



**Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #98**

August 3, 2022

9:00 am – 10:30 am

**Zoom Meeting**

**NOTES**

**Attendance**

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**RAC Members**

Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association  
Anne Middleton, ECOLIFE Conservation  
Ann Van Leer, The Escondido Creek Conservancy  
Beth Gentry, City of Chula Vista  
Brook Sarson, San Diego Sustainable Living Institute  
Charlie de la Rosa and Kelly Craig, San Diego Zoo Global  
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society  
Marisa Soriano, City of Chula Vista  
Marissa Potter, Santa Fe Irrigation District  
Mark Seits, Floodplain Management Association  
Michelle Berens, Helix Water District  
Mike Thorton and Chris Trees, San Elijo JPA  
Elizabeth Lovsted for Kelley Gage, San Diego County Water Authority  
Jennifer Hazard, RCAC  
Joey Randall for Kim Thorner, Olivenhain Municipal Water District  
Julia Chunn-Heer, Surf rider  
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  
Mark Seits, Floodplain Management Association  
Michelle Berens, Helix Water District  
Oscar Romo, Alter Terra  
Patrick McDonough, San Diego Coastkeeper  
Phil Pryde, San Diego River Park Foundation  
Richard Whipple, County of San Diego  
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  
Rosalyn Prickett, Woodard & Curran  
Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran  
Vanessa De Anda, Woodard & Curran

**Interested Parties to the RAC**

Alexi Schnell, San Diego County Water Authority  
Anne Turcotte, La Posta Band of Mission Indians  
Brian Hojnacki, City of San Diego  
Candance Comer, City of San Diego  
Carlos Quintero, Sweetwater Authority  
Cristina Torres, Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians  
Efren Lopez, San Diego County Water Authority  
Eleanor Carrano, La Posta Band of Mission Indians  
Erica Wolski, Ramona MWD  
Gail Patton, San Diego County Water Authority  
Heidi Brow, Pala Band of Mission Indians  
Inken Mello, Woodard & Curran  
Jessica Cleaver, San Diego County Water Authority  
Joel San Juan, Public  
Kumiko Hayazaki, City of San Diego  
Leslie Payne, Sweetwater Authority  
Mariah Mills, City of San Diego  
Mina Ziaei, Department of Water Resources  
Paul Watson, Global Action Research Center  
Ryan Krantz, Viejas Tribal Government  
Soleil Develle, Fallbrook Public Utility District  
Wenda Alvarez, WSA Marketing

**Welcome, Introductions, & Land Acknowledgement**

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Ms. Elizabeth Lovsted, San Diego County Water Authority, 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.*

## **San Diego Regional Drought and Colorado River Updates**

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Mr. Efren Lopez, San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), updated the group on water supply conditions in the San Diego Region and on recent drought-related actions in the state. There have been key state actions in response to the current drought. In November 2020, Governor Newsom directed state agencies to prepare for possible dry conditions in 2021. From April 2021 to October 2021, Governor Newsom issued multiple drought emergency proclamations, which included declaring a statewide emergency, authorizing the State Board to prepare emergency regulations to prohibit wasteful water practices, and directing water suppliers to activate Water Shortage Contingency Plans (WSCPs). In July 2021, the Governor issued Executive Order N-10-21 calling for a voluntary 15% reduction in water use from 2020 levels.

On March 28, 2022, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-7-22 directing the California State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to consider adopting emergency regulations that require water suppliers to submit preliminary Annual Water Supply and Demand Assessment (AWSDA) by June 1<sup>st</sup> and a final version by July 1<sup>st</sup>, to implement Level 2 actions in the WSCP, and to ban irrigation of “non-functional” turf in commercial and industrial sectors. Additionally, by June 10<sup>th</sup>, water suppliers must implement all demand reduction actions identified in the supplier’s WSCP for a shortage level of 10 to 20 percent. Exemptions are allowed if the AWSDA shows no shortage through September 30, 2023, the supplier does not rely on water from the State Water Project, Colorado River, or the Central Valley Project, and no more than 10% of supply comes from critically over-drafted groundwater basins, and the residential gallons per capita day (GPCD) is below 55 gallons.

The key takeaways of the state actions are that regulation does not require formal activation of Level 2 nor an actual reduction of 20% and enforcement is left to the discretion of the water suppliers. The SDCWA can remain in Level 1 but implement Level 2 demand reduction actions. Level 1 and 2 actions are identical, which include ongoing water use efficiency and a communication plan. Supply augmentation actions are not needed.

The SDCWA has made progress toward the Governor’s 15% water savings goal compared to the year 2020. The cumulative savings from July 2021 to May 2022 are 2%. In 2020, the San Diego Region experienced additional rainfall that resulted in lower regional water demands; however, recent dry weather conditions in April 2022 increased regional water use. As a result, using the year 2020 as a baseline has made water conservation more difficult in the San Diego Region. Nonetheless, per capita water use in the Region has declined 43% since 1990 and the Region is well-prepared for dry years.

Water Conservation is hard-wired in San Diego County. The high-priority rights on the Colorado River are secure, and drought-resilient supplies include seawater salination. The Region’s water supplies are reliable even in multiple dry years. The SDCWA has also regularly engaged with the media to circulate key drought messaging. Recently, the SDCWA launched an inclusive outreach campaign to reach wider audiences and new promotional items for events.

Ms. Alexi Schnell, SDCWA, presented updates on the Colorado River. Approximately 69% of the Region’s water supply originates from the Colorado River. Calendar year (CY) 2022 experienced the driest conditions in 1,200 years, resulting in the first Lower Basin shortage declaration. Arizona, Nevada, and Mexico have received 613,000 acre-feet (AF) water supply reductions. California is not subject to reductions due to the state’s high-priority water rights.

As of August 1, 2022, the Colorado River Basin’s precipitation is 99% of normal, but the forecasted unregulated inflow for water year (WY) 2022 is only 61% of normal. Lake Mead and Lake Powell are at 27% capacity. The historic drought and low runoff have led to historically low storage in key Colorado River reservoirs. Additionally, there are hydropower concerns with the potential for reservoirs to drop below minimum power pool elevations. To protect critical elevations, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has taken actions, such as reducing Lake Powell releases by 480,000 AF, releasing 500,000 AF from Flaming Gorge to Lake Powell, and

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developing the Lower Colorado River Basin 500+ Plan. Despite these actions, Lake Powell and Lake Mead elevations continue to decline.

The official determination for CY 2023 operations will be made later in the month. The potential Tier 2 shortage will affect Arizona, Nevada, and Mexico and there is also potential for additional drought contingency plan contributions. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Interior has called on the Basin States to develop a plan for 2 to 4 million AF of additional conservation by mid-August. Colorado River basin stakeholders are working collaboratively on a proposal, and the SDCWA is engaged.

Questions/Comments:

- The Colorado River updates should have been presented prior to the San Diego Regional Drought updates. The first presentation felt like a commercial for the SDCWA because there was no sense of urgency on the current drought conditions in California and the Colorado River. We need to do more meaningful drought messaging and actions to make a difference. The San Diego Coastkeeper is not interested in seeing communication plans, it is interested in seeing actual water savings in the Region.
  - Thank you for your comment. Conservation has always been a main focus for the SDCWA, which has a history of promoting and supporting conservation actions and projects.
  - I agree with these comments. The situation continues to get more dire.
- The wastewater industry has been working endlessly for decades for the Region to be water-wise and conscientious of how we use water. I agree that the first part of the presentation felt like a commercial, but I appreciate Mr. Lopez's passion for the SDCWA. We need to work on bringing communities together and continue with drought messaging. Additionally, we have to be mindful of the consequences of how indoor water conservation is impacting water recycling. The collection systems we have built depend on gravity and water flow to move water and solids to the treatment plants.
- The remedy to the discussion earlier from our perspective is in the water resource planning documents and adding appropriate local multi-benefit sources of water which is where the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program can help.

**Retail Agency Drought Perspectives**

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Ms. Leslie Payne, Sweetwater Authority, presented Sweetwater Authority's perspectives and actions on the current drought. Sweetwater Authority has been delivering safe, reliable water since 1977 and serves predominately large, disadvantaged communities. Sweetwater Authority has a diverse water supply portfolio, which includes service water treatment, groundwater desalination, freshwater wells, and imported water. The agency also owns and operates two dams and reservoirs, 20 storage tanks, and 17 pump stations.

Despite investments in water sources, their water supply is very weather dependent. In wet years, Sweetwater Authority can meet 100% of their customer's water needs with local water, the majority of which comes from surface water collected in two reservoirs and supplemented by groundwater treated at the Groundwater Desalination Facility. In dry years, about 30% of water can be supplied through the Groundwater Desalination Facility with another 10% coming from freshwater wells and the majority coming from purchased supplies of imported water.

The current drought is one of the challenges Sweet Water Authority is currently facing. California is facing a third year of the driest drought on record. In March, Governor Newsom called upon water agencies to activate their Drought Response Plans to higher levels of water restrictions to mitigate concerns of the long-term drought impacting the state. On May 24, the State Water Board adopted a new regulation to guide the state in reducing water demand and to improve conservation. In June, Sweetwater Authority's board voted to remain in Level 1

of their Drought Response Plan but implement additional drought measures to encourage additional water conservation.

Sweetwater Authority's customers are some of the lowest water users in San Diego County and Region and water efficiency is a way of life. The agency has invested in local drought-proof water sources to help mitigate concerns. Sweetwater Authority wants to assist businesses in their service area to save water and money on their water bill. They offer numerous rebates for plumbing fixtures, water efficiency irrigation equipment, and turf replacement. Sweetwater Authority also offers water efficiency grants and free water use audits for homes and businesses.

Sweetwater Authority will continue to monitor the drought and work with their Board to modify drought measures as needed and work with local community partnerships to circulate drought messaging to school programs and community groups. The agency will also advocate through legislative channels at the state and the federal level.

Mr. Brian Hojnacki, City of San Diego, presented the City of San Diego's (the City) water conservation drought response. The City offers many conservation and rebate programs that lead to substantial water savings, including residential and commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) surveys, rain harvesting programs, grey water rebates, turf removal rebates, landscape make-over classes, and device rebates. The City has also implemented year-round restrictions, which include no irrigation between 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, no runoff irrigation, no non-recirculating fountains, etc. The City also had a retrofit upon resell or alterations of homes, which means that any home that is sold in California must certify that they have retrofitted all their water use efficient devices. The City has a program that requires every home seller to obtain a water conservation certificate that shows they removed or upgraded the devices or indicates that the buyer will remove or upgrade the devices.

The City's outreach and education efforts include news releases and social media postings, dedicated field staff who assess people's homes, a public information clerk, a water conservation hotline, a conservation website, and the promotion of regional education programs. An important part of the City's water conservation is the Pure Water San Diego, a multi-year program that will provide nearly half of the City's water supply locally by the end of 2035. Once the program comes online, it will use proven water purification technology to clean recycled water to produce safe, high-quality drinking water.

Questions/Comments:

- Can there be something done about the trees in San Diego? Every few years, I have to dig out roots. We need to look at what kind of trees we want in San Diego.
  - Thank you for your comment and we will consider your suggestion.

**Proposition 1, Round 2**

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Ms. Lesley Dobalian, SDCWA, presented updates on Proposition 1, Round 2. The San Diego IRWM Program is on track and the grant team will submit the grant application to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) by August 19. DWR offered optional workshops with each IRWM region to review projects and vet for potential concerns. The mandatory workshop for Proposition 1, Round 1 resulted in multiple project changes to San Diego IRWM's application in 2019. The project list was presented to DWR on July 18. The feedback was positive with minimal questions and no eligibility concerns arose during the workshop. The anticipated award date is the end of 2022.

The San Diego IRWM application process is on Step 4, which is preparing the DWR application and acquiring additional project details from the local project sponsors (LPSs). The Project Selection Workgroup (PSW) was authorized by the RAC to select a suite of projects to submit to DWR at the April RAC meeting. There were

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four all-day meetings in May and June and PSW members spent time outside meetings to review materials. The process involved PSW members evaluating projects and conducting project interviews. A quorum was achieved at every meeting and the final package was passed by a unanimous vote. Ms. Dobalian would like to thank each PSW member for the time and care they put into the San Diego IRWM process.

Ms. Amanda Loeper, University of California, San Diego, and Chair of the PSW, presented summaries of the projects selected for funding. A total of six projects were selected, totaling \$15,119,616 in grant funding. All underrepresented community projects were awarded 100% of grant requests.

Project 1: The Acres Water Consolidation Project – Phase 1, Part 2 will be implemented by the Ramona Municipal Water District (Ramona MWD) and will install approximately 2,850 feet of 8-inch water main and appurtenances for 11 service connections to provide safe, reliable drinking water supply to a disadvantaged community, along with six fire hydrant assemblies. The project will result in 36 acre-feet per year (AFY) of water supply reliability and reduce 44 tons per year of salt loading.

Project 2: The Federal Blvd. De-channelization and Trail Construction Project will be implemented by Groundwater San Diego – Chollas Creek. The project will de-channelize and restore over 1,000 linear feet of the Chollas Creek waterway, and construct a recreational trail and climate-resilient mini park with stormwater features. The project will restore the ecosystem and habitat and remove 580 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MT CO<sub>2</sub>e) by planting 298 native trees.

Project 3: Ramona/Barona Tribe Recycled Water Pipeline Project will be implemented by Ramona MWD. The project will construct a new 2,760-foot, 8-inch PVC pipeline from Ramona MWD's existing San Vicente Water Reclamation Plant to an existing non-potable pipeline on the Barona Tribe Reservation, providing critical water resources and diversifying the water supply portfolio. This project will increase water supply reliability by providing up to 250 AFY of recycled water supply and reduced groundwater pumping by up to 250 AFY.

Project 4: North San Diego Water Reuse Coalition – Regional Recycled Water Program will be implemented by Olivenhain Municipal Water District (OMWD). The project will complete the next phase of the Regional Recycled Water Program, which includes expanding the recycled water distribution system, installing pumps and valves, constructing a 1.5-million-gallon steel tank, and increasing treatment capacity. The project will result in 180 AFY of recycled water and improve water supply reliability by 2,353 AFY.

Project 5: Integrated Multi-Benefits Solutions for Climate Resiliency in the San Diego Region will be implemented by the SDCWA. The project will support water use reductions, stormwater management, community engagement and customer education in all sectors by expanding regional conservation programs, and direct installing turf conversions. The project will reduce water demand by 245 AFY and remove 184 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e through the offset of imported water.

Project 6: Oceanside Mesa Garrison Force Main River Crossing will be implemented by the City of Oceanside. The project will construct 1,000 linear feet of sewer force main at the San Luis Rey River undercrossing, which is a critical component enabling the transport of wastewater to the Water Reclamation Facility to produce new potable reuse and recycled water. The project will result in 3,267 AFY in new local water supply and reduce ocean outfall discharges by 3,276 AFY.

To conclude, the projects are diverse and met an array of San Diego IRWM purpose and responds to DWR's Proposition 1 IRWM purpose of water reliability and climate resiliency.

#### Questions/Comments

- I like to thank the PSW members for their hard work and commitment to the San Diego IRWM Program.
- Ramona MWD is thrilled that both the Acres project and the Barona project got selected. Thanks everyone for your review and time on the PSW! Also, thanks to the Grant Team for preparing the application.

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- Huge thanks to the PSW! These are good projects!
- It was a pleasure serving on the PSW again. These are all very important projects for water supply resilience, watershed protection, and climate adaptation in our region.
- Is there a list of all submitted projects and how the projects were scored?
  - We distributed a list of all submitted projects along with the scores at the May 24<sup>th</sup> Scoring Workshop.

## **Grant Administration**

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Ms. Loisa Burton, SDCWA, presented updates on grant administration. The addition of \$5 million from the Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Program increased the San Diego IRWM grant funding to \$116.8 million. In total, the San Diego IRWM Region has billed DWR \$85.4 million for ten grant programs, equating to 73% billed. 53 projects are now complete out of the 78 projects funded, which equates to a 68% completion. The total reimbursements received by LPSs to date is \$82 million, accounting for retention. 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). Proposition 84, Round 2 is still ongoing. Two projects are complete, and the remaining projects are performing implementation/construction activities. A recent funding agreement amendment with the state has been approved to further extend the current project completion dates and rescope a few project work plans. Most active projects in Proposition 84, Round 4 are extending past their original dates of completion due to permitting, COVID-related impacts, and other projects. This program is still scheduled to end by March 2024. There are only two remaining projects for Proposition 1, Disadvantaged Community Involvement (DACI) 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. Ongoing and anticipated activities included the final review and execution of a \$5 million funding agreement with DWR in August 2022 and approval of the sub-agreements with the LPSs. Additionally, a program kickoff is being planned by the end of the month and invoicing in September 2022.

### Questions/Comments

None.

## **Public Comments**

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- We are in the RAC to have discussions and we are not going to have the same perspectives. We are in a critical situation given the State's current drought and conditions of the Colorado River. It deserves more time and discussion.
  - I appreciate your comments and we will take this back to the San Diego RWMG.
  - It's a core issue, let's get it on the agenda!
  - I support your comments. It is a difficult discussion to have, but this discussion will be useful.
  - I appreciate your second set of comments. This is a great forum where environmental and NGO groups and utilities can learn each other's perspectives.

**Summary and Next Steps**

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Ms. Johnson presented a list of upcoming funding opportunities. They have been included in the table below. Additionally, there are additional funds in the Governor’s budget which has been proposed to be distributed via grant programs. The details are still being discussed at the State. There may be another drought round of funding in the fall. Ms. Johnson stated that it may be similar to last year’s drought round.

Project Types	Deadline	Website
<b>CDFW:</b> Environmental Enhancement Fund	Expected in September	<a href="https://wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/Science/Environmental-Enhancement-Fund/About">https://wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/Science/Environmental-Enhancement-Fund/About</a>
<b>EPA:</b> Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation (WIFIA)	LOI due September 6	<a href="https://www.epa.gov/wifia">https://www.epa.gov/wifia</a>
<b>SWRCB:</b> Prop 1 Technical Assistance Funding Program	Open: rolling	<a href="https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/proposition1/tech_asst_funding.html">https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/proposition1/tech_asst_funding.html</a>
<b>DWR:</b> Water Desalination Grant Program	Open: rolling	<a href="https://water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices/2020/Sept-2020/Water-Desal-Grant-CAP">https://water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices/2020/Sept-2020/Water-Desal-Grant-CAP</a>

Next RAC Meeting:

- October 5, 2022 – 9:00-11:00 a.m. via virtual platform.

The meeting schedule for 2022 is included below. Please add them to your calendar:

- December 7, 2022