

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Plan Overview.** The San Diego Region (hereinafter Region) features a complex array of water supply, water management, water quality protection, pollution prevention, habitat protection, flood protection, and recreational needs. Numerous water management plans have been developed within the Region to address these needs. Jurisdictional and water management conflicts exist among the individual water management plans, and many challenges exist to identifying, addressing, and resolving these conflicts and the Region's water management issues.

This Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWM Plan) represents the first step in bringing the Region's stakeholders together to:

- identify and discuss the Region's complex water management issues, challenges, and conflicts,
- establish goals and objectives that define the Region's water management needs,
- identify and prioritize water management projects, programs, and plans that help achieve the goals and objectives,
- work together to fund and implement the prioritized projects, programs, and plans, and
- monitor implementation progress in achieving the goals and objectives and adapt the Region's water management efforts to meet changing water management needs.

**Region and Plan Preparation (Section A).** This IRWM Plan addresses a region that includes the portion of San Diego County that is tributary to coastal waters. The Region is entirely within the jurisdiction of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region 9 (Regional Board). A single NPDES permit issued by the Regional Board regulates all urban and stormwater runoff within the Region.

This IRMW Plan was prepared under the direction of a Regional Water Management Group (RWMG), which is comprised of the San Diego County Water Authority, the City of San

Diego, and the County of San Diego. The combined jurisdiction of the three agencies comprises the entire Region. Policy-level input to the IRWM Plan was provided by a Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) that is comprised of experts representing environmental groups, academic institutions, business, agricultural, water suppliers, wastewater agencies, water quality interests, regulatory agencies, and disadvantaged communities.

This Plan was prepared in accordance with statewide IRWM Program Guidelines established by the State Water Resources Control Board and State of California Department of Water Resources in 2004 and updated in 2007. This Plan is in keeping with Initiative No. 1 of the *California Water Plan Update 2005* which established a strategic approach for California's communities and regions to (1) foster regional partnerships, (2) develop and implement integrated regional water management plans, and (3) diversify regional water portfolios.

**Regional Overview (Section B).** The Region is comprised of eleven parallel and similar hydrologic units that discharge to coastal bays, estuaries, lagoons, and the ocean. The Region's diverse population of three million predominantly resides in a coastal zone that includes 18 municipalities as well as urbanized unincorporated areas of the County. Open lands comprise much of the eastern (upstream) higher elevations of the Region. Disadvantaged communities are geographically spread throughout the Region.

The Region is home to more endangered species than any County in the nation, and Multiple Species Conservation Program Plans have been developed to provide for the protection of important habitats. The Region's coastal lagoons represent a unique resource, and the Region features more coastal lagoons than any comparably sized area in California. The Region also features more than 70 miles of recreational beaches. Combined, all of these assets provide for a large portion of the Region's economy in the form of tourism.

Precipitation and streamflows are highly seasonal. Historically, approximately 90 percent of the Region's streamflow occurs during the months of December through May. Many water quality problems have been identified within the Region's groundwater and surface waters. The Regional Board has identified over 40 inland surface waters and 35 coastal waters or beach segments as not complying with applicable water quality standards. Primary water quality constituents of concern for the Region's surface waters include coliform bacteria, sediment, nutrients, salinity, metals, and toxic organic compounds. The Regional Board has completed Total Daily Maximum Loads (TMDLs) for several of these non-complying waters, and has initiated TMDLs for a number of additional impaired waters.

Depending on hydrologic conditions, imported water supplied by the Water Authority typically comprises 70 to 90 percent of the Region's water supply. The Region's water agencies have targeted increasing local supplies as a key element in meeting future regional water demands.

**Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (Section C).** The RWMG and RAC developed the following vision and mission statement to provide overall direction to the Region's IRWM planning approach:

***IRWM Plan Vision***

*An integrated, balanced, and consensus approach to ensuring the long-term sustainability of San Diego's water supply, water quality, and natural resources.*

***IRWM Planning Mission***

*To develop and implement an integrated strategy to guide the San Diego Region toward protecting, managing, and developing reliable and sustainable water resources. Through a stakeholder-driven process and adaptive process, the Region can develop solutions to water-related issues and conflicts that are economically and environmentally preferable, and that provide equitable resource protection for the entire Region.*

Through a public outreach process that included three facilitated public workshops, the RWMG and regional stakeholders developed the following four IRWM Plan goals:

**IRWM Plan Goals**

- 1. Optimize water supply reliability.*
- 2. Protect and enhance water quality.*
- 3. Provide stewardship of our natural resources.*
- 4. Coordinate and integrate water resource management.*

The RWMG, RAC, and regional stakeholders developed nine objectives to accomplish the four IRWM Plan goals. The RWMG, with input from the RAC, also identified measurable targets for each of the nine objectives. The nine IRWM Plan objectives include:

Objective A: Maximize stakeholder/community involvement and stewardship.

Objective B: Effectively obtain, manage, and assess water resource data and information.

Objective C: Further scientific and technical foundation of water management.

Objective D: Develop and maintain a diverse mix of water resources.

- Objective E: Construct, operate, and maintain a reliable infrastructure system.
- Objective F: Reduce the negative effects on waterways and watershed health caused by hydromodification and flooding.
- Objective G: Effectively reduce sources of pollutants and environmental stressors.
- Objective H: Protect, restore and maintain habitat and open space.
- Objective I: Optimize water-based recreational opportunities

**Water Management Strategies (Sections D & E).** To address the Region's water management challenges, thirty water management strategies were selected for inclusion in this IRWM Plan, including strategies that address water supply and conservation, water quality protection, land conservation, runoff management, habitat and ecosystem enhancement, flood management, and recreation. Selected water management strategies are in keeping with strategies listed in the *California Water Plan Update 2005* and 2004 IRWM Program Guidelines. Many of the water management strategies are complementary and may be integrated to avoid duplication of effort, address common issues, provide for cost savings, allow for cost sharing, and optimize attainment of IRWM Plan goals and objectives. As a guide to the Region's water resources planning effort, selected groups of water management strategies are combined (integrated) to demonstrate how projects can be combined to optimize attainment of Plan objectives and provide additional economic, social, water resources, or implementation benefits.

**Short-Term and Long-Term Priorities (Sections F and G).** Three long-term IRWM priorities have been identified: (1) maintain an effective institutional structure, (2) maintain public involvement, and (3) achieve goals and objectives. To address immediate Plan implementation needs, the following seven short-term priorities were identified by the RWMG with input from the RAC and stakeholders:

1. Implement priority projects and programs that support the Region's IRWM goals and objectives.
2. Formally establish a long-term institutional structure to guide the ongoing development and implementation of the San Diego IRWM Plan.
3. Implement and update (as needed) a Public Outreach Plan that ensures key stakeholders and affected parties are informed and engaged in IRWM planning and implementation.
4. Establish a regional, web-based system for sharing, disseminating and supporting the analysis of water management data and information.

5. Complete a needs assessment and develop recommendations for addressing existing deficiencies in the technical and scientific foundation of San Diego Basin Plan beneficial uses and water quality objectives.
6. Complete an updated assessment of local water management plans to ensure effective and upfront input from these plans during all phases of IRWM planning and implementation. Where planning deficiencies are identified, address these deficiencies as part of the IRWM Plan update process.
7. Revise the IRWM Plan and publish the Second Edition of the San Diego IRWM Plan.

A key short-term priority is establishing a Regional institutional structure to take over IRWM Plan implementation responsibilities from the RWMG and RAC. One proposed option is the formation of a regional council through the development and acceptance of a common Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Membership of the MOU-formed organization would include interested land use, water, and wastewater agencies; environmental, business, and agricultural non-governmental organizations, and other regional stakeholders.

Identifying and implementing priority projects is another key short-term priority. More than 160 water management projects are considered within this Plan, including a wide array of water supply, water system reliability, water quality protection, pollution prevention, storm runoff control, habitat protection and enhancement, wetlands creation, invasive species control, land conservation, flood control, water-based recreation, data collection, stakeholder outreach, and public education projects.

A two-stage prioritization process that includes Plan-level prioritization and funding-level prioritization is proposed for evaluating the Region's water management projects. This IRWM Plan includes the initial Plan-level prioritization that rates projects on their ability to (1) contribute to regional goals and objectives, (2) integrate multiple water management strategies, (3) provide multiple benefits, (4) benefit the entire region, (5) synergize with other projects, (6) benefit disadvantaged communities, (7) address environmental justice needs, (8) build upon other local and regional planning efforts; and (9) foster partnerships among entities. A consensus process was used by the RWMG and RAC to establish the relative importance of each of these criteria within the project prioritization process. On the basis of the selected criteria, a list of 80 Tier I projects was selected.

A funding-level prioritization process will represent the second stage of project prioritization. This process, which will occur prior to submitting grant applications, will identify and apply

additional prioritization criteria to narrow the Tier I pool of projects and identify priority projects for implementation.

**Benefits and Impacts (Section H).** Proposed Tier I projects will result in many region-wide benefits. These benefits will include water quality improvement, ecosystem improvement, fish and wildlife enhancement, flood control enhancement, erosion control enhancement, recreation and public access enhancement, public safety enhancement, improved water supply reliability, cultural resource preservation, reduced wastewater discharges, improved water management coordination, enhanced scientific and public understanding, and economic benefits. Known impacts associated with the Tier I projects are limited to short-term effects associated with construction. None of the proposed projects have any known impacts on disadvantaged communities.

**Performance Monitoring (Section I).** This Plan identifies monitoring parameters and sets forth proposed procedures for measuring Plan success, benefits, and impacts. An iterative adaptive management process is proposed for evaluating Plan implementation. Under the direction of the Region's IRWM Plan institutional structure, this stakeholder-driven process would include cycles of: (1) assessment, (2) Plan formulation, (3) implementation, (4) monitoring, and (5) reassessment.

**Data Management (Section J).** Data collection and management will represent a key component of this overall process. Currently, a central or organized data management structure does not exist within the Region. Additionally, significant data gaps exist in the collection and assessment of regional surface water quality, groundwater quality, groundwater availability, and habitat data. Filling the data gaps and coordinating data collection and management within the Region will be required to effectively assess regional water management needs and to assess the effectiveness of implemented water management projects.

**Plan Funding and Financing (Section K).** The RWMG agencies funded development of this Plan and Proposition 50 grant applications, and are committing additional funding and resources to facilitate development of a long-term institutional structure to oversee implementation of the Plan. The primary means of financing IRWM capital projects will be through government agency Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budgets. State of California grant funds are also an important potential source of funding for capital projects. IRWM projects for environmental enhancement may be funded directly by agencies, by local grant funds, or by non-government endowments or contributions.

**Conformance with Statewide Priorities (Section L).** Tier I projects will result in inter-regional benefits associated with helping to achieve State Water Plan objectives and goals, including reducing imported water demands on the Sacramento Bay-Delta. Proposed Tier I projects are in conformance with statewide priorities, as the projects will reduce water use conflicts, help implement Regional Board-imposed TMDLs, implement Regional Board policies, and implement the State Water Resources Control Board's Non-Point Source Pollution Plan.

**Consistency with Local Plans (Section M).** This IRWM Plan builds on the existing Regional water management plans and planning efforts, including: water quality, water supply and conservation, urban and stormwater runoff, watershed protection, groundwater, wastewater and recycled water, land use, flood control, habitat and species protection, land preservation, wetlands, and recreation plans. This IRWM Plan is intended to be an umbrella document that encompasses these local water management plans, but addresses water management issues on a Regional level

Many of the Region's major water management plans have been reviewed and incorporated into this Public Review Draft, and specific water management strategies proposed within these plans have been identified. Goals and objectives from a number of other local water management plans have been identified, summarized, and considered. Additional work is required, however, to review and incorporate all local plans into the IRWM Plan. Accordingly, this Plan establishes as a short-term priority for reviewing all of the Region's pertinent water-related management plans and incorporating specifics from these local plans into the IRWM Plan.

**Stakeholder Involvement and Plan Coordination (Sections N & O).** Stakeholder input is an important component of each development phase of this Plan. Continued stakeholder input will be required (1) to identify proposed water management strategies and projects, (2) implement short-term priority action plans, (3) form and organize a Regional IRWM Plan institutional structure, (4) provide broad-level input on Plan direction, monitoring, evaluation, and reassessment. A diverse range of stakeholders has been identified, including land use agencies, water and wastewater agencies, flood control agencies, state and federal agencies, Native American Tribes, environmental, and other non-government organizations.

This Plan presents a proposed outreach process to further stakeholder and public involvement, engage disadvantaged communities, and address environmental justice concerns. This outreach program will include partnering with Project Clean Water, conducting public workshops and presentations, posting information on the internet, holding meetings with stakeholders, and conducting stakeholder activities to incorporate the Region's disadvantaged communities in the IRWM process. Successful implementation of this Plan will require the continued coordination with a number of federal, state, and local agencies, including regulatory agencies, land management agencies, resource agencies, and land use agencies.

**Importance of Stakeholder Participation.** This IRWM Plan is intended to be a stakeholder-driven Plan. The RWMG invites the public and interested stakeholders to become active participants in the Region's efforts to:

- identify, evaluate, prioritize, and implement solutions to the Region's complex water management issues, challenges, and conflicts, and
- continue the development and evolution of this Plan.