



Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting #89

February 3, 2021
9:00 am – 11:30 am

Zoom Meeting

NOTES

Attendance

RAC Members

Richard Whipple, County of San Diego (Chair)
Ann Van Leer, Escondido Creek Conservancy
Anne Bamford, American Water Works Association California/Nevada Section
Anne Middleton, ECOLIFE Conservation
Beth Gentry, City of Chula Vista
Charlie de la Rosa, San Diego Zoo Global
David Walker, San Diego Audubon Society
Elizabeth Lovsted for Kelley Gage, San Diego County Water Authority
Erick Del Bosque, Sweetwater Authority
Jennifer Hazard, Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Julia Chunn-Heer, Surfrider
Keli Balo, City of San Diego
Justin Gamble and Tim Murphy, City of Oceanside
Kimberly O'Connell, UCSD Clean Water Utility
Leslie Cleveland for Jack Simes, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Joey Randall for Kim Thorner, Olivenhain Municipal Water District
Marisa Soriano, City of Chula Vista
Mark Seits and Alex Yescas, Floodplain Management Association
Michael McSweeney, Building Industry Association
Michelle Berens, Helix Water District
Mike Thorton, San Elijo Joint Powers Authority
Oscar Romo, Alter Terra
Patrick McDonough, San Diego Coastkeeper
Rob Hustel for Phil Pryde, San Diego River Park Foundation
Sandra Jacobson, California Trout

RWMG Staff and Consultants

Arthella Vallarta, Woodard & Curran
Chelsea McGimpsey, County of San Diego
Karina Danek, City of San Diego
Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority
Mark Stadler, San Diego County Water Authority
Mark Stephens, City of San Diego
Nicole Poletto, Woodard & Curran
Sally Johnson, Woodard & Curran
Sarah Brower, City of San Diego

Stephanie Gaines, County of San Diego
Rosalyn Prickett, Woodard & Curran

Interested Parties to the RAC

Andrew Meyer, San Diego Audubon Society
Brian Hojnacki, City of San Diego
Christopher Paulino, Viejas Tribal Government
Goldy Herbon, City of San Diego
Efren Lopez, San Diego County Water Authority
Eleonore Durand, Environmental Incentives
Genel Abordo, San Diego County Water Authority
Jes Camilla, Public
John Quenzer, City of National City
Joni German, San Diego County Water Authority
Heidi Gantwerk, H. G. Consulting Group
Laurie Broedling, San Diego Green Infrastructure Consortium
Luca Zapiello, City of National City
Michelle Hallack, NV5
Omar Passons, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency
Robert Leiter, American Planning Association
Tom Hamilton, Dexcom
Wesley Leonard, County of San Diego
Vicki Quiram, City of Carlsbad

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Richard Whipple, County of San Diego 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.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for SDIRWM

Diversity, equity, and inclusion has been a topic of discussion for the past few RAC Meetings. Mr. Omar Passons, County of San Diego, continued the discussion and explained the intersection of environmental, economic, and social justice in San Diego and provided tips for what you can do both at work and at home to dismantle racism.

The first step is to recognize the historical policies that lead to the creation of disadvantaged communities. Mr. Passons gave examples of how policies can disproportionately impact people of color. One of those policies is redlining, which is the systemic and discriminatory practice by banks, insurance companies, and other institutions that refuse or limit loans, mortgages, insurances, and other services to certain geographic areas of communities, often because of racial characteristics. Mr. Passons stated that redlined communities suffer lower levels of investment, such as in the city of Richmond where the redlined communities experience higher summer temperatures due to the low tree cover and large asphalt and paving ground cover.

There are tools and resources to measure and examine the lack of equity in disadvantaged communities, such as the Area of Deprivation Index, Healthy Places Index, and CalEnviroScreen. However, these tools only display inequity, rather than address it. These tools must be put into practice, and one method is through authentic and continuous community engagement.

Attendees broke into small breakout rooms to discuss one opportunity and one challenge in embedding addressing racial equity in your work.

Visit us at www.sdirwmp.org

Breakout Room Comments: What can you do to embed racial equity in your work?

- We have to be intentional about addressing these issues. They aren't going to fix themselves.
- Structure of funding can offer challenges; there is not always a lot of diversity roles of decisionmakers; a lot of mistrust of science; more affluent neighborhoods tend to have louder voices (i.e. more money and time to be the squeaky wheel).
- Lots of challenges: homogenous communities, limited number of diverse applicants.
- Having discussions or presentations like this.
- Reaching out to all groups, equity not folded into agency's everyday work or priorities.
- More robust engagement in EJ communities before/during capital projects. Challenge—grant availability, influence DWR to fund engagement.
- Challenge: equitable water/wastewater/waste management rates, and capacity building for disadvantaged communities to apply for state/federal grants.
- Opportunities: Going into diverse communities, listening sessions, offer training on water and these good jobs in junior college or high school, encourage to pursue good steady jobs, support DAC with grant applications and guidance.
- Challenge: where to focus our conservation projects, which parks and places in the County, utilities need to maintain equitable access to needed services, minimize local impacts to disadvantaged communities. Opportunity: new rebate program could open up new doors and reach new audiences, and resources should be in multiple languages.
- Opportunities: During project selection – include targeted questions about specific community needs that could be funded through projects (awarded) and how we market to communities – bringing in the “what's in it for me” message so they have a clear understanding of how important a (for example) community meeting or other engagement activity can be. Constraints: DWR and working with them to include outreach as a funded component of projects, and deferred maintenance in communities. Also, time and access to show up to community meetings and events, to allow their voice/concerns to be heard.
- Opportunity: Thoughtfully consider protecting cultural artifacts when identified during a project. Think about how to evaluate impacts to communities when conducting facilities/water supply planning. Planning considerations include financials, liability, etc. but don't always have a process for evaluation community/equity impacts. River foundation had 100s of volunteers. Think about how to broaden engagement and representation in volunteers.
- Create funding policies, regulations, requirements that are feasible or realistic for anyone (including DACs to fulfill). Provide NGOs with resources and training to understand requirements.
- Challenges include hiring regulations, rigidity in Stormwater Permit requirements; lack of information for the general public regarding the goals and structure of stormwater planning; restrictions in some of the state grant programs.
- Challenge: awareness of embedded bias that goes unnoticed or creeps in unknowingly; also equity vs quality – some see that as taking away from one group and giving it to another when it's actually an attempt to level the playing field. Opportunity: COVID has forced us to use technology in ways we never imagined – use it to reach communities, policy-makers and influencers to create better integration; also allows us to provide as much information as possible to the greatest number of people.

Mr. Passons ended his presentation with these final thoughts: people are limited by imagination and determination. We, as a society, must keep moving forward and continue these conversations in a thoughtful and respectful way.

Questions and Comments:

- No questions, but I want to say thank you, Omar. Very engaging and interesting conversation.
- Wonderful presentation. Thank you.
- Do you have guidance or suggestions as we approach diverse communities and encourage their input if it's around water, climate change, sea level rise, etc.? Everyone is dealing with so much, that sometimes, environmental concerns are not front of mind. Any advice on how to have a sensitive approach and be mindful on what is concerning them?
 - Sometimes there are objective facts that impact something. Sometimes the room doesn't believe that is true. The initial meeting may never be the space to get to the facts. Until people legitimately heard, which may mean long meetings and listening to insults and past trauma. In a community setting, you want to get past that point for most people in the room where it seems that people are open to listening to what they think.
 - An important thing is to tie the environmental issues to the other issues that you are hearing, such as making sure that their stormwater system doesn't fail will make them be able to be open to their other concerns.
- I've gone through cases where sharing information like what you've you shared with us makes people angry in DACs. It makes them feel alienated or more frustrated even when they knew these things. The reaction is not always positive. What do you do in these scenarios?
 - There are some audiences where certain people can have the conversation easier than others. That is a legitimate concern that people will have. Depending on the audience, I would start by saying that communities are more than the harms of their past. For instance, "I know there are assets and strengths in this community. I am about to share are historic wrongs, and it is not mean to disparage. I genuinely believe in the power and strength in this community." If you don't know the community yet, get some of those nuggets. "I know that Ms. Jones has been a leader at City Hall for the past 15 years, etc." Before you to get to the negatives, open with the positives.
- Great point. Begin listening and respect before meaningful discussion on complex topics.
- In our program, we dole out grant money and select projects for funding. We have a pretty rigorous process that involves scoring and quantification to make sure the process is fair for everyone. How can we rethink or evaluate that with a new lens? One of our challenges for example is quantifying the benefits of investment in a community. We have CalEnviroScreen and DAC mapping tools, but sometimes it is difficult to weigh and measure the benefit of investment for a small project (small AFY) for small vs large organizations as the water supply benefit may be vastly different between the two.
 - We sometimes make our applications so burdensome where some groups don't have the infrastructure to compete. By trying to make it more fair, we've made it less fair. Small organizations do not have enough staff to spend hours on the application. We should also rethink the application, and make sure that it addresses the minimum requirements for regulatory framework and scrutinize anything that goes beyond that. Can we nudge back on the people giving us the money to challenge and streamline? For the benefits – there are some equity requirements embedded in what the State is pushing out now that allows you

to inflate the need of smaller burdened areas (for example, has there been an issue in the small community for a century vs the large community for five years). What “fair” means, may evolve.

- Do you have any thoughts on how gentrification in San Diego impacts the maps and where we start off in this conversation?
 - I have thoughts, but I want to be careful. My past life is in the real estate world. To level set, there are 50 different definitions of gentrification. The notion of what it means to be forced out is a slippery definition. We have to be careful when we have these conversations to set the anchors. For instance, who was there in 2000 and had to move by 2010 to increase the MHI?
 - There has been good research at San Diego State. The bigger problem with gentrification is that residents can no longer afford the types of things in the community once it has been gentrified. When you have depressed the values in a community for a long time and you don't have the legal framework to change it, you will still have that issue. We will need to use policy tools that haven't been deployed before (community land trust or social housing) to help protect gentrification in neighborhoods.
- Awesome presentation. Very interesting and engaging!
- Thank you, Omar! Powerful and useful.
- Omar, I want to echo all the sentiments above, and thank you for taking the time to speak with our RAC and stakeholders – the messages are so useful for our program as we move forward to identify how we're currently implementing Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity and giving us thoughts for how we can improve our program.
- Thank you, Omar, and the RWMG for bringing this forward. Great job!

Diversity and Inclusion

Ms. Stephanie Gaines, County of San Diego encouraged everyone to participate in the Menti survey to discuss what resonated from Mr. Passons's presentation and what the SDIRWM should keep in mind while considering diversity, equity, and inclusion in SDIRWM.

She reviewed previous conversations on diversity, equity, and inclusion centered on geography, funding, and membership and introduced the proposal to being a DEI Workgroup for SDIRWM. The purpose of the DEI Workgroup is to:

- Define diversity, equity, and inclusion as related to SDIRWM
- Examine project scoring and selection processes and make recommendations to help reduce bias
- Consider SDIRWM activities and identify opportunities for equitable program access/participation
- Establish metrics to evaluate progress towards meeting DEI goals
- Identify resources with local DEO expertise, data, and knowledge

Questions/Comments

- I would like to see the development of some guidelines. In some cases, we do not have the tools to meet the criteria when we meet with DACs. The Workgroup should develop the guidelines and present them to SDIRWM.

- Issue of the RAC membership should be considered – looking for new voices to be heard around the table. Outreach to allow people to know that there is this opportunity to participate on the RAC.
- Maybe change the word “bias” in the second bullet of the DEI Workgroup purpose to “help reduce inequity.”
- Open a conversation with DWR and grantors to make people more comfortable with fulfilling requirements.
- For the third bullet in the DEI Workgroup purpose, are you talking about SDIRWM program access?
 - Yes.
- There are many households that can’t afford their water bill. Communities need help navigating the governmental process to access assistance funds. We will be seeing how projects could provide assistance.
- Great start. I imagine the focus could change as the Workgroup moves forward, so need to stay flexible and adaptable.
- As we strive for continuous improvement of our program, we should be careful not to make our proposal selection process more complex.

The Workgroup is comprised of RWMG and volunteers, which are open to RAC and stakeholders. The ideal number of volunteers is about 15 people. There will be four meetings, about two hours each. The Workgroup is anticipated to be active from February – July 2021. If interested in participating, email Mark Stadler at mstadler@sdcwa.com.

What resonated with you and what should we keep in mind while considering diversity, equity, and inclusion in SDIRWM?

People must feel heard before they will want to listen

Reconsider what is "fair"

We need to be proactive about reaching out, take note of whom is doing the 'reaching,' and create a space for (and opportunities for) disadvantaged communities.

Awareness and action are key. We have to be intentional.

Embedded or implicit bias that goes unnoticed

Keep learning and listening

Make sure that information on the website is current and available to all.

Consider historic policies/trends that have created inequity in water supply/quality and how IRWM can remedy those.

Calculating project benefits can include length of burden in addition to magnitude of project benefit

Interested to see how DAC mapping correlates with the SD Area Deprivation Index. This mapping tool may help us better evaluate past and future program investments and community need.

More attention to water supply/quality concerns, even WITHIN existing municipal/district service areas. Are there hidden inequities?

Important to be aware how grant requirements and structures can be inclusive or onerous.

The history of systemic racism in San Diego that has lasting effects. We're making progress in our policies, and through discussions like we're having today, but we still have a long way to go. We have to remain persistent in these efforts

Active listening to community members - even if their concerns are not what you are in the community to discuss during that meeting

Need a way to measure success. What gets measured gets done.

Community advocates are needed.

Hire staff that reflects community.

His point about making it less fair by trying to make it more fair, too burdensome

I think there are some opportunities to improve IRWM's guidance and procedures for obtaining grant funding that supports racial equity.

There are a lot of opportunities for us to make lasting change on these topics that we need to think about and incorporate, especially in regards to the built environment

The areas/communities that might be most in need of the services we are involved in funding and planning may not always have the loudest voices to get our attention so we need to be their voice and seek out to be their advocates

Evaluation criteria can be thought about in different ways to work through and be more aware of inequities and provide more inclusion.

how to structure dialogue for meaningful inclusion, follow up, have plan for integrating this into everyday and work life.

Social costs from climate change

Making sure historical data is included in mapping and showcases changes and inequities over a period of time.

how can we push back on funder/DWR on onerous grant or admin requirements that limit DAC engagement

Project Completion Report

Mr. Luca Zapiello, City of National City, presented on the Paradise Creek Water Quality and Community Enhancement project funded in Proposition 84, Round 1. Mr. Zapiello gave an overview of the planning, design, and implementation process. There are two channels that merge into the creek, flowing on the west side. There was a culvert and storm drain that diverted water to the creek. Mr. Zapiello provided a map that identified all construction phases of the project. The planning and design phase was funded by the Prop 84 “Clean Beaches Program” from the California State Water Resources Control Board approximately a \$1.5 million project. This phase is complete. The implementation of Phase 2 was granted by the IRWM Prop 1, Round 1 for almost \$3.6 million with no local match. Construction is expected to start in the spring. The City is researching grant opportunities to fund the third phase of the project, which is estimated to cost \$1.6 million.

Project goals included improving water quality, addressing flooding, reducing high-volume surface runoff, and adding recreational space. The bioswale creek will now filter out small levels of pollutants and provide flow-through treatment. This project increased the capacity of the creek and added inlet to efficiently convey the 100-year peak flood. The improvements helped better control the flow and removed 16 disadvantaged community properties from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard. The creek has a low-flow channel that helps to slow down surface runoff flow and better direct it toward the detention basin. The project included an education path along the creek for pedestrians and bicyclists, and finally, helped preserve and restore the existing open space while providing an aesthetically pleasing solution for the disadvantaged communities.

There were three main planning and construction challenges in the project implementation. The first challenge was permitting delays, such as obtaining the required 404 permit and the negotiation of the time extension to the grant manager for the construction of the first phase of the project. The second challenge was utility relocation - the coordination of relocating utility poles and overhead cables in Phase 1 and the removal and relocation of the new culvert close to gas, sewer, and other underground utilities was difficult. The third challenge was the construction in the creek. There were extended delays caused by several storm events during the last rainy season and managing the water creek was challenging during the dry season caused by the unexpected water flowing in the creek.

Questions/Comments

- All the organizations on the “Thank You” slide—were they paid to work on the project?
 - No, HDR worked on the design, D-Max worked on water quality. We also have the funders on the slide as well. We worked with CDFE for the permitting.
- Slide 24, it looks like there is a ramp down the side. Is that for access for repair and maintenance?
 - The access road is for public works. One of the primary goals of this project is to make the channel easier to maintain. If we don’t maintain it, it will be the same situation as before. That ramp is overflow. There is also a diversion structure to capture any sediment flow.
- Looking at the elevation and the ramp down to the filtration basin, if this fills up and goes over the top of the spillway where does the water go?
 - It goes back to the main channel right on the other side of the channel. This is an offline biofiltration basin.
- This is one of the projects that we’ve been looking at doing with stormwater permits for alternative compliance. It can clean things up on the side of the creek.
 - The basin is approximately 2 square miles.
- I agree, I am anxious to get out on my bike to see it.
- Among the many cool things about this project is that it has received two grants from our IRWM program where one led to the other, just the way it is supposed to work. In the DACI round we gave nine planning grants to projects to do the planning they need to do to apply for the implementation grants from ourselves or other funders.
- Great project! It is very impressive that you were able to persuade the City to use the land for this purpose rather than selling.

- Great presentation. As a suggestion, could the Grants & Agreements page on the web have a few examples of projects such as Paradise Creek presentation that we are seeing?
 - That's a great suggestion. We normally post the project completion reports to our RAC page, but we can also link to it on the grants page.

RAC Membership

Mr. Mark Stadler, San Diego County Water Authority reminded RAC members of the discussions in October and December about what to do with the new open seat. Currently, there are 31 voting members that represent six caucuses. Approximately half of the seats turn over every two years in order to maintain continuity. The most interest was in a seat involving Wildfire-Water Nexus since wildfires have an impact on water supply, water quality, and natural resources.

Mr. Stadler welcomed the new members to the RAC. A few of these members have been on the RAC before but this is a new term for them.

Questions/Comments

- I move that we adopt the recommendation.
- I second the motion.
- I have a clarifying question – I am new and coming up to speed. In the seven other seats, we already have a climate seat. There are two at large positions, and this would be in addition to those positions?
 - The intent of this position is not to be another climate change position but looking at the relationship between water and wildfire once wildfires happen. (Not how they've increased due to climate change). It may be USGS, the forest service, etc.
- Ever since the Cedar Fire, I've been knee-deep in wildfire-watershed issues. Is there a definition, clarification, or boundary for what you are looking for with this seat? Do you want to set boundaries or keep it vague? I'd like to make sure that it is a position that is related to natural resources in a direct way. I mention this as a precaution. I would be disheartened if someone came in and was a large proponent of vegetation removal.
 - We look forward to getting recommendations from you about who to fill the position.
- A few things that we discussed as an RWMG when thinking about the scope is that we understand the Wildfire Nexus can hit a few ways, but a primary need we discussed was watershed management—flooding post fire, impacts to watersheds, and more downstream water treatment. That is a core concern and area of need for more understanding. There is also water infrastructure in rural areas where there is a large wildfire risk. This seat may also help advise about improving resilience to this infrastructure.
- I encourage us to maintain integrated water management and iterative process of wildfire and water. We can take wildfire into consideration for projects we fund, how we build projects. Keep an integrated focus.

The RAC voted and approved the addition of a new RAC seat for Wildfire-Water Nexus.

- 24 yes
- 0 no
- 0 abstained

Grants 101

Ms. Johnson gave an overview of the Grants 101 presentation that was discussed with underrepresented communities in the Fall of 2020. There were five one-on-one working sessions that discussed the IRWM funding process more in depth. The purpose of the working sessions was to discuss the IRWM Grant Program and other funding programs and to help make projects more competitive.

To summarize, there are many funding opportunities from grants. See www.grants.ca.gov to learn more. There is still approximately \$16 million available to the SDIRWM Region for Round 2 of Proposition 1 funding. The Proposal Solicitation Package (PSP) is expected by the end of 2021 from DWR. Grants awards are expecting in Summer/Fall 2022.

Ms. Johnson provided recommendations for success in applying for grants.

Questions/Comments:

None.

Grant Administration

Ms. Loisa Burton, San Diego County Water Authority, presented updates on grant administration. In total, the San Diego IRWM Region has received \$111.7 million, 74 projects funded, and 50 projects completed. Approximately, 64% of the grand award as been billed to DWR (\$71.1 million). Proposition 84, Round 3 is almost complete (5 of 7 projects completed). An amendment to extend this contract is underway. Proposition 84, Round 4 was also allowed to be extended through 2024 and projects will now be completed at the end of December 2023. Most projects in Proposition 84, Round 4 are still in the implementation phase with eight active projects over 50% complete and four projects still in the planning phase. Proposition 1, DACI Program is still ongoing with six out of nine projects complete. The program is scheduled for completion in December 2022. The grant agreement for Proposition 1, Round 1 is underway.

Questions/Comments:

- Thanks Loisa, great update!
- Thanks Loisa for all you do!
- Nice job, Loisa!
- Loisa does an amazing job.

Public Comments

Mr. Whipple gave a disclaimer about the Climate Science Alliance 2021 Southwest Adaptation Forum April 6-8, 2021. This will conflict with our next RAC meeting. If you would like to go, please coordinate with your Alternate or vice-versa.

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
Prop 1 Technical Assistance Funding Program	Open: rolling	https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/proposition1/tech_asst_funding.html
Water Desalination Grant Program	October 15	https://water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices/2020/Sept-2020/Water-Desal-Grant-CAP
USBR: Small-Scale Water Efficiency	March 18	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=331224

Next RAC Meeting:

- April 3, 2021 – 9:00-11:30 a.m. via virtual platform.

The meeting schedule for 2021 is included below. Please add them to your calendar:

- June 2, 2021
- August 4, 2021
- October 6, 2021
- December 1, 2021

Regular Meetings Held First Wednesday of Every Other Month.