

**Merced Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan**

**Regional Advisory Committee Meeting #2**

**June 26, 2012  
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

***The Sam Pipes Room***

***1st floor of the Civic Center (City Hall)***

***678 W. 18th Street***

***Merced, CA 95340***

**DRAFT MEETING NOTES**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Charles Gardiner welcomed members of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) and interested parties to the second meeting of the Merced Region Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan RAC. All those present introduced themselves.

**RAC Materials for Discussion and Approval**

Gardiner walked through a PowerPoint presentation (available on Merced Region IRWM website: [www.mercedirwmp.org](http://www.mercedirwmp.org)) revisiting the RAC purpose and Ground Rules. He asked for additional comments on the revised RAC Charter. The following comment was received:

* Comment: There are a variety of regulatory processes underway that should be captured in the charter, such as the FERC relicensing process. How are those being captured? Working within external regulatory constraints should be added to the charter.

The RAC agreed to finalize the charter with this change. No comments were received on the Governing Procedures. The RAC agreed to finalize the Governing Procedures without modification.

Gardiner reviewed the handout entitled: Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Key Elements and Components, which provides an overview of several of the planning process components and a general schedule for completing specific program elements. Gardiner invited general questions related to the IRWM process. The following comments and questions were received.

* Question: What does the project solicitation refer to? Is that only for existing projects, or will there be an opportunity for brainstorming?

Answer: The project solicitation will provide an opportunity for all RAC members and other stakeholders to submit projects for inclusion in the IRWM Plan. Projects may include those that are already planned, or “on the books.” Projects may also include preliminary planning concepts, which may be developed in response to brainstorming of regional issues and objectives.

Gardiner reviewed the intended purpose of RAC members and alternates. Alternates are invited and encouraged to attend all meetings and participate in discussion along with all other RAC members and alternates. Decisions are intended to be made on a consensus basis. Should the group be unable to achieve a general consensus on a critical issue, and a vote of the RAC members may be required to make a decision; alternates will be asked to abstain from voting. The following question was raised.

* Question: If no alternate has been assigned to a member, can that member self-assign their own alternate?

Answer: Yes.

**Discuss Regional Overview**

Alyson Watson asked for comments on the meeting notes from RAC Meeting #1, held on May 23rd , 2012. No comments were received. She discussed the items that were sent out in advance of the RAC meeting and their purpose.

* Plan Inventory Technical Memorandum: This document includes the following three key components.
  + Summary of Information Gathered / Reviewed: the purpose of this section is to summarize the documents that were reviewed in preparing the Region Description, Relation to Water Planning and Relation to Land Use Planning sections of the IRWM Plan. The consultant team is interested in feedback as to whether there are additional reports and studies that should be reviewed and incorporated into IRWM Plan development.
  + Relation to Local Water Planning (IRWM Plan chapter): This section will serve as a chapter of the IRWM Plan, summarizing the relationship between the IRWM Plan and local water planning documents. The consultant team is interested in feedback on the documents reviewed, as well as the overall content of this document.
  + Region Description (IRWM Plan chapter): This section will serve as the IRWM Plan Region Description chapter, which provides a comprehensive overview of the region’s water resources. The consultant team is interested in feedback on the overall content of this document.

Watson explained that the documents are working drafts, and they will be updated as additional information is gathered and comments are received from the RAC. Watson walked through the PowerPoint presentation, which included an overview of the region. The following questions and comments were received.

* Question: Generally, how does groundwater flow in the Region?

Answer: Groundwater generally flows south from the Merced River through the region.

* Question: There has been a significant conversion from rangeland to irrigated agriculture in the Region. Is more recent land use data available? The Fish and Wildlife Service or the County of Merced may have more recent data.

Answer: The land use map is based on data from 2005 from the Department of Water Resources. The consultant team will continue to seek more recent data sources to be sure the maps are based on the latest available data.

* Comment: UC Merced is not shown as a land use entity, but should be.
* Question: The table showing water quality impairments only lists a small number of waterbodies. Is this correct? What monitoring is this based on? Would the Regional Water Quality Control Board have additional information?

Answer: The table shows 303(d) listings in the Region. The 303(d) list is developed based on monitoring data collected by public agencies and non-governmental organizations, including volunteer monitoring groups. Water bodies that are in non-attainment of water quality objectives are added to the 303(d) list and scheduled for development of a total maximum daily load (TMDL), which considers all contributing sources of the contaminant and assigns a budget to each, designed to allow the waterbody to achieve the objective for that contaminant. The 303(d) list is a requirement of the Clean Water Act, but is developed and published by the State Water Resources Control Board and is posted on the website of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The consultant team will confirm accuracy of this table as it relates to 303(d) listings. However, if individuals are aware of specific local water quality issues, they are requested to provide that information to the consultant team so they may be incorporated into the IRWM Plan.

Watson indicated that these are working draft documents, and there are several specific pieces of information the consultant team is still trying to secure. She requested that comments on the documents be provided by July 10th, 2012.

Gardiner asked if all members of the RAC were able to access and read the documents sent. Comments included:

* Comment: Some RAC members were unable to open the documents, likely due to older versions of MS Word.
* Comment: Many RAC members are unable to print 11x17 tables, so the tables are very difficult to read.

Gardiner indicated that future documents will be sent in an older version of MS Word to assist in avoiding these issues, and any 11x17 tables will be printed and copies will be brought to the meetings. He also indicated that documents will be posted to the website ([www.mercedirwmp.org](http://www.mercedirwmp.org)) in advance of the meetings. Gardiner indicated that materials will continue to be sent out via email. If RAC members would like printed copies, he asked that they respond to the email with that request.

**Develop IRWM Plan Objectives**

Watson reviewed the Example Objectives Memorandum sent in advance of the meeting. The memorandum summarizes objectives from the local planning documents reviewed and provides examples of potential objectives and performance measures to give the RAC a sense of the types of objectives they may wish to consider. She indicated that the memorandum was prepared for discussion purposes only and the RAC will be developing and recommending the IRWM Plan objectives.

Gardiner facilitated a brainstorming session on water-related issues in the Region. The following overarching issues were identified.

* The groundwater basin is in decline, yet population is projected to increase – this mismatch needs to be reconciled.
* If the increase in growth exceeds available supply, is it a shortage of water or an overuse of water?
* There has been a rise in the conversion of rangeland to irrigated agriculture, which has increased agricultural water demands.
* Because private groundwater pumpers are not regulated, it is difficult to understand impacts to the groundwater table.
* There is little management or control over private groundwater usage.
* Usage by agriculture impacts the ability to use groundwater for urban use, and vice versa.
* There is flood control on some creeks, such as Deadman Creek.
* There is a need for better management of the Region’s water resources.
* We need to support better management of groundwater basin information.
* Urban water use per acres is less than agricultural uses because of compact development. There is a need to look holistically at recharge. For example, if some groundwater irrigators could be converted to surface water, there could be enhanced recharge in some cases (not all cases).
* It is important to remember that agriculture drives the Region’s economy.
* There are vernal pool areas in Eastern Merced County that require water.
* Fracking is occurring in the grasslands area – could this be causing water quality issues?
* Solar farms completely alter the landscape and could impact water supplies, plus bring their own water demands.
* We need more opportunities for surface storage.
* Flood management should be coordinated with storage.
* There are currently only a couple of areas of managed groundwater recharge in the Region.
* The Region should use flood water to recharge groundwater basins.
* Lower groundwater levels impact environmental resources.
* We need to be able to manage agricultural water use.
* Better coordination with land use planning is necessary. In the past, people have brought suggestions, but they have not been implemented.
* We need to look at things long term so that plans are not changed every time there is a new governing body.
* Water quality is impacted by aggregate mining in the Mariposa Creek area.
* Flood control presents a water supply opportunity through storage or groundwater recharge.
* There are opportunities to connect creeks on the east side to convey water to the south east where there are sandy soils and good recharge.
* There is a project being planned for the Dry Creek Watershed that involves flood storage.
* There are groundwater quality issues from pesticide and herbicide use that are impacting domestic drinking water quality in the Livingston area.
* Saline intrusion from groundwater pumping near the San Joaquin River is impacting water quality.
* Wastewater collection and treatment capacity is limited and many areas are without public sewers.
* There are legacy nitrate issues in some portions of the region.
* Stormwater runoff, urban irrigation runoff, domestic fertilizer and pesticide / herbicide use impact water quality.
* Deep well injection of wastewater is occurring in Hilmar.
* The Region should be aware of the threat of pharmaceuticals and personal care products as well.
* Water suppliers have difficulty raising rates for necessary water management projects.
* The use of raw water/onsite use should be considered.
* Conservation and agricultural water use efficiency are critical.
* There is a need for education of the general public related to water issues, lower watering demands, water use efficiency, hydrology, and water appreciation.

After a short break, Gardiner facilitated a brainstorming session to identify potential regional objectives. The following objectives were identified.

* Manage flood flows for water supply, recharge and natural resource management
* Stabilize water supply / meet future demands in the region
* Improve coordination between land use planning and water resources planning
* Work with planners to make sure they understand water issues
* Implement metering and pricing mechanisms to promote conservation
* Improve water use efficiency
* Encourage compact development in urban areas / good land use planning
* Align land development with water management
* Arrest or reverse decline in groundwater levels through education, coordination, and water use efficiency
* Meet demands for all use, including agriculture, urban, and environmental needs
* Practice graywater reuse
* Where a new demand arises, make sure there is supply to meet that demand
* Improve education related to water resource management needs and issues

The following question was raised.

* Question: Are supplies and demands currently in balance?
* Answer: No. Groundwater levels are declining, so there is currently an imbalance. MID is working to develop an integrated water resources model which will provide valuable information on the groundwater basin and assist in developing approaches to better manage the basin and balance supply and demand. The consultant team is working on developing water balance information, which will be discussed at the next RAC meeting.

**Discuss Disadvantaged Community (DAC) Outreach Approach**

Watson walked through the PowerPoint slides summarizing the proposed approach for conducting DAC outreach. The following suggestions were raised.

* Comment: Winton should be added as a target community.
* Comment: There are septic problems in Atwater/Jordan.
* Comment: Other contacts to be made include:
  + LAO family community
  + Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs)
  + Schools
* Comment: Strategies that may be effective include:
  + Door to door flyer distribution
  + Tying into MAC community meetings
  + Building email lists to cover more participants
* Comment: The team should plan to provide a phone number and bilingual support.
* Comment: Lack of sewer capacity is a common issue.
* Comment: High nitrates may be an issue.
* Comment: Flooding may be an issue.

**Review Technical Workshop Overview and Timing**

Watson walked through the anticipated timing for the upcoming technical workshops. Four one-hour workshops will be held in the Sam Pipes Room in advance of the next RAC meeting as follows:

* 9 am-10 am: Water Conservation
* 10 am-11 am: Groundwater recharge
* 11 am-12 pm: Salt and Nutrients
* 1 pm-2 pm: Climate change

RAC members are encouraged to attend any or all meetings and to spread the word about the meetings to other potentially interested parties.

A general public workshop will also be held in the City of Merced in August.

**Next Steps**

Watson recapped next steps:

* Comments are requested on all documents to [awatson@rmcwater.com](mailto:awatson@rmcwater.com) by July 10, 2012.
* RAC members are reminded to consider attending the technical workshops on July 24, 2012 from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm.
* The next RAC meeting will be held on July 24, 2012 from 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

**Attendance**

**RAC Members and Alternates**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| RAC Member | Present | Alternate | Present |
| Johnnie Baptista |  | Brad Samuelson | X |
| Martha Conklin |  | Thomas Harmon |  |
| Kathleen M. Crookham | X | Bill Spriggs | X |
| Jim Cunningham | X |  |  |
| Daniel De Wees | X | Scott Magneson |  |
| Hicham ElTal | X |  |  |
| Connie Farris | X | Irene De La Cruz | X |
| Bob Giampoli | X | Tom Roduner | X |
| Thomas Grave | X |  |  |
| Gordon Gray | X | Dena Traina | X |
| Robert Kelly |  |  |  |
| Cindy Lashbrook | X |  |  |
| Jim Marshall | X | Marjorie Kirn | X |
| Lydia Miller | X | Bill Hatch | X |
| Jean Okuye |  |  |  |
| Jose Antonio Ramirez | X |  |  |
| Terry Rolfe | X | William (Skip) George | X |
| Ron Rowe | X |  |  |
| Larry S. Thompson | X | Jerry Shannon | X |
| Kole Upton | X | Walt Adams |  |
| Paul van Warmerdam | X | Gino Pedretti, III | X |
| Michael Wegley | X |  |  |
| Bob Weimer | X |  |  |

**Project Team and Staff**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Team Member | Affiliation | Present |
| Ann Marie Felsinger | Merced Irrigation District |  |
| Dick Tzou | Merced Irrigation District | X |
| John Bramble | City of Merced |  |
| Stan Murdock | City of Merced |  |
| Ken Elwin | City of Merced |  |
| Vicki Jones | County of Merced – Environmental Health | X |
| Kellie Jacobs | County of Merced – Public Works | X |
| Oksana Newmen | County of Merced – Planning | X |
| Ali Taghavi | RMC Water and Environment | X |
| Alyson Watson | RMC Water and Environment | X |
| Ryan Alameda | RMC Water and Environment |  |
| Samantha Salvia | RMC Water and Environment |  |
| Leslie Dumas | RMC Water and Environment |  |
| Charles Gardiner | CLGardiner | X |
| Garth Pecchenino | Fremming, Parson and Pecchenino | X |
| David Bean | AMEC Geomatrix, Inc. |  |
| Grant Davids | Davids Engineering |  |
| Dave Peterson | Peterson Brustad, Inc. |  |

**California Department of Water Resources**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| DWR Representative | Affiliation | Present |
| Michelle Dooley | DWR | X |
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**Other Interested Parties**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Affiliation (if any) | Name | Affiliation (if any) |
| Larry Harris |  |  |  |
| Rod Webster | Merced Sierra Club |  |  |
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