

Meeting Notes

Merced IRWMP Update 2018

Subject: Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Update / Storm Water Resources Plan – Public Workshop #1

Prepared By: Jennifer Kidson/Woodard & Curran

Date/Time: July 11, 2018, 3pm

Location: City of Merced Council Chambers
678 W 18th Street, Merced, California

Attendees: Leslie Dumas, Jennifer Kidson (Woodard & Curran); Hicham Eltal, Dominique Zuniga (Merced Irrigation District); Daniel Chavez (Planada CSD); Alex Heeren (UC Merced); Bob Kelley (Stevenson WD); Cindy Lashbrook (Merced College and CAFF); Breanne Ramos (Merced County Farm Bureau); Leah Brown, Bill Osmer, (City of Merced); Jean Okuye (EMRCD) Jeff Marchini (Merced Irrigation District)

Project Number: 0011200.00

Meeting Agenda

- Region Background
- Summary of IRWM Program and Prop 1
- Summary of SWRP Program and Guidelines
- Implementation Funding
- How to Submit a Project
- Next Steps and Q&A

Meeting Objectives

- Provide background on the Merced Region, IRWM Program, and SWRP Program
- Inform the public about how to become involved in the Merced IRWMP Update and SWRP and how to submit projects for inclusion in the Plans

Meeting Notes

Background

- Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a collaborative effort to identify and implement water management solutions on a regional scale that increases regional self-reliance, reduces conflict, and manages water to concurrently achieve social, environmental, and economic objectives.
- The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) began the IRWM program in 2004.
- The purpose of an IRWMP is to:
 - Develop regional understanding
 - Identify water resources needs and solutions
 - Maximize benefits through integration of water management strategies
 - Leverage regional resources through partnerships
 - Be eligible for State funding through the IRWM grant program. IRWM funding has been provided through Prop 50, Prop 84, and now Prop 1.

- In order to be eligible to receive IRWM funding, Regions must be governed by a Regional Water Management Group with statutory authority over water management, be approved through a structured “Regional Acceptance Process,” and prepare an IRWM Plan consistent with program standards.
- An IRWM Region is defined by the organizations that created it (that is, Region boundaries are not defined by the State). Regions define themselves and form of their own accord. Regions are not restricted by political boundaries. They are often defined by a combination of geographic boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, political boundaries. Typically, IRWM Regions fall entirely within one of the state’s hydrologic areas.
- IRWM Regions must be approved by DWR through their Regional Acceptance Process (RAP).
- An IRWMP is a planning document. It describes water-related resources, challenges, goals, and solutions. An IRWMP also serves as an opportunity to form regional partnerships and platforms for coordination. Finally, as noted above, an IRWMP is a vehicle to facilitate State funding.
- An IRWMP is not a substitute for local planning (e.g., a General Plan, Water Master Plan, etc.). An IRWMP also does not represent a decrease in agency responsibilities or autonomy. An IRWMP does not define policy, and is not comprehensive project documentation (that is, documents such as design and CEQA documentation are not included in the IRWMP).
- Many types of organizations may contribute to the IRWMP, including water and wastewater agencies, counties, cities, public groups, private organizations, and members of the public.
- An IRWMP helps to consolidate information, encourage discussion among stakeholders, evaluate projects on a regional scale, and increase the chances of project implementation. The IRWMP increases chances of project implementation by providing opportunities to combine projects or identify areas where projects could be modified in order to make them stronger (e.g., incorporate additional benefits). Because the IRWM program focuses on multiple benefits, this can help make projects more competitive when applying for funding.
- The general process of the IRWM Program is that a region is formed, they prepare (or update) an IRWMP, including adding projects to the IRWMP. They then adopt the IRWMP, and apply for funding once DWR releases their Proposal Solicitation Package (PSP) (DWR’s version of a request for proposals).
- The Merced IRWM Region was formed in 2009. Its first IRWM was completed in 2013 and was compliant with Prop 84 Guidelines. The IRWMP is being updated to comply with Prop 1 Guidelines and thus be eligible to receive Prop 1 funding.
- The Merced Region governance structure is made up of three parts:
 - The Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Authority (MIRWMA) acts as the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG)
 - The RWMG is broken into Policy and Management Committees
 - Management Committee is made up of staff-level representatives who manage the IRWMP on a day-to-day basis
 - The Policy Committee is made up of elected officials providing oversight and approval.
 - The Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) provides stakeholder input and diverse perspectives to the RWMG.
- Prop 1 was approved in 2014, and allocated \$510 million to the IRWM grant program. This funding is allocated among large regions within the state, known as Funding Areas, which often contain multiple IRWM Regions. IRWMPs must comply with 2016 (Prop 1)

Guidelines to be eligible for funding; therefore, updates to the Merced IRWMP are needed.

Summary of Storm Water Resources Program and Guidelines

- The Merced Region is preparing a Storm Water Resources Plan (SWRP) concurrently with the IRWMP Update. Senate Bill 985 (2014) requires public agencies to develop a SWRP in order to receive grant funds from a bond for stormwater projects.
- A SWRP is an integrated plan focusing on regional watershed-based storm water priorities and developing multiple benefit projects. The focus of the SWRP is on stormwater and dry-weather runoff. SWRPs also have a more quantitative focus compared to IRWMPs. Also, where IRWMPs are overseen by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), SWRPs are overseen by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). Both types of plans include a process by which projects are submitted to the Plans.
- SWRPs are required to include information in the following categories:
 - Watershed/Planning Area Identification
 - Water Quality Compliance
 - Organization, Coordination, Collaboration
 - Quantitative Methods
 - Identification and Prioritization of Projects
 - Implementation Strategy and Schedule
 - Education, Outreach, Public Participation
- Prop 1 Storm Water Grant Program (SWGP) Funding availability
 - Prop 1 allocated \$200 million to the Storm Water Grant Program in total.
 - Planning Grants: ~\$10 million awarded
 - Round 1 Implementation Grants: ~\$80 million awarded
 - Round 2 Implementation Grants: ~\$90 million available (est. early 2019)

IRWM Implementation Funding

- \$510 million is available statewide. \$31 million is available in the San Joaquin River Funding Area (over multiple rounds of funding). 10% of this \$31 million (or \$3.1 million) is allocated to disadvantaged community projects.
- Project proponents (or project sponsors) must be a public agency, non-profit, public utility, mutual water company, or State- or federally-recognized Indian Tribe. They must also comply with the Prop 1 IRWM Guidelines, such as compliance with Urban Water Management Plan requirements, water meter requirements, and other requirements, as applicable). If you have a project idea but are not an eligible applicant, you can partner with an eligible applicant who would sponsor the project. Any project proponent seeking funding must adopt (or approve, if adoption is not possible) the updated IRWMP.
- In order for a project to be eligible, it must be included in an IRWM Plan. This is what drives the Call for Projects which opened on Monday, 7/9/2018. Eligible projects must also have benefits within the IRWM Region and provide multiple benefits. Inter-regional projects are allowed. Allowable project types include a wide range of projects, including water reuse, conjunctive use, pilot projects, studies, conveyance facilities, and more. A project is not limited only to construction.
- Q: Does a project have to have all its benefits in the same localized area? A: Not necessarily; it would likely depend on the project. The benefits must occur within the Region. For example, the Merced Region received funding for the UC Merced/EMRCD/Merced ID Merced River Education and Enhancement Program, which had benefits in separate locations throughout the Merced River watershed.
- The Merced IRWM Region has received IRWM funding during Rounds 2 and 3 of Prop 84 (approximately \$3 million awarded in each case).

- The current IRWM Implementation funding schedule, as communicated by DWR, is that a draft PSP can be expected in September 2018, with a final PSP in late 2018. Pre-application workshops with each Funding Area would be held between February and July 2019. Approximately 8 weeks after each Funding Area's workshop, applications would be due.

How to Submit a Project into the IRWMP

- A Call for Projects (a formal period for submitting projects for inclusion in the IRWMP and SWRP) is occurring from July 9, 2018 through August 23, 2018. Projects can be submitted via the Region's online database, known as Opti. It is accessible at <http://irwm.rmcwater.com/merced/login.php>. Any member of the public can make an account and view submitted projects. Additionally, anyone may create an account to become a "Community Member," which will then allow them to submit projects. A paper form is available for anyone without internet access.
- Opti is a useful tool because it serves as a dynamic, living project database. The Region can update the project information without having to update the entire IRWMP. The public can also see what projects have been submitted and see project details. Finally, the questions asked in Opti can help project proponent identify areas where their project could be strengthened.

How to Participate in the IRWMP Update and SWRP

- Attend meetings:
 - Public workshops, Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Authority meetings, Regional Advisory Council meetings
- Add projects to the IRWMP and/or SWRP
- Provide comments on Public Draft IRWMP and SWRP (to be made available online)
- Sign up to receive email announcements (by notifying the W&C team)