

Emerging Investment Strategies for the Future of IRWM

Water management in California has improved significantly over the past 12 years through implementation of Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) and the support of state bond funds. State funds have helped local water management agencies and other interests to form regional water management groups and work collaboratively to identify and implement regional water management solutions. Today, 48 IRWM regions cover 99% of the state's population and 87% of the state's geographic area.

Past investments of \$770 million in bond funds have leveraged about \$3.5 billion of local and regional investments in IRWM. State bonds have supported more than 600 multi-benefit projects to improve water supply reliability, water quality, drought protection, regional self-reliance, public safety, and environmental stewardship. Looking to the future, the California Water Action Plan calls for supporting and expanding investments for integrated water management planning and projects.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is working with IRWM stakeholders to develop the Strategic Plan for the Future of IRWM in California. The project team, in collaboration with stakeholders, is taking stock of significant IRWM accomplishments and identifying measures needed for the future.

Ten statewide workshops have yielded a wealth of input about IRWM in California and its future. This input is being used to develop the draft strategic plan to be released in summer 2014.

Emerging investment strategies derived from stakeholder input at the strategic plan workshops are listed below to help inform the current water bond legislative process. Key considerations for these strategies are structuring financial assistance in a manner that fosters collaboration and cooperation among regions, providing flexibility for local circumstances, and lowering barriers for participation in IRWM.

- Provide base-level funding to all active regional water management groups in the state to help support key operations, including stakeholder engagement and regional planning.
- Allocate funds to substantially increase the state's level of service to regional water management groups, including technical support, data management systems, water management analysis tools, and public outreach.
- Provide non-competitive funding to regional water management groups to address statewide priorities, such as disadvantaged community critical water supply needs, inter-regional groundwater overdraft conditions, reduced dependence on the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, and source area protection.
- Continue competitive grants to assist regional water management groups in meeting water management needs of their regions, while promoting local project selection and prioritization processes.
- Invest in state leadership and innovation to better support IRWM through the alignment of state and federal policies, programs, and regulations.

The majority of water management decisions and investments in California are made at the local and regional level. Representatives of these local and regional interests have provided input on how to improve the return on investments in California's water management strategies.