

# Mojave Region Update of Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

## Stakeholder Group Meeting #2 - Summary

April 4, 2013

Mojave Water Agency Headquarters  
Apple Valley, CA

### **Meeting Purpose and Overview**

This was the second of nine scheduled meetings of the Stakeholder Group for the Update of the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan for the Mojave Region. The purpose was to review and build on work from the first meeting of the Stakeholder Group on March 4, 2013 as well as to introduce new topics for discussion. Thirty-seven individuals completed the meeting sign-in sheet, with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) staff person (Tracie Billington) and the Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) staff person (Jon Rokke) calling in via conference call.

Several topics were addressed during the Stakeholder Group meeting, including:

- Provide an Overview of the Planning Process
- Present Updates to Planning Process Goals
- Discuss Challenges and Opportunities of the Mojave Region
- Present the Mojave IRWM Plan Outline
- Introduce Current and Future Conditions of the Mojave Region
- Introduce Preliminary Draft Mojave IRWM Plan Objectives
- Discuss Recommendations made by DWR Regarding Changes to Mojave IRWM Region Boundary

This meeting also included the first presentation related to preparation of a Salt & Nutrient Management Plan, which is being developed in conjunction with the IRWM Plan Update.

Ken Kirby, of Kirby Consulting Group and a member of the Kennedy/Jenks consultant team, served as the facilitator for the meeting.

### **Establishment of the IRWM Region**

The meeting began with introductions led by Scott Weldy, Chairman of the Technical Advisory Group (TAC) to the MWA. The Stakeholder Group was then asked to consider a motion to authorize the TAC Committee Chairman to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that establishes the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) of the Mojave Region IRWM Plan. The RWMG will consist of the following five agencies:

- Mojave Water Agency (MWA)
- Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority (VWVRA)
- Technical Advisory Committee to the Mojave Water Agency (TAC)
- Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District (MDRCD)
- Morongo Basin Pipeline Commission

The motion was carried through a showing of hands with all voting in favor.

The Stakeholder Group was then reminded that the RWMG will guide the development of the IRWM Plan through a Coordinating Committee, consisting of two representatives from each member of the RWMG. As representatives have already been designated from the other four members of the RWMG, the Stakeholder Group was asked to authorize the recommended representatives from the TAC, which they did. As a result, the full Coordinating Committee will consist of the following representatives, one of whom is the designated representative and the other who serves as an alternate.

- MWA – Kimberly Cox, Kirby Brill
- VWVRA – Logan Olds, Ryan Orr
- TAC – Scott Weldy, Jeanette Hayhurst
- MDRCD – Chuck Bell, Paul Johnson
- Morongo Basin Pipeline Commission – Bob Stadum, Frank Coate

### **Recap of Kickoff Meeting**

Ken Kirby began by reviewing the summary from the March 4, 2013 kickoff meeting and stating that all meeting summaries, handouts, presentations and other information from that meeting and all upcoming meetings can be accessed at the Mojave Region IRWM Plan website, [www.mywaterplan.com](http://www.mywaterplan.com). Mr. Kirby emphasized that plan development will be an iterative process with multiple opportunities to weigh in on content, topic by topic, over the coming months before the Plan is finalized.

Tim Gobler from MWA provided a tour of the website which was projected onto a large screen.

Mary Lou Cotton from Kennedy/Jenks reviewed the plan development schedule, including the completion date which is July 2014. Ms. Cotton then turned the meeting back over to Ken Kirby, who reminded the group of the respective roles of all participants in the Plan Update process. These participants include the RWMG, Mojave Water Agency, Stakeholder Group and the Project Team. The Project Team is responsible for developing content for the Plan and includes people from the Coordinating Committee, the Consultant Team and Participating Agency Staff.

### **Updates to Planning Process Goals**

During the regional kickoff meeting on March 4, 2013, the Stakeholder Group had been asked to consider draft goals for the IRWM planning process, which were specific things they would like to accomplish by the end of the planning process. These planning process goals had been revised in response to comments and suggestions provided by participants at that time. Ken Kirby introduced these changes to the planning process goals, which are highlighted in handout #1, available on the IRWM Plan website. No additional questions or suggested changes were provided by meeting participants at this time.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

In the previous Stakeholder Group meeting, participants wrote down their ideas for challenges and opportunities that they believe the IRWM Plan should address, and they posted them on a wall in the meeting room. All of these suggestions were grouped into common themes and then transcribed as written by the participants. This list of suggestions was reviewed by Ken Kirby (see handout #2a), who then presented a draft synthesis of these challenges and opportunities (see handout #2b) that had been prepared by the Project Team. The challenges and opportunities will be used to draft the Plan Objectives. Nine major themes emerged from this synthesis of challenges and opportunities, consisting of the following:

- Coordination
- Engagement
- Disadvantaged Community Needs
- Water Supplies
- Water Quality

- Finance and Affordability
- Risk and Uncertainty
- Judgment and Water Rights
- Project Ideas

This summary of challenges and opportunities led to a variety of comments, questions and suggestions from meeting participants:

### Engagement

- A pro-active approach is required to encourage engagement by all those who can benefit from the IRWM Plan but who may not yet recognize or understand that.
- It is essential that efforts be undertaken to identify critical groups that might be missing from the process.
- Outreach to these groups must clearly explain what is in it for them.
  - As an example, there are 13 minimum water producers in the Baja subarea who do not know they are minimum water producers, why they should participate in the IRWM planning process, or how they can participate.
- One idea to reach people was to send outreach letters inviting all the Community Services Districts (CSDs) in the rural areas.
- Ensure that both the Colorado River RWQCB and the Lahontan RWQCB are participating in the IRWM planning process.

### Disadvantaged Communities (DACs)

- In response to a map of the Mojave Region showing the locations of all the disadvantaged communities, it was noted that almost the entire area appeared to be classified as a DAC, and that there were only a few exceptions. Is that correct?
  - It was explained that the map showing DACs throughout the Mojave Region, was based on a combination of Census Block Groups, Census Tracts, and Census Designated Places. The Project Team will review the map and make sure that it is accurate.
- Residents in Hinkley may not realize that they are classified as a DAC.

### Water Supplies

- The challenge to “expect increasing competition between different water uses in the region” appears to conflict with the goal of increasing cooperation.
  - These challenges represent what people feel to be true for the Region now. Both of these challenges seem to be true now.

- One of the purposes of the IRWM planning process is to work toward solutions that will reduce conflict and enhance cooperation.

### Water Quality

- What “new regulations” are you referring to? It was discussed that the issue was drinking water contaminants.

### Finance and Affordability

- Proposed water rate increases will inspire public interest.
- It is important to be creative while addressing challenges and opportunities, i.e. to propose possible projects/solutions, without initially determining a revenue source for the effort.

### Project Ideas, Other Suggestions, and Clarifications

- Prospective project proponents should recognize that some projects likely will not qualify for grant funding through DWR and Propositions 84 and 1E, and some projects may qualify for funding sources other than DWR’s current grant programs.
- Introduce the concept of “Resource Management Strategies” by providing a link on the Mojave Region IRWM Plan website to the resource management strategies described in DWR’s California Water Plan.
- One of the great challenges and opportunities we face is trying to balance the need to capture stormwater while also successfully managing flood risk.
- A challenge that appears to be missing – capturing contaminants before they can enter the water supply.
- How will projects be prioritized?
  - A great question; that topic will be tackled in the next meeting.
- One difference for this Plan update from the previous plan is that MWA may not be the lead project proponent for projects included in the Plan. It is hoped that some high priority projects will be implemented by proponents other than MWA.
- Concern expressed about moving water outside subareas and even outside the region, i.e. exporting water for sale.
- The IRWM Plan will need to address the problem of water pumping that is not in alignment with the Judgment. This is associated with new producers that were not in existence at the time of the adjudication.
- Alternative water conservation methods are needed in the Baja subarea.

## **IRWM Plan Outline and Current/Future Conditions**

Mary Lou Cotton provided a brief review of an updated version of the proposed outline for the IRWM Plan (handout #3). She explained that the outline identifies the content that will be included in the Plan. The updated Plan will recycle everything possible from the 2004 Plan, but it must also comply with new IRWM Plan guidelines defined by Propositions 84 and 1E.

Following the overview of the Plan Outline, Sandra Carlson, also from Kennedy/Jenks, explained in detail some of the content required for the Plan; current and future conditions of the region (handout #4). Specific topics included land use, species and habitat of special concern, water supply, water quality, and flood management. One of the only questions at this time was to clarify the meaning of “wastewater imports,” which was featured in the water supply table.

## **Preliminary Draft Plan Objectives**

Ken Kirby referred to handout #5 which presented fourteen preliminary draft Plan objectives. He explained that the objectives from the 2004 IRWM Plan would no longer satisfy new DWR guidelines, which require that objectives be measurable, and preferably quantifiable. Also, given the importance of the objectives, the group will devote a considerable amount of time to the objectives during the Plan development process. Questions and comments included:

- What should be the long-term planning horizon referred to in objective #1?
  - 2035 was suggested for consistency with MWA’s recently completed 2010 Urban Water Management Plan.
- Protecting ephemeral washes (which have multiple benefits) from development should be included as part of the objective to protect and restore riparian habitat areas.
- How are objectives different from goals?
  - Goals provide a long-term direction for the Plan, but are probably never fully attainable, while objectives are more short-term and measurable.
- Are goals required for the Plan?
  - Some people think that identifying goals is a clarifying step required to help determine objectives.

## **DWR Recommendations Regarding Changes to Mojave IRWM Region Boundary**

When DWR accepted the Mojave Region as part of the Regional Acceptance Process (RAP), DWR “strongly suggested that the Mojave RWMG expand their Region boundary to include the upper watershed (Lake Arrowhead area) and the lower watershed (Afton Canyon). DWR also encouraged the Mojave RWMG to continue efforts to reach out to the Twentynine Palms area and to continue coordination and cooperation regarding the minor overlap areas with the Antelope Valley IRWM Region.” Some of these areas are not included within any other IRWM region.

Early in the meeting the question was asked as to what are the benefits of adding areas outside the MWA service area.

- In order to be more hydrologically inclusive and aligned, DWR wants IRWM regions to reflect natural watershed boundaries rather than political ones.
- Areas that are not part of an IRWM Plan will not qualify for Proposition 84 funding.

To accommodate DWR’s suggestions and to further answer this and other questions, Tracy Billington from the DWR, called in to the meeting and participated via a speaker phone.

- Will expansion of the IRWM boundary require the annexation of water agencies operating in those regions?
  - The boundaries of water service agencies are not affected by changes in the boundaries of the IRWM region.
- Have there been any discussions with the Bureau of Land Management about including the Afton Canyon Region in the Mojave IRWM Region?
- A representative from the Twentynine Palms Water District stated there was interest in participating in the Mojave Region IRWM process.
- A representative from the Lake Arrowhead Community Services District stated the District is interested in improving communication between upstream and downstream areas; recognizing at this time they do not yet know the needs of the downstream region.
- The key questions for communities within the existing Mojave IRWM Region and those in the outlying areas: what are they committing to and what are the benefits of joining?
  - Changes to the Mojave IRWM Region boundary would affect all agencies within the area.
  - Areas added to the Mojave IRWM Region could submit projects for inclusion in the IRWM Plan and those projects may qualify for implementation grants from DWR.

- DWR believes the recommendations could enhance water management within the Region as the Mojave IRWM Region will then be aligned with the natural hydrologic boundaries of the watershed.

## **Salt and Nutrient Management Plan Overview**

Phyllis Stanin from Todd Engineers, a member of the Kennedy/Jenks Consulting Team, presented an overview of the Salt and Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP) process.

- Key technical components of that process include:
  - The stakeholder process
  - Goals and objectives
  - Conceptual model
  - Water quality and assimilative capacity
  - Salt and nutrient balances
  - Future water quality
  - Anti-degradation analysis
  - Monitoring program
  - Implement measures

Ms. Stanin pointed out that a great deal of prior research work has been done in this Region, so they already have a solid data base to build upon. While describing the salt and nutrient loading hydrologic process, it was explained that one key benefit of this project is to make sure that future efforts to increase the water supply do not at the same time inadvertently introduce contaminants (artificial or natural) that damage water quality.

The technical analysis will utilize the STELLA software model to project salt loading and mixing in 22 groundwater sub-regions in the Mojave Region over a 70 year period. Existing data collected in the Region will be used to establish baseline conditions for salt and nutrient loading in each of these sub-regions. Ms. Stanin explained that although the nutrient loading process is understood in general, it is a very complicated process involving a number of sub-process/elements, so in each sub-region it is difficult to know which portions of the nutrient loading process are actually happening and to what extent the processes are happening.

A key outcome of the SNMP process will be determining the available assimilative capacity of total dissolved solids (TDS) in each of the 22 sub-regions. An area could be deemed to have no assimilative capacity if the existing average groundwater quality



exceeds the water quality objective for TDS. In contrast, areas where TDS levels are below the water quality objective do have assimilative capacity. Proponents of proposed projects that are projected to take up all the available assimilative capacity in a sub-region will need to make the case for why their project should proceed, as it will preclude opportunities for any other projects in that sub-region.

During this presentation, a staff representative (Jon Rokke) from the Colorado River RWQCB was listening via a phone conference line. In addition, Mike Plaziak, agency staff from the Lahontan RWQCB, attended the meeting. In response to this presentation, several questions and comments were raised by the audience. Mike Plaziak (in conjunction with the Colorado River RWQCB staff) assisted by volunteering to address some of the questions raised in the audience, which are listed below:

- What date will be used for baseline salt/nutrient loading conditions – today's date or an earlier point in time?
  - Data that has been collected over the previous five years will be used to determine an appropriate baseline date.
- What is the impact of salt carried into the Region from imported water?
  - The SNMP takes the impact of all sources of salt into account.
- Will this study fill the need for the Local Area Management Plans (LAMPs)?
  - The SNMP will do some of the heavy lifting in terms of data analysis and projections, but each jurisdiction will still need to do their own particular LAMP if they require one.
- Will it be possible to adjust LAMP deadlines while waiting for results from the SNMP?
  - Yes, MOUs are still in effect through 2016.

## **Conclusion**

Ken Kirby wrapped up the meeting by asking members of the Stakeholder Group to review and provide comments by April 18, 2013 on all the materials and information presented during the meeting, all of which will be posted on the website. In particular, this included drafts of the:

- Challenges and opportunities
- IRWM Plan outline
- Information sheets
- IRWM Plan objectives
- Mojave Region boundary approach

The next meeting of the Stakeholder Group is scheduled for June 6, 2013. Three public meetings will likely be scheduled to take place on days leading up to and including this meeting. Materials for the June 6 meeting will be posted to the website one week in advance.