but we have very limited stormwater infrastructure in Ramona.
- Agree that there is potential to integrate stormwater in a Pure Water Program. Great future RAC agenda item. Do you have any thoughts on how rainwater harvesting compliance was over complicated?
  - I will follow up with you on this topic.
- Central Valley is also a good example of harvesting stormwater.
- Las Virgenes is looking at integrating stormwater into their Pure Water program if we want to invite them to talk about it.
- San Diego Airport is a good example of stormwater onsite capture.

- The use of stormwater for Pure Water is complicated because the stormwater infrastructure is different from the Metro sewer system.
- There are discussions on stormwater tax initiative. The main concern is that we have serious stormwater management problems and public safety is a huge issue. Do you believe there is an opportunity to use tax measures to address the environmental aspects of stormwater management and to focus on solutions to use other methods to better manage stormwater instead of grey infrastructure?
    - The biggest opportunity is where there are multiple objectives. Grant funding tends to prioritize projects that have multiple objectives.
    - Cities should prioritize Multibenefit solutions.
- Parks and canyons may be underutilized for stormwater infiltration. There is major potential for raising the groundwater table and increasing riparian coverage.
    - Agua Hedionda Creek in Vista is a beautiful riparian environment being destroyed by falling trees. There is an opportunity to rehabilitate this environment and replenish the vegetation. Groundwater is underutilized.
- Would you be able to speak about the advantages and disadvantages of de-channelization?
    - We have been working with Groundwork San Diego. The final approval of dechannelizing a portion of Chollas Creek is forthcoming. I would not define dechannelizing as stormwater harvesting but has similar benefits.
- Many stormwater departments are underfunded, and it is going to require public education and outreach and political will. Perhaps San Diego needs a similar measure, such as Measure W in Los Angeles.

State and IRWM Updates

Ms. Chelsea McGimpsey, County of San Diego, presented on state and IRWM updates. Assembly Bill (AB) 1567, Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparation, Flood Protection, Extreme Heat Mitigation, Clean Energy, and Workforce Development Bond Act of 2024, aims to finance projects for safe drinking water, wildfire prevention, drought preparation, flood protection, extreme heat mitigation, clean energy, and workforce development programs. AB 1567 has allotted $350 million to IRWM under the Ensuring Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, Enhancing the State's Flood protection category. AB 1567 will be heard by the Senate Natural Resources & Water and Governance & Finance Committees. Senate Bill (SB) 867, Drought, Flood, and Water Resilience, Wildfire and Forest Resilience, Coastal Resilience, Extreme Heat Mitigation, Biodiversity and Nature-Based Climate Solutions, Climate Smart Agriculture, and Park Creation and Outdoor Access, and Clean Energy Bond of 2024, aims to finance projects for drought, flood, and water resilience, coastal resilience, extreme heat mitigation, biodiversity and nature-based climate solutions, climate smart agriculture, park creation and outdoor access, and clean energy programs. SB 867 has allotted $300 million to IRWM under the Drought, Flood, and Water Resilience category. SB 867 will be heard by the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. There is potential that the final amount of AB 1567 and SB 867 will be reduced due to the state's budget deficit. However, nothing has been officially confirmed. The Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) will continue to monitor these bonds and update the RAC.

There are two upcoming state summits. The Statewide Disadvantaged Community Tribal Involvement Summit will be held on March 26 and March 27 at the Los Angeles County Public Works Headquarters in Alhambra, California. The Roundtable of Regions (RoR) Bi-Annual Summit will be held on March 11 in Sacramento, California.

The 2024 San Diego IRWM Summit (Summit) will be held on February 29 at Balboa Park. The RWMG would like to thank the City of San Diego for booking the venue. The objectives of the Summit are to highlight the evolution of the San Diego IRWM Program as one that embraces a resilient mindset and has expanded its engagement and support underrepresented communities (URCs), and to solicit input from local and regional stakeholders about the direction of the San Diego IRWM Program. Since the 2020 Summit, San Diego IRWM has focused its attention and resources to four categories: program management, funding, grant administration, and outreach.

Ms. McGimpsey also reviewed the current structure of the San Diego IRWM Program. The RWMG is the decision-making body of the program, which includes the SDCWA, City of San Diego, and County of San Diego. The RWMG is advised by the RAC, which is comprised of 40 agencies and organizations. Among the 40 agencies and organizations, 32 are voting members while eight are non-voting members. Most of San Diego IRWM's activities are funded by the RWMG, such as monthly RWMG meetings, RAC meetings, and preparation of grant applications. Grant administration is funded by a combination of grant funds and the RWMG.

Ms. Lovsted presented an overview of the activities the RWMG has been developing in preparation of the Summit. There is uncertainty of the future of IRWM because there is no more designated IRWM funding available. The RWMG discussed which aspects of San Diego IRWM should be adjusted or changed to remain relevant. The RWMG has focused on four main areas: URC Support, Collaboration, Information Sharing & Advocacy, & Funding.

Currently, the San Diego IRWM Program has support URCs in three main areas: outreach, grant administration and information sharing. Recently, grant administration has been expanded to provide support for URC local project sponsors for the 2021 Urban Multi-Benefit Drought Relief Grant. Current collaboration, information sharing & advocacy activities include maintaining RAC meetings on a quarterly basis, sharing grant opportunities and funding webinars, and advocating for IRWM with the state via RoR. The historical funding sources have been a combination of RWMG funds and bonds from the state.

The RWMG has developed goals of each of the focus areas and are asking feedback from the RAC to improve the goals:

- URC Support: Increase and facilitate partnerships with URCs to provide resources and information that can support the needs of URCs in the region. Support can include information sharing, training resources, capacity building, and positioning for successful funding applications.
- Collaboration: Strengthen and expand partnerships with state and federal agencies and facilitate RAC members and IRWM Program stakeholders with meaningful engagement with water management agencies and organizations in the region.
- Information Sharing & Advocacy: 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 in the region.
- Funding: Identify potential funding sources that support the goals of IRWM and enhance IRWM's capacity to improve water resources planning in the region. Position the region for success in funding endeavors.

Questions/Comments

- The San Diego IRWM Program has done great work with URCs. Recommend considering demonstration sites to build more trust and interest within communities.
- When developing strategies, consider adding measures to gauge success in achieving larger goals.
- Recommend revising the funding goal to "identify and secure potential funding sources…" to make it more proactive.

- Collaboration with other IRWM members is very important. How about adding to the IRWM portal a place where members can provide contacts and priorities so IRWM members can search for program partners prior to funding becoming available.
- The Stormwater Quality for Grape Day Park DACs under Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant was marked complete in the presentation. This project was sponsored by Escondido Creek Conservancy. However, there is still more to be done since the City of Escondido had a different philosophy from what was presented in the plan. Recommend that project sponsors should ensure that cities give them commitment to implement the project.
    - Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant was a planning grant. It only funded the planning portion of the project and not implementation.
- The San Diego IRWM Program has been very helpful in working with URCs, such as Groundwater San Diego. San Diego IRWM is setting the standard for other regions to follow.
- An email will be going out with more details about the San Diego IRWM Summit, including the link for RSVPs.

Grant Administration

Ms. Loisa Burton, SDCWA, presented updates on grant administration. Total grant funding awarded to the San Diego IRWM Program is approximately $133 million for 84 regional projects. Almost $101 million has been spent to date with $31 million in grant funding remaining. Actual funding reimbursed to the local project sponsors totals $89 million and 23 projects are still active. An official request to extend the program for nine months was submitted. The new completion date for Proposition 84, Round 4 is December 2024. Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant Program has been completed. The Groundwater Planning for Pauma Valley DACs and Tribes, sponsored by Yuima Municipal Water District, and Sediment Management for Tijuana River Valley DACs, sponsored by California State Parks and Recreation Department, recently completed their work, closing out the Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant Program. In late January 2024, DWR has accepted the completion of the program. Over a five-year period, this program addressed the water management concerns of disadvantaged communities, economically distressed areas, and underrepresented communities within the San Diego funding area. Four projects in Proposition 1, Round 1, are more than 50% complete, and Project 4: Lower Santa Margarita River IPR Pilot Project is complete. Three projects remain in the Urban Multibenefit Drought Relief Program, and the program is scheduled to be complete by December 2025. Proposition 1, Round 2 is ongoing, and two projects are more than 40% complete.

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
USBR: WaterSMART: Water and Energy Efficiency Grants	First round due February 22, 2024 Second round due October 30, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350982

Project Types	Timing	Website
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: Planning and Project Design Grants	Second round due May 21, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=349785
USBR: Native American Affairs: Emergency Drought Relief for Tribes	Due April 11, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/351456
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
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

Public Comments

- Has the San Diego IRWM Program had any interaction with the World Design Center San Diego/Tijuana 2024 Program?
  - The San Diego IRWM Program is not familiar with the program.
- There are approximately 375 homeless people living near the riverbeds in San Diego, and they have been greatly affected by the floods. Please keep them in your thoughts.

Summary and Next Steps

- Ms. Lovsted informed the RAC that there is an opportunity to host an in-person RAC meeting on May 1st at the Safari Park in Escondido. There has been more virtual attendance compared to in-person attendance in prior hybrid meetings. The RWMG would like to gauge the RAC's interest in attending an in-person meeting via a Zoom poll.
- Zoom Poll: Are you interested in attending an in-person RAC meeting at the Safari Park in Escondido?
  - Yes: 34
  - No: 7

2024 Meeting Schedule

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

Regular meetings to be held quarterly in 2024.