

Sierra Nevada Water Workgroup Charter

I. PURPOSE

The Sierra Water Workgroup mission is to assist regional efforts to protect and enhance water quality, water supply, and watershed health; to develop cooperative regional responses; and to facilitate reinvestment in our watersheds and water resources by all beneficiaries.

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 55% of water used statewide, offer prime recreation, provide habitat for half the animal and plant species of the state, and generate 55% of California's hydroelectric power. 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 may lead to both larger winter flood events and more frequent droughts. Climate change and population growth could significantly impair water supply availability, reliability, quality, and ecosystem health in the Sierra and far beyond. Failure to take action to address these impending threats could lead to the deterioration of natural processes, water infrastructure, and public safety, resulting in significant economic and ecological consequences for California and the nation.

II. BACKGROUND

In addition to the significant resource and climate issues facing the Sierra Nevada Region, there are a number of programs, state and federal policies, and organizational changes that served as the impetus behind the formation and continuation of the SWWG.

- In 2002 the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 1672, which created the Integrated Regional Water Management Act. This Act encouraged local agencies to work cooperatively in a region to manage local and imported water supplies to improve the quality, quantity, and reliability. Following this Act a number of bonds were also passed; Proposition 50, the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002, which provided \$500,000,000 (CWC §79560-79565) to fund competitive grants for projects consistent with an adopted IRWM plan; Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality, and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act, which provides \$1,000,000,000 (PRC §75001-75130) for IRWM Planning and Implementation; and Proposition 1E, the Disaster Preparedness and Flood

Prevention Bond Act, which provides \$300,000,000 (PRC §5096.800-5096.967) for IRWM Stormwater Flood Management. The passage of these bonds redirected state agencies to develop policies and guidelines to encourage regional water resource management.

- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is required by statute to prepare updates of the *California Water Plan* every five years. The Water Plan is used by water managers, legislators, and the public to make water management decisions state-wide. DWR also utilizes a public advisory committee to provide input and guidance in the development the Water Plan. For the Sierra region the Mountain Counties Water Resources Association served as the primary representative, and was successful in convinced the state to include the western side of the Sierra region in the 2005 Update. In the 2009, the state expanded their stakeholder participation with the inclusion of regional workshops. The workshops were attended by regional organizations, and IRWM stakeholders. For the 2013 update, the state intent for the regional forums is much broader. *The primary objective of regional engagement is to support integrated water management – water supply, flood management, IRWM planning and decision-making – at local, regional and statewide levels.*
- In 2004 the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, a California state agency was created by legislation (AB 2600). The Conservancy was established with the understanding that the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada and its communities are closely linked and that the Region and the State of California would benefit from an organization providing a strategic direction.
- The San Francisco Bay-Delta is faced with number issues concerning water supply, water quality, flooding and ecosystem health. The state of California is considering a wide-range of solutions throughout the state. The Sierra region, being a large contributor to the state’s water supply system, needs to assist in coordinating efforts, while planning for future water supply needs, maintaining water quality and preserving the watersheds.
- The Federal government plans and implements number programs that impact the Sierra forests and water resources. Coordination of IRWMs will assist stakeholders to better communicate and interact with Federal agencies.

III. SCOPE

Geographic Boundary:

The Sierra Water Workgroup geographic boundary is consistent with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Region (see map). The only significant difference is that the SWWG boundary includes the Tahoe Basin. All or part of 22 counties make up the Sierra

Nevada region and are organized into six sub-regions: **North:** Modoc, Lassen, Shasta Counties; **North Central:** Tehama, Butte, Plumas, Sierra Counties; **Central:** Yuba, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado Counties; **South Central:** Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa Counties; **South:** Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kern Counties; **East:** Alpine, Mono, Inyo Counties.

Objectives:

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 aims to achieve this by addressing water issues of concern to the Sierra by:

- Coordinating amongst Integrated Regional Water Management Plan groups in the region;
- Coordinating and collaborating with local and regional agencies, organizations and other stakeholders interested in Sierra water;
- 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.

IV. WORKGROUP STRUCTURE

1. **The Workgroup:** The Workgroup is comprised of voting representatives from each Integrated Regional Water Management Plan group in the Sierra and advisory members that include regional organizations representing diverse water interests, tribal interests, state and federal agencies.
 - a. **Coordinating Committee:** The Coordinating Committee is a subgroup of the Work Group. This is a smaller, representative group of the Workgroup meets in-between meetings to assist with process planning, agenda items, communications, and other administrative issues.
 - b. **Public Forum:** The “Public Forum” is the term used to describe the general public and the broad range of organizations interested in the SWWG process that seek information about SWWG activities either by attendance at meetings or through other means of communication.
 - c. **Subcommittees:** Subcommittees could be formed by the Workgroup to do specific projects or tasks.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to accomplish the groups overarching goal in the Sierra region it is very important that the group includes active representation from each IRWMP, regional organizations, state and federal agencies, and tribal interests. Below are descriptions of the roles and responsibility of each committee and a list of the organizations included.

The Workgroup

- Integrated Regional Water Management groups in the Sierra will select one formal designee to represent them on the Sierra Water Workgroup. The designee will represent the views of the region that selected them to participate in the process.
- Workgroup members will attend meetings consistently and, if unable to attend, will send an alternate also designated by their participating region. However, use of alternates is not encouraged as this can interfere with the continuity of discussion and decision-making.
- The Workgroup is the decision making body of the SWWG process, and its members will achieve 100% consensus (agreement among all participants) in all of its decision-making. If members are not present for a decision, the facilitator will contact absent members and get their vote to confirm consensus prior to moving forward.
- Definition of “Consensus”: In reaching consensus, some Workgroup members may strongly endorse a particular proposal while others may accept it as "workable." Others may be only able to “live with it.” Still others may choose to “stand aside” by verbally noting a disagreement, while allowing the group to reach a consensus without them if the decision does not compromise their interests. Any of these actions still constitutes consensus.
- Workgroup members will regularly communicate information about the process and programs to their regional groups, which should include organizations and agencies, as well as the individual constituencies and communities they represent.
- A Workgroup member’s eligibility to take part in SWWG decision-making depends on active participation by that member or alternate. “Active Participation” is defined as a member or alternate attendance of a minimum of three of the four previous meetings in person or by phone.

Workgroup Members

Cosumnes, American, Bear and Yuba Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

Tahoe-Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Mokelumne Amador Calaveras Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Tuolumne/Stanislaus Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Southern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Mariposa Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Northern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

Invited:

Four-County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Lassen County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Pitt River Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

Regional Stakeholders

- Regional stakeholders are non-voting members, who are regional organizations. They may choose to formally support any programs, projects, policies, or documents produced by the SWWG.
- Regional Stakeholders will consist of regional organizations, state and federal agencies, and tribal interests.
- Definition of a “regional organization”; is intended to describe; an organization whose jurisdiction and/or boundaries extend over multiple IRWMP regions in the Sierra Nevada.
- One formal designee and alternate will be selected, and will represent the views of the regional organization that selected them to participate in the process.
- An application process will be required for organizations wanting to participate in the Advisory Committee that are not listed in this charter.

Regional Stakeholders

Sierra Nevada Alliance
Sierra Business Council
Mountain Counties Water Resource Association
California Tahoe Conservancy
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Department of Water Resources
Department of Fish & Game
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Invited:

Regional Council of Rural Counties
State Water Resources Control Board
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

VI. SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP MEETINGS

The SWWG will meet quarterly and be held from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The location of the meetings will be throughout the Sierra region. More meetings may be held for specific purposes. However, all IRWM members can participate and attend.

VII. SIGNATURE PAGE

(Each team member signs, agreeing to the contents and being held mutually accountable for adherence.)