

SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP

Meeting Notes

Thursday March 26, 11:00-4:00

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Office

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

ACTION ITEMS:

- Fill out survey on the following issues:
 - Next time, date and location of Sierra Water Workgroup meeting
 - Topics for next meeting's agenda
 - What one outcome do you want to see the Workgroup accomplish by the end of 2009?
 - Raw water optimization paper
 - Potential Sierra IRWM conference
- If your IRWM has changed its boundaries (CABY, MAC etc) please send your new GIS shape files/metadata to marion@sierranevadaalliance.org ALSO PLEASE REVIEW the draft Sierra IRWM maps and send comments to marion@sierranevadaalliance.org
- Draft Comment Letter on creating a Sierra Nevada funding region and other common points regarding the State Water Plan. PLEASE COMMENT on the draft v.1 attached.

Participants:

Bill Hetland (El Dorado County Water Agency)
Joan Clayburgh (Sierra Nevada Alliance)
Kim Carr (Sierra Nevada Conservancy)
Ed Pattison (Calaveras County Water District)
Krissy Gilbert (Sierra Business Council)
Marion Gee (Sierra Nevada Alliance)
Andrew Winberry (Sierra County)
Robert Collier (Sierra Nevada Alliance)
Katie Burdick (CABY IRWM)
Carlo Dobbas (Upper Feather River Watershed Group)

Norman Shopay (DWR)
Tanya Meeth (DWR)
Brian Morris (Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District)
Marie Davis (Placer County Water Agency)
Mark Drew (phone) (Inyo-Mono IRWM)
Julie Allen (phone) (S. Sierra IRWM)
Barry Hill (phone) (Forest Service Region 5)
Elissa Brown (phone) (S. Sierra IRWM)
Holly Alpert (phone) (Inyo-Mono IRWM)
Len Mckenzie (phone) (Mariposa IRWM)

I. RAP (Regional Acceptance Process) Guidelines Presentation- Norman Shopay (DWR)

- See attached PDF of Norman's PowerPoint.
- DWR is pushing to get expedited implementation money out. But it may be 1-2 years until planning money is available.
- An IRWMP must have been adopted by Sept. 2008 to qualify for expedited funding. It is not clear if this requirement applies to Prop 1E money (150 million) – but an IRWM would have to be RAP approved to receive that money.

- DWR has established a regular schedule for the RAP- it will happen at least once every year and before the issue of ANY future PSPs, including planning grants.
- DWR stressed that regions should be based on watersheds. They don't want a county line or district boundary or state boundary approach but rather an issues approach.
- New section of the California Water Code 10541 (g) (passed in SB2x1) is now available online.
- The final RAP guidelines released by DWR do not track changes but since both were issued in Microsoft Word you can see the changes made.
- Conditional approval means that you need more time to get governance/stakeholder outreach done (you should submit a timeline/workplan with the RAP). You would then follow through with that timeline/workplan and wait for another RAP cycle to come back and get final approval from DWR. Depending on how much you need to do, conditional approval might mean you can come back in a few months to get final approval rather than waiting for the next RAP.
- **TIP:** Put a table together to reflect the table in the RAP guidelines that would be roadmap to where answers are so as not to repeat parts and to make it easy for the reviewers. You may use excerpts from other documents.
- **TIP:** Be sure to notify DWR if your region is interested in developing an IRWM so DWR does not give all the planning money away and can keep a placeholder for you. This will help them better allocate planning and implementation money.
- **TIP:** Be sure to include map overlays of watersheds and jurisdictional boundaries so DWR can compare.
- **Question:** Does DWR want shape files? What form do you want maps? What should be on it?
 - **Response:** Just include shape files of your regional map, they are not expecting shape files of everything. Norman says that the shape files SHOULD have layers/overlays to show watersheds and other things that you need to present the "best picture" of your region. Try to keep the same scale and make sure every map or layer clearly shows your regional boundary. For items like sensitive species, include them if you think they relate to the justification of your boundaries.
- **Tip:** Norman suggested peer reviewing your RAP application with adjacent regions.

II. Sierra IRWM updates

- Each representative was asked to give the current status, needs of their IRWMs.
- **Upper Feather IRWM** (Andrew Windbury, Brian Morris)
 - Starting a JPA
 - 2005 plan to be updated
 - 90-95% RAP application completed
 - Prop 50 implementation \$ frozen
 - Sierra county needs to coordinate with CABY (part of county in the CABY)

- Far northeast part of Sierra county is not in an IRWM.
- **CABY IRWM** (Katie Burdick, Executive Director)
 - CABY has changed its northern boundary.
 - MOU has been signed with American River Basin IRWM.
 - They are negotiating an MOU with the Yuba IRWM.
 - They are starting talks with the MAC to develop an MOU.
 - Annual project update on implementation probably costs \$10-20,000.
 - Waiting to update rest of plan to comply with Prop 84.
 - Water agencies fund CABY operations in the interim.
 - CABY received \$495,000 for planning from DWR.
 - CABY is currently preparing some project packages for members with little capacity.
 - CABY will be applying expedited funding for drought related projects including:
 - ◆ region wide leak detection and repair program
 - ◆ small water purveyor water conservation programs
 - ◆ irrigation efficiency project- looking at region wide technology smart irrigation
 - ◆ reservoir re-lining to prevent seepage
 - ◆ ditch efficiency projects
- **Tahoe-Sierra IRWM**
 - Will update their plan to prop 84 standards.
 - Currently improving their outreach.
 - Will be applying in the RAP process.
- **MAC IRWM** (Mokelumne, Amador, Calaveras) Ed Pattison, Calaveras County Water District
 - Rob Alcott ED of UMRWA (Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority is a JPA) is in charge of the RAP application, which is 80% done.
 - 2006 is when they adopted IRWM plan.
 - Boundaries used to go into eastern san Joaquin water groundwater basin- overlapped with them- wanted an interregional conjunctive use project, this project will be in State water plan update
 - Coordinating with adjacent IRWMS as there was some overlap issues.
 - Boundary is transition from valley floor to foothills
 - They will be applying for a planning grant to update their plan.
 - They did receive \$145,000 in planning money from DWR
- **Tuolumne-Stanislaus IRWM** (Ed Pattison and John Buckley)
 - Developing their RAP application.
 - This is an emerging region.
 - Calaveras County Water District is involved in both.
 - It is a proactive effort with active participants including Audubon Society, csds, water agencies, forest service etc. There are a lot of NGOs including Farm bureau participating.
 - They are ahead of the curve but concerned that planning grants won't be available for a long time. This may result in a lot of energy being lost and

so they may attempt do something on their own as 2 years is a long time to wait for a planning grant.

- **Suggestion:** Is there something the Sierra Water Workgroup can do to get money for rural areas?
- Process and governance have been finalized. Formal funding agreement is part of MOU. No dollars have been received so far – agencies have contributed as well as minor amounts from NGOs.
- Right now their decisions are made by consensus. At some point they could become a JPA. Consensus approach is more time consuming but it works. Case in point there was some controversy about a boundary point, an island of land that drains to the delta and is not part of Calaveras or Stanislaus watersheds and in the end the group did include it in their region.
- **MARIPOSA IRWM**
 - The boundaries of their region are still being discussed with Merced (MAGPI), Madera County and South Sierra IRWM. They plan to submit a RAP application and have received \$10,000 from Mariposa County to support their project manager.
- **MADERA IRWM**
 - Received Planning \$ from DWR. They have finished their plan. They will be submitting their RAP application with Madera county lines as their region unless the Board of Supervisors approves one of the other options suggested by their Water Advisory Commission.
 - They are also in discussions with Merced, Mariposa and South sierra IRWMs.
- **SOUTH SIERRA IRWM-** (Julie Allen, Facilitator)
 - Working with the Tulare Basin JPA.
 - Governance- close to agreement on MOU.
 - Not convened since their pre-planning money was frozen.
 - Consensus based.
 - Positive working relationships.
 - Outreach continues .
 - Barry Hill from FS is encouraging all National Forests to be involved in IRWMPs. He might consider getting a letter from the regional forester to encourage them to do so.
 - Will be submitting a RAP application
- **INYO-MONO IRWM** (Mark Drew, Project Manager)
 - Planning to submit a RAP application and finish a draft by April 14.
 - Right now their pre-planning money is frozen.
 - Planning Committee (their decision making body, based on consensus) decided to start writing the plan once the RAP was finished and to raise money for planning from other sources. Trying to keep the momentum going.
 - They are continuing their outreach and currently have 22 signatories to their MOU.

- **Question:** How long is everyone's application? CABY 30 pages. Tuolumne-Stanislaus 11 pages plus maps.
- **TIP:** Cross-referencing is a good idea for keeping page numbers down on the RAP application.

III. Review of Sign-On Letter and Process

- **ACTION ITEM:** Need an action plan for the Workgroup. This should be discussed at the next meeting. What product or outcome(s) do you need to see to make participating in the Workgroup worthwhile?
- **ACTION ITEM:** Need to do better outreach to Sierra IRWMs and member organizations. Need to better articulate the mission as well as direction and outcomes.
- See email attachment for final State Bond Freeze Sign On Letter that was sent from the Sierra Water Workgroup.
- Comments on the State Bond Freeze Sign on Letter and Process:
 - In the future, need a voice/call follow up whether it is an email or hard copy that was originally sent.
 - There was a question as to the need of the Sierra Water Workgroup and what it is doing to elected officials. It is still not clear what this forum is doing and it is hard to vocalize.
 - There is a clear need for outreach, need to clarify direction and why we are group. The group is still in its infancy. We have a mission statement and how actually implement and what are outcomes need to be worked out.
 - Original idea was to have a group that could respond to issues more quickly than MCWRA but this sign-on letter took a lot longer than expected.
 - This groups needs to roll up the sleeves and get to the issues, which is not what the MCRWA does. At the same time we don't want to duplicate efforts, need to make sure we are serving different functions.
 - Someone identified a need for unanimity and quick responses. The question was raised is it worthwhile formalizing preamble and mission? Response was we don't need a formal agreement or 100% sign on or unanimity but working together we can make impact on these actions in the mission. Group believes there is high value in what we are doing today, in communicating, in working together, in identifying common action items.
 - We need to show successes of the Sierra Water Workgroup to "sell it".

IV. Bond Freeze Update and Discussion

- **ACTION ITEM:** Develop an executive summary for local agencies on how to invest in private bonds to get people back to work. The summary should articulate all the necessary financial information and the safety of the investment. Brian Morris would be interested in helping develop this. We should also involve a local

finance director from a local agency with useful input- Ed Pattison volunteers Jeff Myer at Calaveras County Water District 209-754-3543

- Recently CA was able to conduct its first bond sale, money will go to reimbursement first then to priority projects (ie public safety etc). There may be another bond sale in April. But there might not be another bond sale until the fall. There are currently SWRCB Revolving Fund opportunities.
- Private Bond Sales Opportunity- Each region of the state is trying to bundle their projects and find investors. But this may be a hard task for the Sierra since it is a rural area and does not have many community foundations.
 - Ed Pattison pointed out the potential of local water agencies/ local governments using their investment money to purchase private bonds to help get local people back to work. We would need to demonstrate the safety of these investments and articulate the process. Could be a safe investment and a good return for water agencies.
 - Placer county has already raised some money for a private bond sale.

V. State Water Plan Discussion

- **ACTION ITEM**: Draft a letter from the Sierra Water Workgroup pushing for a Sierra funding region. The group may also want to include other comment points.
- There will be a series of regional workshops and comments on the Public Review draft are due by June 5.
- SWP doesn't seem to understand rural areas and the Sierra- for example one section says regionalization in the Sierra is impossible and that no groundwater basins exist.
- The Workgroup could work to get Sierra specific examples in the SWP.
- Would it help for the Workgroup to submit comment to the State Water Plan? Appears to be agreement on this.
- We should comment that the Sierra Nevada should be a funding region rather than an overlay in the bonds and SWP.

VI. Proposed California Water Bonds Discussion

- At this point Jim Branham (SNC) and other stakeholders from the Land Trust community joined the group to discuss the 5 water bonds that had been introduced in the State legislature and how the Sierra Nevada Conservancy was not called out for funding in any of those bonds.
- 5 water bonds have been introduced with cut and paste language. SNC is in the initial stages of working with partners to make a case for the Sierra getting money in any of those water bonds.
- Brainstorm of ideas of how to educate legislators and the public to ensure Sierra will receive funding in the future and how to ensure it gets included in these current bonds.
 - Need for creating powerful allies to develop solutions and bring attention to the Sierra.
 - Need to educate legislators on where their water comes from (not the tap) and the need to fix problems at the source.

- Need to identify the opportune time to get involved and maximize effort as the bonds will merge at some point.
- Need to get a champion legislator then worry about the general voter.
- One suggestion is to set up Sierra tours for legislators and staff to educate them on where their water comes from.
- Need unified Sierra messages so everyone is making the same point.
- Should get message by April 15 to inject into the Watershed Rally on April 15 and Sierra Lobby Day on June 24.
- Need to research and quantify how much water the Sierra provides, how many people received it, quantify the water by volume and then break it down by California constituencies, so your district gets 50% of your water from the Sierra.
- Need to coordinate with Tahoe Conservancy?
- NEXT STEPS:
 - SNC will share their strategies with the group.
 - Maybe develop a needs assessment – show projects and how they benefit the state.