

SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP

Meeting Notes

Tuesday Jan. 13, 10:00-2:00

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Office

11521 Blocker Drive, Ste. 205, Auburn, CA 95603.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Draft Sign on Letter on Impacts of the State Budget crisis and bond freeze to the Sierra (Assigned to: Steve Frisch/Liz Mansfield). To be sent to the Sierra Water Workgroup next week for review and then the final draft will be taken back to the IRWMs for organizations within the IRWMs to sign on. See Notes for more details.
- Finish Sierra IRWM map by Feb. 15 to aid in DWR's Regional Acceptance Process. (Assigned to: Marion Gee, Kim Carr)
- Invite new members from the U.S Forest Service Region 5 (Assigned to: Kim Carr), PG&E (Assigned to: Steve Frisch), National Park Service (Assigned to: Kim Carr)
- Assist newly formed IRWMs through RAP (Assigned to: SNC, Sierra Nevada Alliance)
- Schedule a meeting for the Sierra Water Workgroup in March (Assigned to: Marion Gee)
- Please review/edit the Sierra Water Workgroup contacts list.

DECISIONS:

- Geographic Boundaries: We should be umbrella group and we should include the entire Sierra region as defined by the SNC boundaries, to also include the Tahoe Basin and future coordination with shared Nevada watersheds.
- Membership: Membership/voting body should consist of representatives from IRWMs and regional groups with an interest in water.
- Approved Preamble and Mission of the Sierra Water Workgroup (see below)

Participants in Jan. 13 Meeting:

Kansas McGahon, Placer County/Tahoe-Sierra IRWM
Steve Rothert, American Rivers/ CABY IRWM
Kim Carr, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Pete Kampa, TUD/Tuolumne-Stanislaus IRWM
Steve Frisch, Sierra Business Council
Brian Morris, Plumas County, Upper Feather IRWM
Joan Clayburgh, Sierra Nevada Alliance
Marion Gee, Sierra Nevada Alliance
Marie Davis, PCWA, CABY IRWM
Don Wight, Nevada Irrigation District, CABY IRWM
Mark Drew, CalTrout, Inyo-Mono IRWM
Liz Mansfield, El Dorado Irrigation District, CABY IRWM

Elizabeth Betancourt, El Dorado Irrigation District, CABY IRWM
Bill Hetland, El Dorado County Water Agency, CABY IRWM
Len McKenzie, Mariposa RCD, Mariposa IRWM

1. Brief Review of the history of the Sierra Water Workgroup (formerly known as the Western Sierra Workgroup)

- This Workgroup started as group of water managers brainstorming about how to get Sierra IRWMs represented at state level, to raise awareness of Sierra issues, secure more funding opportunities for the Sierra and to efficiently supply information on the Sierra to DWR to include in the State Water Plan. The purpose of the first meeting was motivated by was to improve communication between Sierra IRWMPs with DWR. The first name was the Western Sierra Coalition. The first phone calls were all water agencies and since then the group has expanded to include more regional groups working on water. Some of the first meetings were focused on data and information sharing with DWR. There was a face to face meeting of the workgroup with DWR. DWR was interested in a pilot program coordinating among IRWMPs. At the meeting the group did not have consensus on some key points in front of DWR. A draft paper was authored by John Mills, Pete Kampa and Brian Morris with concepts for a Western Sierra Work Group. Participants commented on this paper. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy was approached to act as neutral facilitator for an in-person meeting.

2. Review Nov. 4 Conference Call

- ***Geographic Boundaries Decision***- We should be umbrella group and we should include the entire Sierra region as defined by the SNC boundaries, to also include the Tahoe Basin and future coordination with shared Nevada watersheds.
- ***Membership Decision***- Membership/voting body should consist of representatives from IRWMs and regional groups with an interest in water.
 - At today's meeting, other potential members were identified to be included in the Sierra Water Workgroup including:
 - ◆ Northern Sierra folks (Mark Steffek, Todd Sloat)
 - ◆ Region 5 Forest Service representative
 - ◆ PG&E- Steve Frisch will contact Wendy Pauling, Head of Environmental Programs to see who would be the best representative to the Sierra Water Workgroup. Pete Kampa also has a contact: Steve Bennett, Regional Hydro Manager.
 - ◆ National Park Service Representative
 - The question was raised by the group: What defines a "regional group"? The group defined it as: an organization that brings in information, clout and/or funding and also crosses multiple Sierra IRWM lines.
 - ◆ The group identified other groups that meet some of this criteria but it would be best to partner with them in the future on certain issues, once the Sierra Water Workgroup articulate a clear vision, purpose and workplan. Potential future partners

identified included: BLM, DFG, National Parks Conservation Association and SPI.

3. Preamble and Mission of the Sierra Water Workgroup was APPROVED as follows:

Preamble:

The Sierra Nevada is a unique region that provides water, electricity and natural resources that are essential to local residents and to the state of California. Sierra watersheds supply 65% of the state's water, offer prime recreation, provide habitat for half the animal and plant species of the state, and generate 55% of California's hydroelectric power (E. Betancourt and B. Morris will verify the source of these statistics). According to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), climate change is already impacting California's water resources. DWR further expects that a 25% reduction in snowpack by the middle of the century will impact California's water supply, while an increase in weather extremes will lead (Liz Mansfield will double check DWR's wording on weather extremes) to both larger winter flood events and more frequent droughts. Climate change and population growth will significantly impair water supply availability, reliability, quality, and ecosystem health in the Sierra and far beyond. This will necessitate a cooperative regional response and reinvestment in our watersheds and water resources by all beneficiaries. Failure to take action to address these impending threats will lead to the deterioration of natural processes, water infrastructure, and public safety, resulting in significant economic and ecological consequences for California and the nation.

Mission:

The Sierra Water Workgroup was formed with diverse interest groups to protect, enhance and restore Sierra water supply, water quality, public safety and ecosystem health. The group achieves this by addressing water issues of concern to the Sierra by:

- * Coordinating amongst local and regional water plans;
- * Exchanging information and tools for water and watershed management amongst stakeholders in the region;
- * Serving as an information source regarding state and federal water policy issues for local governments, non-profits, and other stakeholders;
- * Raising the profile of the Sierra to increase private, state and federal funding opportunities; and
- * Advocating for Sierra water issues in state and federal legislative and administrative forums.

4. California Budget Discussion- Implications for Sierra IRWMPs, water agencies, watershed groups...

- The Money Investment Board ordered work to stop on bond funded contracts. The Board will be meeting next week and the SNC will be giving updates via their newsletter and website.
- It may be politics holding up selling bonds. One person suggested the State could be using this situation leverage money from the federal government.
- State of Sierra IRWMs who relied on bond funding for project management:
 - Inyo-Mono IRWM is currently relying on a CalTrout grant match to retain project staff.
 - Mariposa IRWM had not yet signed a contract with a project director. Currently, they are on hold.
 - S. Sierra was relying on SNC grant as well for project management costs. It is not clear how they have been affected.
 - Tahoe-Sierra IRWM was relying on CTC funding, which has been frozen, but they are hoping to get some money from local and federal agencies like the TRPA. They may postpone their meetings etc. but that will depend on the state's timeframe.
- Agency/ member funded IRWMs like CABY, Tuolumne-Stanislaus are stable for the moment.
- The group stressed the importance of Sierra IRWMs completing the RAP (regional acceptance process through DWR). Kim Carr offered the services of SNC staff to help the newest IRWM groups -- Mariposa and S. Sierra to complete the RAP.
- Steve Frisch pointed out the cascading impacts of the bond freeze. Land conservation work in Sierra watersheds has also been suspended. The Wildlife Conservation Board February meeting was canceled and projects were pushed to the May meeting. Some of the land deals may fall apart and at least one landowner may go bankrupt due to the transactions delay.
- What happens in next budget? How do you get 42 billion out of the hole? It is suggested that group make some sort of statement on the current budget situation to make people aware of this group and position us to be able to comment on the development of the next budget in June.
- Some Southern California water agencies (MET?) are contemplating legal action to free up the voter approved bond money. Liz Mansfield will investigate the possibility of interested parties of this group joining with the Southern California water agencies in their litigation.

5. Identify Short Term Goals and Projects of the Sierra Water Workgroup

- ***SIERRA IRWM MAP***: The Sierra Water Workgroup and its IRWM members would benefit from a Map of Sierra IRWMs for DWR's Regional Acceptance Process and to facilitate better communication between IRWMs. This map will be developed by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy with the help of the Sierra Nevada Alliance no later than Feb. 15. If your IRWM has not yet submitted your GIS files and metadata to Marion Gee marion@sierranevadaalliance.org, please do this ASAP. If the files are too big to email, email Marion for instructions on uploading to the SNC FTP site. The group also discussed what the map should include:

- Show crosshatched areas for overlap and colored areas for gaps between IRWMs. The legend should indicate how groups are working on those discrepancies.
- The map should also include population centers, jurisdictional boundaries, hydrologic boundaries, and Prop. 84 funding regions.
- Potential layers for future, more detailed maps: public/private lands, disadvantaged communities.
- Potential Resources for the map: Sac River Watershed program has GIS program for Northern California. SNC should tap into their database and use it as a potential model for SNC publicly available GIS program. The Stewardship Council also has DAC information for Northern California and CABY based on the last census.
- Potential Problem for ID disadvantage communities: Small rural areas in the Sierra may not have been included in the last census and may still qualify as DACs.
- ***DWR REGIONAL ACCEPTANCE PROCESS:*** The Sierra Water Workgroup, Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Sierra Nevada Alliance will do what they can to help Sierra IRWMs through DWR's RAP.
- ***SIGN ON LETTER:*** The group decided to draft a sign on letter detailing the impacts of the budget crisis and bond freeze on Sierra citizens, economy, water agencies, watershed groups and IRWMs. It would be a simple letter or statement of impact to get this group on legislator's radar and would not call for any specific action. It would be a letter showing an organized Sierra and detailing the unintended and cascading effects of the current budget and bond situation. Drafting letter about impact of budget freeze on people, economy, water agencies (create position for standing to advocate in June)- sign on letter, project and economic impact of state budget freeze, and a couple of stories, and plea for rapid resolution. Simple letter, not state that we think tax is necessary, just statement of impact, get us on their radar -> beginning of broader communication agenda (value of headwaters, importance of local economy) watershed coordinators could be interesting case or study – funding stopped for water conservation in drought year, also maybe stories about projects where lots invested but had to stop and cost more in long run- have them hear from an organized Sierra of unintended and cascading effects and waste of past dollars -> to everyone -> should be IRWMs that sign on (with list of those involved in each IRWM)
 - Some potential stories include:
 - Process: Steve Frisch and Liz Mansfield will produce a first draft by Tuesday Jan. 20. The draft will be sent to the Sierra Water Workgroup for edits. The final letter will then be brought to the member IRWMs to sign on. The letter will be written on Sierra Water Workgroup letterhead with each IRWM listed, with each organization signing on listed below each IRWM. If budget passes before the letter is sent in, the letter will be re-drafted into a thank you letter.

6. Discuss Decision Making Structure of Sierra Water Workgroup

- Due to lack of time, the group decided to postpone this discussion to the next meeting. For the time being, the group is relying on consensus, which is everyone can “live with” the outcome, to make decisions as a group.

7. Schedule next meeting and Determine Next Steps

- See Beginning of Notes for Action Items.
- The group agreed to schedule another meeting for March.