

## Section I: Integration

The intent of the Integration standard in the Proposition 84/1E Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program Guidelines is to ensure that Regional Water Management Groups (RWMGs) intentionally create a system where integration can occur. The IRWM Plan must demonstrate that the RWMG is forming, coordinating, and integrating separate efforts in order to function as a unified effort. Integration may occur on many levels. This section discusses three types of integration: 1) stakeholder/institutional integration, 2) resource integration, and 3) project integration. The processes, structures, and procedures that foster integration are also described, sometimes implicitly, in other sections of this IRWM Plan (including the Governance, Stakeholder Outreach, Data Management, and Project Review sections).

### I.1 STAKEHOLDER/INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

IRWM Plans are required to contain governance structures and processes that enable diverse groups of stakeholders to participate in all levels of the IRWM planning effort. The California Water Code (CWC) §10541(h)(2) refers to ensuring that IRWM plans are developed collaboratively in a manner that balances interests and engages a variety of stakeholders regardless of their ability to contribute financially. This type of integration has been ensured in the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region through the governance structure, including composition of the RWMG and the process for stakeholder participation.

#### I.1.1 Governance

Eighteen organizations have come together to form the Greater Monterey County RWMG for the purposes of IRWM planning and project implementation within the Greater Monterey County IRWM region. These entities include government agencies, nonprofit organizations, educational organizations, water service districts, private water companies, and organizations representing agricultural, environmental, and community interests, as follows:

- Big Sur Land Trust
- California State University Monterey Bay
- California Water Service Company
- Castroville Community Services District
- City of Salinas
- City of Soledad
- Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
- Garrapata Creek Watershed Council
- Marina Coast Water District
- Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
- Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner's Office
- Monterey County Water Resources Agency
- Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency
- Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
- Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.

The Greater Monterey County RWMG is made up of diverse organizations with differing expertise, perspectives, and authorities of various aspects of water management, representing all major geographic

areas within the region. There is no one leadership position on the RWMG, and no hierarchy of decision-making. All major IRWM planning decisions are decided by vote at the regularly scheduled RWMG meetings. Each RWMG member organization is allowed one vote regardless of whether or not they have contributed financially to the Plan or to other RWMG activities. As such, in both its composition and rules of governance, the RWMG lays the foundation for an integrated approach to IRWM planning in the Greater Monterey County region.

### **I.1.2 Stakeholder Involvement**

Outreach efforts to include stakeholders in the development of the IRWM Plan have targeted specific entities as well as the general public. An initial stakeholder email list, with about 175 names, was developed by the RWMG by brainstorming every known organization that might be affected by and/or interested in the IRWM Plan process. The current list includes about 250 individuals representing over 150 agencies, organizations, and interest groups. The list continues to expand and evolve as new stakeholders are introduced to the process.

Stakeholders have played an important role in the decision-making process throughout the development of this IRWM Plan. Together, stakeholders and the RWMG represent all of the major water resource management authorities in the region—as well as water resource management authorities and stakeholders from neighboring IRWM regions—and provide broad and fair representation of water supply, water quality, wastewater, stormwater, flood control, watershed, municipal, environmental, agricultural, and regulatory interests throughout all geographic areas of the planning region. Stakeholder organizations include such entities as the following:

- Water suppliers and water service districts
- Wastewater agencies
- Water quality regulatory entities
- Watershed groups
- Flood control agencies
- Federal, state, county and municipal governments
- Environmental non-profit organizations
- Agricultural organizations
- Business organizations
- Disadvantaged communities
- Other community organizations
- Universities and research institutions
- Elected officials
- Other interested individuals

All of the stakeholder groups necessary to meet the objectives of the IRWM Plan are included on the stakeholder list. Please see Appendix D for the full list of stakeholder organizations in the Greater Monterey County region (also posted on the website, <http://www.greatermontereyirwmp.org/documents/>).

The RWMG ensures public involvement in its decision-making processes through various means, including regular email updates to stakeholders on the IRWM planning process, a regularly updated website, public comment periods on all major IRWM Plan “milestones,” and occasional public workshops. In addition, stakeholders are always invited to participate in the monthly RWMG meetings, with locations and meeting times announced on the website each month. Meeting minutes are posted on the IRWM website following each RWMG meeting.

Through these efforts to develop as broad, diverse, and inclusive a stakeholder base as possible and to promote the active participation of all stakeholders in the planning effort, the Greater Monterey County RWMG ensures stakeholder/institutional integration in the IRWM planning process.

## **I.2 RESOURCE INTEGRATION**

Resource integration can have multiple meanings. It can refer to the combining of multiple participant/agency resources to aid the regional planning effort, including the sharing of data or of differing expertise or technical capacity. Resource integration can also mean the consideration of different resources or resource management strategies—including both man-made and natural water resource infrastructure—as components of the water system being managed in the IRWM planning effort. This section describes how the RWMG promotes integration in both of these ways.

### **I.2.1 Sharing of Information and Expertise**

Between the RWMG members and stakeholders, the combined knowledge, expertise, and technical capacity within the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region is truly immense. The RWMG members lend their expertise and unique perspectives through the ongoing planning process, and call in outside expertise from stakeholders as needed. For example, in the early stages of IRWM Plan development, water management and natural resource specialists from throughout the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region were asked to provide their knowledge and opinions about the water resource “issues and conflicts” that existed in the region. Outside experts are also asked to provide input on technical aspects of project applications during the project review process, as needed. The RWMG expects to involve outside experts and specialists to an even greater extent in the IRWM planning process as part of a Climate Change Task Force, with the intent of forming a sort of “hub” for climate change planning in the broader Monterey County and Monterey Bay region.

Another way in which the RWMG promotes integration in the IRWM planning process is through the sharing of data. Section K of this IRWM Plan describes the data management system for the Greater Monterey County region. Because the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan does not have an ongoing secure funding source for data management, the RWMG has opted to utilize existing State database frameworks including, for surface water quality, those developed by the California Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) and by the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN). Wetland and riparian habitat conditions will be measured and documented using the California Rapid Assessment Methods (CRAM), and groundwater data will reside in GeoTracker using the Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) database. The intent and design of the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan data management system thus focuses on a localized approach to data collection and management with uploading of data into statewide databases. The statewide databases include web tools for dissemination, which will easily allow for the sharing of data between stakeholders and project proponents in the planning region.

The RWMG is also making use of a new online data tool to track IRWM Plan implementation projects. The Conservation Action Tracker database, described in the Plan Performance and Monitoring Section of this Plan, is a data system for tracking land-use management improvements in the Central Coast region. It is an online tool that will allow project proponents to register and update information on conservation projects across the region in order to track efforts and improve stakeholders’ ability to evaluate collective impacts and effectiveness. The Conservation Action Tracker is being implemented by the Central Coast Resource Conservation Districts and project partners of the Greater Monterey County IRWM Plan.

## **I.2.2 Integration of Resource Strategies**

Implementing projects that utilize a diverse mix of resource management strategies and that promote the full capacity of the water management system in the IRWM planning region, including both natural and man-made water resource infrastructure, is yet another way in which the RWMG promotes integration in the IRWM planning process. Section E of this IRWM Plan lists and describes the resource management strategies chosen by the Greater Monterey County RWMG for inclusion in the Plan. The resource management strategies include both natural watershed systems and drinking water distribution systems as components of the water system being managed in the IRWM planning effort, and as such, reflect a recognition on the part of the RWMG that the proper and “healthy” functioning of both systems are equally important.

The projects included in the IRWM Plan utilize a broad and diverse mix of resource management strategies (see Table E-1 in Section E, which demonstrates how the various projects utilize resource management strategies). The RWMG encourages stakeholders to develop projects that employ a diverse mix of resource management strategies by offering additional points to projects that demonstrate such diversity as part of the project ranking process. The integration of resource management strategies not only ensures robust solutions to current water management issues but will enable the region to become more resilient to, and to mitigate for, uncertain future circumstances, including the impacts of climate change.

## **I.3 PROJECT INTEGRATION**

One advantage of regional planning lies in the ability to address similar objectives of local organizations with regional programs. IRWM planning decisions can lead to existing projects being combined or replaced by new projects. The resources to implement multiple smaller efforts (e.g., personnel, finance, equipment) may benefit from economy of scale when similar local interests can be met with a regional project.

### **I.3.1 How the RWMG Promotes Project Integration**

The RWMG encourages stakeholders in the Greater Monterey County IRWM planning region to form partnerships and to collaborate on projects that meet regional needs and produce regional benefits. The RWMG also promotes project integration during the project review process for each IRWM Plan project solicitation. During every project solicitation, a Project Review Committee comprised of RWMG members reviews each project (both implementation projects and concept proposals) for potential integration opportunities, with an aim of combining discrete project elements or combining entire projects to create regional programs. Through this integration process, the RWMG helps coordinate activities within the IRWM planning region in order to avoid redundancies, increase efficiencies, and to create projects with multiple benefits.

Note that for future IRWM Plan project solicitations, the RWMG has considered the idea of hosting informal “mixers” for project proponents and other stakeholders where they can discuss current projects and brainstorm new project ideas. The concept behind the mixers is to bring individuals together in a casual setting that is conducive to “mingling” and to an easy exchange of ideas. The intent is to increase integration of projects and to enhance opportunities for coordination of activities, collaboration, and partnerships throughout the region.

### **I.3.2 Water Resource Project Coordination Process**

One important effort that has resulted from the project integration process described above is the Water Resource Project Coordination (WRPC) process. The WRPC process represents a new approach to addressing and resolving water-related conflicts in the region, while at the same time promoting stakeholder collaboration and project integration. Through the WRPC process, the RWMG will bring together project proponents and other stakeholders in a particular sub-watershed of the region—the lower Gabilan/Reclamation Ditch watershed—to discuss and reconcile conflicts between IRWM Plan projects or project objectives, to coordinate and integrate the projects where possible, and to find new potential areas of collaboration. Through this process the RWMG also hopes to find additional opportunities for integrated flood management.

The idea for WRPC came out of a recent project review process. As RWMG members were reviewing projects for opportunities to integrate them into multi-benefit projects and programs, it became apparent that many projects within certain sub-watershed areas could and should be integrated, except that underlying conflicts between project objectives and/or project proponents put the projects at odds with one another. A process was needed—beyond the normal integration process—to reconcile these projects in order for integration to occur and for project implementation to proceed. But while many attempts at traditional conflict resolution have been made in the past, most of these attempts have failed, resulting in even more mistrust on the part of stakeholders. The RWMG concluded that a new approach was needed.

The WRPC process uses a basic joint fact-finding approach, whereby parties discuss what factual questions they believe to be relevant to a decision, exchange information, identify where they agree and where they disagree, and negotiate an approach to seeking additional information, either to fill gaps or to resolve areas of disagreement. The WRPC brings stakeholders into the process from the start, beginning with the question, “What information do we need to make our decisions?” The goal is to alleviate areas of mistrust so that mutual solutions can be achieved. The process is intended to work towards solutions that are reached by a sharing of data, experiences, stakeholder concerns, and viewpoints. Beginning from a solutions-based platform, all stakeholders interact and in the end develop, ideally, a result that all involved can get behind. The RWMG anticipates that bringing the public together with scientists and local-elected leadership to work with each other and share their knowledge in an open consensus-seeking process will prove a better way to ensure the use of good science in water resource decision-making than through the more typical adversarial process.

With the WRPC process, the Greater Monterey County RWMG seeks to proactively move from a conflict resolution paradigm to one of cooperation and reconciliation. And through cooperation, the RWMG hopes to encourage the development of new collaborations and new integrated projects for the IRWM Plan. All projects developed through the WRPC process will be forwarded to the RWMG for review and consideration for possible inclusion in the Plan.

The WRPC process has been fully funded through the Proposition 84 IRWM Round 1 Planning Grant, and is currently underway. If successful, the WRPC process will enable the Greater Monterey County RWMG and stakeholders to move past certain (sometimes contentious) issues that have held project proponents back in the past from conducting important water resource-related work in the watershed. The significance of this cannot be overestimated, and if successful, the template for the WRPC process will be shared with other IRWM regions throughout the state.

Thus, it is through processes such as the WRPC along with multiple other aspects of the ongoing IRWM planning process—including governance, stakeholder participation, data management, utilization of resources and resource management strategies, and project integration—that the RWMG ensures a cohesive, collaborative, and integrated planning process for the Greater Monterey County IRWM region.