

# Chapter 6: Outreach and Engagement

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## Overview of Community and Stakeholder Involvement

Since its inception in early 2008, the Inyo-Mono RWMG has undertaken extensive outreach to inform, educate, and engage constituents, stakeholders, and interested parties. The RWMG recognized early in the process that because of the large geographic size of the planning region and the breadth of water-related issues within the area, community involvement was critical in order to facilitate meaningful input, foster collaboration, ensure an inclusive and well-managed process, engender trust, and establish credibility. The RWMG sees broad stakeholder involvement as absolutely integral to the success of the IRWM Program, and the involved parties are proud of what has been achieved through outreach so far.

The RWMG has maintained its commitment to frequent public meetings, timely outreach to interested stakeholders, and focused efforts to build interest and involvement of Native American tribes and disadvantaged communities. From the beginning, effort was made on the part of Program Office and early RWMG participants to involve stakeholders from many different types of organizations that have some kind of involvement with water resources: government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, water suppliers, academic institutions, and Native American tribes. Currently, all of these sectors are represented in the RWMG by at least one organization, and in many cases, several organizations. The specific composition of the RWMG is presented in Chapter 5.



## Process Used to Identify and Encourage Broad Participation in IRWM planning process

The original stakeholders of the Inyo-Mono RWMG consisted of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, California Trout, and California Department of Water Resources, with facilitation provided by the Center for Collaborative Policy. One of the primary tasks of this initial group was to identify water-related stakeholders in the planning region and to encourage attendance and participation at RWMG meetings. Within the first few months of the initiation of the IRWM planning process, meeting attendance grew to 35-40 people. Throughout the first two years, effort was continually made to identify new stakeholders and invite their participation in the process. This was mostly

done through word-of-mouth from existing RWMG participants and through outreach to various media sources.

Program Office staff and Members of the Inyo-Mono RWMG have conducted outreach on a continual basis to encourage further participation from all groups and individuals within the planning boundaries having interests in water resources management. Such outreach efforts continue to this day, which include, but are not limited to, attending meetings of various entities throughout the planning region. Either Program Office staff or RWMG participants attend such meetings to provide an overview of the IRWM Program, to answer questions, to hear what water issues are of concern in the community, and to provide information on how to be involved in the IRWM planning process. These meetings may be ongoing public meetings, such as Mono County Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) meetings, County Board of Supervisors meetings, individual meetings with stakeholders, or special IRWM Program outreach meetings. Often, follow-up phone calls or visits are conducted with meeting participants to continue answering questions or to begin folding them into the RWMG (adding them to contact lists, providing additional information, etc.). Outreach has also occurred through the many topic-specific trainings that have been sponsored by the IRWM Program (see below; also discussed in Chapter 10). Often, water system operators and managers, who do not otherwise have time to participate in the IRWM process, will attend these trainings, thereby providing another venue for meeting stakeholders and learning about regional water issues.

Outreach has been conducted and is ongoing with other Sierra IRWM planning groups such as CABY, Upper Feather, Tahoe-Sierra, Southern Sierra, Mojave, Antelope Valley, Mariposa, Kern County, and Madera County. This outreach builds rapport with other regional efforts and contributes to collaboration among other mountain-region and headwater RWMGs. In addition, the knowledge gained from discussions with other IRWM groups has provided valuable information for the Inyo-Mono RWMG.

In 2011, the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program undertook a special project, funded through a Proposition 84 DWR grant, to focus on disadvantaged community and tribal outreach and engagement in IRWM planning. A more complete description of the work performed through this grant is included in the section of this chapter titled “Involving Disadvantaged Communities and Native American Tribes.”

Since the Program’s early meetings in 2008, more than 70 specific outreach meetings have been conducted throughout the region. These meetings are in addition to regular RWMG and Administrative Committee meetings and have resulted in dozens of new individuals and entities being added to the IRWMP contact list, several of whom now regularly attend meetings and participate fully in the IRWM process.

It is through these dozens of meetings that the RWMG and Program Office staff learned of several potential barriers to involvement in the IRWM process. While no financial commitment is required to become an Inyo-Mono RWMG Member, attending RWMG meetings does require an expenditure of resources, whether it is staff time, gas for traveling to meetings, or lost wages and work time for attending meetings as a volunteer of an organization. To help overcome these barriers, Program Office staff ensures that a conference call option is available for all

RWVG and Administrative Committee meetings. Also, at times during the history of the Program, disadvantaged communities have been able to receive travel assistance to attend meetings. After working with many small water systems for several years, it is understood that the limited staff of these water systems may not have time to participate in meetings, and board members are often volunteers who have other day jobs and cannot take time off to attend meetings. To date, RWVG meetings have always been conducted during weekdays, although many outreach meetings, and some of the trainings, are conducted in the evening, and staff can be available to work with stakeholders during evenings and/or weekends.

**Table 6-1.** IRWMP outreach meetings conducted 2008-2013

<b>Name of Community</b>	<b>Number of Times Visited 2008-2013</b>	<b>Participation in RWVG as a result of outreach?</b>
<b>Antelope Valley (Walker, Coleville, Topaz)</b>	Four	Yes
<b>Bridgeport</b>	Six	Yes
<b>Bridgeport Indian Colony</b>	Two	Yes
<b>Lee Vining</b>	Four	Yes
<b>June Lake</b>	Two	No
<b>Mammoth Lakes</b>	Eight	Yes
<b>Crowley Lake</b>	One	No
<b>Tri-Valley (Benton, Chalfant, Hammil)</b>	Six	No
<b>Round Valley</b>	Three	Yes
<b>Bishop</b>	Nine	Yes
<b>Bishop Paiute Tribe</b>	Two	Yes
<b>Big Pine</b>	Three	Yes
<b>Big Pine Paiute Tribe</b>	Two	Yes
<b>Fort Independence Indian Reservation</b>	Three	Yes
<b>Lone Pine</b>	One	Yes
<b>Lone Pine Paiute Tribe</b>	One	No
<b>Tecopa/Shoshone/Death Valley</b>	Five	Yes
<b>Timbisha Shoshone Tribe</b>	One	No
<b>Ridgecrest/Inyokern</b>	Six	Yes

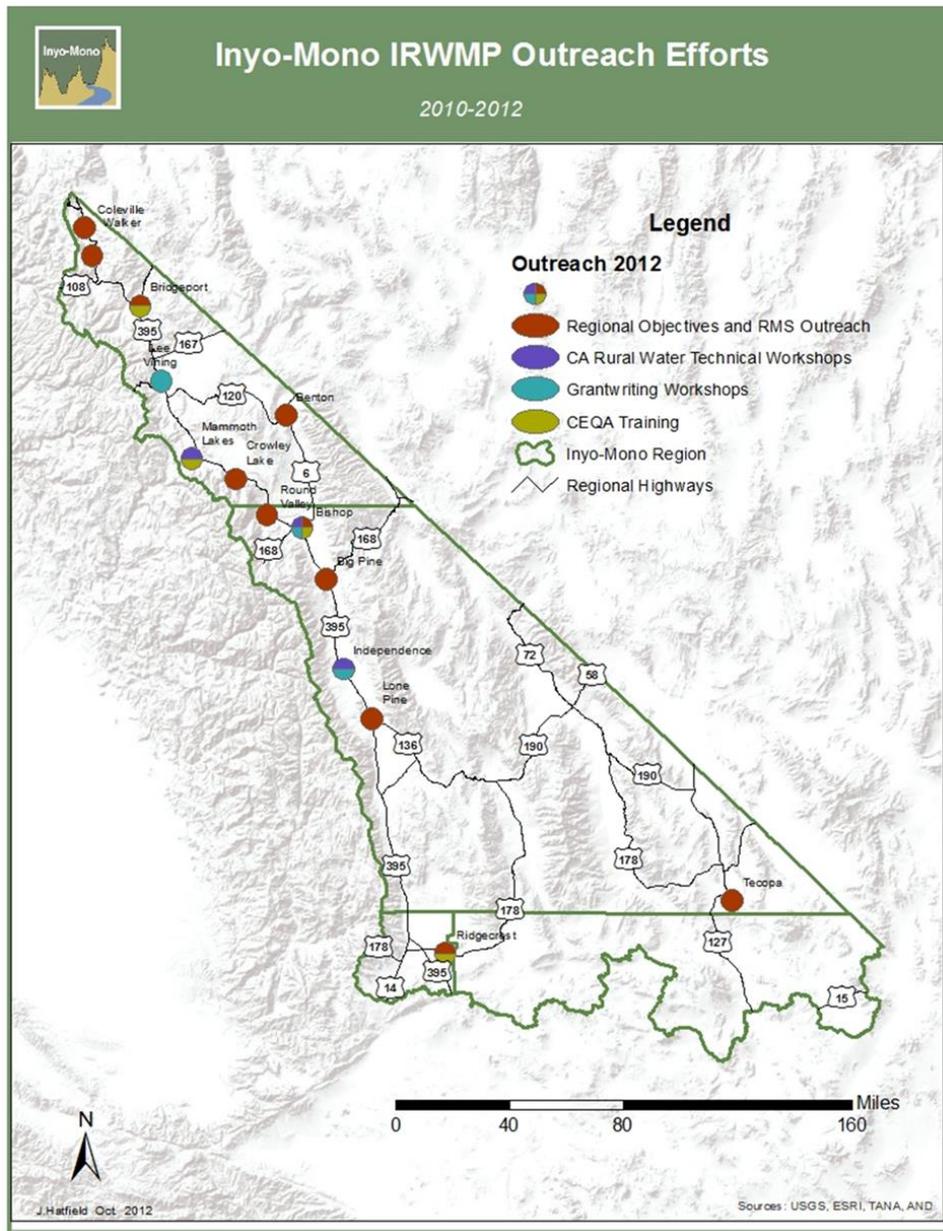
In addition to the stakeholders who regularly attend meetings or otherwise participate in the IRWM planning process, the Program Office maintains a list of stakeholders who receive communications about the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program but who do not actively participate. As time permits, staff and RWVG participants attempt to make contact with these entities and encourage increased participation (see Chapter 1 for a listing of these entities). All told, since the completion of the Phase I Plan, the project mailing list has grown to include over 200 contacts.

Given the very large area of the Inyo-Mono planning region, it is not possible to reach out to and include every stakeholder that has water-related interests, though we have found that some groups are simply not interested in IRWM planning. Considerable effort has been put into ensuring that all communities and areas of the region are represented by at least one stakeholder group. A further challenge is maintaining levels of stakeholder involvement through staffing changes, budget cuts, and shifting priorities. If Program Office staff observes that a previously engaged stakeholder has not been participating at the same level, they contact the organization and work to facilitate that entity's continued involvement. Having broad and consistent representation in the RWMG is key as the representatives bring many different opinions and points of view to discussions. The Inyo-Mono RWMG is truly a grassroots, member-driven organization.

Staff relies heavily on the knowledge and contacts of current RWMG Members and other stakeholders in determining which potential new stakeholders to contact. There are myriad written materials, including maps and graphics, to aid in providing information to new stakeholders. New stakeholders have expressed that they find it difficult to learn about the history, process, and current activities of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program, and written materials help to distill this information. These documents are available on the website or from Program Office staff and are updated as needed.

The IRWM Program intends to continue outreach both proactively and on an as-needed basis. As people move in and out of the region, and composition of stakeholder groups shift, it is necessary to continually meet with new contacts and to continue building relationships. This type of work requires ongoing programmatic funding and an emphasis on long-term relationships among stakeholders.

#### Figure 6-1: Two years of outreach in the Inyo-Mono Region



### Involving Disadvantaged Communities and Native American Tribes

Throughout implementation of Proposition 84, DWR has placed emphasis on reaching out to and supporting disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the IRWM Program. The initial RWMP recognized that the Inyo-Mono IRWM planning region contains many DACs, as defined by 2000 census median income data. In addition, several unincorporated communities within the region were too small to be counted in the census data and thus were not considered DACs, even though they might have fallen into that category. Inyo-Mono Program Office staff has updated the region's list of DACs using 5-year median household income data from the American Community Survey (ACS; household income data were not collected as part of the 2010 Census). A new online mapping tool for DACs provided by DWR is based on 2006-2010 ACS data, but it does not cover every community in the Inyo-Mono region

([http://www.water.ca.gov/irwm/integregio\\_resourceslinks.cfm](http://www.water.ca.gov/irwm/integregio_resourceslinks.cfm)). ACS data for the communities missing from the DWR map were accessed directly from the U.S. Census website (<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>). Additional information regarding the process of determining which communities in the region are DACs, as well as a list and a map of the identified DACs, is discussed in Chapter 1.

Utilizing funding from another Prop. 84 grant, the Inyo-Mono RWMG has been investigating ways of identifying and engaging DACs (including tribes) in IRWM planning processes. This project has included performing DAC-specific outreach both within and outside of the region, assessing needs of DAC water systems, providing capacity-building trainings, producing a documentary film about water and DACs in the Inyo-Mono region, and researching alternative



ways of defining and identifying disadvantaged communities. Because the availability of income data is limited, particularly for small and/or rural communities, the RWMG has been working to find other metrics that could be used to define DACs in California – either data-based metrics, such as high school dropout rate or unemployment rate, or observation-based metrics, such as house size, type of car, nature of landscaping, etc. The goal of this effort is to more effectively identify DACs so that resources can be provided to those communities that need them most.

Outreach conducted through the DAC grant included the following stakeholders and communities both within and outside of the Inyo-Mono region. Specific stakeholder meetings included: Benton Paiute Tribe, Bridgeport Utilities District, Bridgeport Indian Colony, Tecopa & Shoshone, Big Pine CSD, Paiute-Shoshone Coalition for Protection of Aboriginal Lands Inter-Tribal Meeting, Mono Basin RPAC, Bridgeport RPAC, Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District, South Sierra IRWMP, Upper Pit IRWMP & associated stakeholders, Yosemite-Mariposa IRWMP (including Madera IRWMP and Merced IRWMP representatives), and Tuolumne-Stanislaus IRWMP including Tuolumne-Me-Wuk Tribe.

A subset of the DAC outreach efforts has focused on Native American tribes within the region. The Program Office has conducted targeted outreach to all of the tribes based in the region (vs. tribes with headquarters outside the region and only limited representation in the region). The results from this outreach have been excellent; all of the major tribes except two are involved in the IRWM planning process and are signatories to the MOU (see Chapter 5).

While not every outreach effort has yielded an ongoing working relationship between the RWMG and a DAC or tribal entity, the overall impact of these efforts is that there is solid (though not complete) representation of DACs and tribes among RWMG Members and other involved

stakeholders, which has also led to a much more thorough understanding of the water issues faced by these communities.

A key goal of the outreach to DACs, tribes, and small water districts has been to assess their water-related and institutional needs and assist in bringing resources to those entities to address their needs. The RWMG has worked with the California Rural Water Association to undertake needs assessments for individual water systems and provide the technical, financial, and/or managerial expertise needed by small water purveyors.

More information about the work of the disadvantaged communities grant can be found at: <http://inyo-monowater.org/inyo-mono-irwm-plan-2/dac/>.

## **Governance, Decision-making Process, and Communication**

Since the inception of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program in 2008, the group has been governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. The first MOU, which governed the pre-planning phase of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program, was adopted in November, 2008, and was subsequently signed by 28 organizations (see Chapter 5). It was later agreed among RWMG Members that the MOU should be updated and revised to reflect the Group's progression into the planning and implementation phases. A working committee made up of a subset of RWMG participants developed a new MOU that took effect November 15, 2010, with 22 signatories. A slightly revised version (Appendix B) was adopted by the RWMG with an effective date of September 1, 2012. Additional organizations may sign the MOU at any time, and a continually updated list of signatories is available on the website. As of June 30, 2012, there were 31 signatories to the planning/implementation MOU (see Chapter 5 for more information).

Decision-making in the RWMG has always occurred through consensus. The Inyo-Mono RWMG's operational definition of consensus is that all entities either approve or can live with the item being decided upon. If one or more entities disapprove, then no decision is made and it goes to a "parking lot" to be revisited at later time or further discussion ensues and an alternative decision is put forth for consideration. Only MOU signatories can participate in this decision-making process, although any individual or stakeholder can be part of discussions leading up to decisions. Every Member group has one "vote" and thus equal power, regardless of the size or influence of any given entity. More information about the governance and decision-making processes of the Inyo-Mono RWMG can be found in Chapter 5.

Any member of the public is welcome to attend and contribute to RWMG, Administrative Committee, and working committee meetings. In the summer of 2010, the Inyo-Mono RWMG decided by consensus that it would conduct all its activities under the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act. Stakeholders and other members of the public can find meeting information on the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program website ([www.inyo-monowater.org](http://www.inyo-monowater.org)), in local newspapers, and at several posted locations throughout the region. Furthermore, each RWMG meeting agenda is presented to both the Inyo County and Mono County Boards of Supervisors and thus becomes part of the public record. Call-in locations are available and open to the public (see Chapter 5 for more details).

Communication between the Program Office and the RWMG, and among RWMG

representatives, primarily occurs via email. Program Office staff uses email to send out meeting notices and agendas, documents, announcements, and other relevant material. The program website ([www.inyo-monowater.org](http://www.inyo-monowater.org)) is used as another primary tool for outreach and communication throughout the Inyo-Mono IRWM planning region. The website was overhauled in late 2011 and now provides more access to information than before. On this website, visitors can find topics such as introductory information about the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program, Member organizations, meeting summaries, a library of planning documents, and links to other IRWM Program websites. Documents being circulated to the RWMG are posted to the website. Internet access has improved over the six years of the Program's existence. Initially, it was evident that not everybody could easily access email and websites, so some communications, particularly notices of special events, were sent out in hardcopy to stakeholders. Notices of RWMG meetings and Administrative Committee meetings are still posted in several physical locations throughout the region as part of the Program's compliance with the Brown Act.

External communication of IRWM Program matters takes place primarily through the website and through local media sources. The three most widely-read local newspapers have each run several articles about various aspects of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program, including interviews with Program Office staff and RWMG participants. There are several documented cases of these articles contributing to the involvement of new RWMG participants. One local newspaper in particular posts notices of upcoming meetings and other IRWM Program events in its calendar. All public notices regarding IRWM Program activities – the public notice for development of this Plan, for example – are published in the three regional newspapers. However, given the size and sparsely-distributed population of the region, Program representatives are always looking for ways to improve communication to potentially interested stakeholders and the public.

### **Integration of Stakeholders and Institutions**

One of the most tangible, yet unquantifiable, benefits of the Inyo-Mono IRWM process to date has been the practice of gathering water-related stakeholders at meetings on an almost-monthly basis to discuss the IRWM planning process, water issues, and opportunities for collaboration. Many of the organizations sitting at the table have historically been at odds over water issues. While it is not expected, (nor intended) that the RWMG will solve water-related conflicts in the region, many participants have acknowledged the advantages of increased communication and cooperation among adversaries and allies alike. In addition, during the RWMG's visioning exercise in early 2010, several RWMG participants expressed the desire that the IRWM planning process should help individual stakeholders overcome conflict and should allow the group to speak with one voice and from common objectives.

The Inyo-Mono IRWM process has helped to educate stakeholders about each other's activities and priorities. Smaller water districts have sought advice from larger water districts on technical issues. Disadvantaged communities benefit by learning from groups with more experience in water management, and in turn, RWMG stakeholders have begun to understand the difficulties of maintaining high-quality water resources and ecosystem protection in small, rural communities. Representatives from the various participating government institutions are sitting at the table with various individuals from within the region, and through discussions a stronger

sense of the region's needs are being explored and understood. It is also through this repeated contact that the RWMG has been able to develop mutually-supported goals, objectives, and resource management strategies and to start choosing projects that move the Program towards achieving the goals and objectives.

### **Stakeholder Involvement in Plan Implementation**

Inyo-Mono RWMG Members are involved in a variety of ways. At the most basic level, RWMG members attend and participate in work group meetings. A subset of six RWMG members sits on the Administrative Committee, which provides guidance to the Program Office and helps to resolve conflict within the RWMG. Staff relies on the Administrative Committee, as well as other RWMG participants, to provide feedback and advice on day-to-day activities and operations. RWMG participants also have opportunities to participate in work groups that perform specific tasks or functions, such as developing budgets for grant proposals, researching issues as they arise, creating project review criteria, or assisting with writing assignments. Because of the large and remote nature of the Inyo-Mono region, many stakeholders only participate in RWMG meetings by phone, or if they cannot participate at all, they can stay informed about Inyo-Mono RWMG activities through the website or through contact with staff. Stakeholder involvement is welcome at any level.

Stakeholders that wish to put forward projects for funding consideration under the IRWM program are strongly encouraged to attend RWMG meetings and are required to sign the MOU. However, regardless of any party's ability to contribute financially to the IRWM Plan's development or implementation, the RWMG encourages participation from all interested individuals and organizations.

The Inyo-Mono RWMG continues to believe that outreach to and engagement of additional stakeholders, and an open, transparent process are foundational to the IRWM planning process and are necessary for the program's ultimate success. This bottom-up model helps to ensure that all voices are heard, regardless of community size, economic status, or type of interest group, and that water-related concerns are addressed in an equitable manner. It is only by continuing to progress using this collaborative process that the RWMG will succeed.