

Mojave Region Update of Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

Stakeholder Group Meeting #3 - Summary

June 6, 2013

Mojave Water Agency Headquarters
Apple Valley, CA

Meeting Purpose and Overview

This was the third of nine scheduled meetings of the Stakeholder Group for the Update of the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan for the Mojave Region. The major purpose for today's meeting was to prioritize the objectives of the Plan Update and to present and discuss the proposed approach to identify, select and prioritize projects and programs. Between this meeting and the next Stakeholder Group meeting scheduled for August 20, a Call for Projects will take place beginning on July 1. The deadline to submit proposed projects is August 1.

Objectives for today's meeting included:

- Review progress to date
- Discuss Draft IRWM Plan Sections 1 and 2
- Status of Possible Planning Boundary Expansion
- Status of Salt & Nutrient Management Plan
- Approach for Project Identification, Screening, Selection and Prioritization
- Refine and Prioritize Plan Objectives

Sixty-seven individuals, including staff and consultants were in attendance. Ken Kirby, of Kirby Consulting Group and a member of the Kennedy/Jenks Consultant Team, once again served as the facilitator for the meeting.

Recap of Stakeholder Meeting #2

Ken Kirby began the meeting with a brief review of the April 4 stakeholder group meeting. During this 2nd meeting, stakeholders had reviewed the updated planning process goals for the IRWM Plan, which Mr. Kirby reminded the group, are now posted on the Mojave Region IRWM website: www.mywaterplan.com. During Meeting #2, Mr. Kirby also had presented a synthesized version of challenges and opportunities in the Mojave Region originally identified by the stakeholders during their 1st group meeting in March. The challenges and opportunities are seen as key for the development of draft IRWM Plan

objectives, which in turn will contribute to the criteria needed to prioritize proposed projects.

The update of the IRWM Plan will reflect both changed conditions in the Region as well as new guidance from the State. During the April 4 meeting, information about the intended updates to the IRWM Region Description were presented and discussed. The information is also available on the Mojave Region IRWM Plan website. An iterative planning approach will offer multiple opportunities throughout the 18-month planning process to review and provide feedback on the emerging Plan, section by section, rather than one large draft document in the final phase of the process.

Other topics addressed during the previous meeting had been the potential expansion of the Mojave IRWM Region planning boundary, and an update of the Salt & Nutrient Management Plan which is being developed in conjunction with the IRWM Plan Update.

IRWM Plan Draft Content – Sections 1 and 2

Mary Lou Cotton from Kennedy Jenks Consultants described the two draft sections of the IRWM Plan that are now available for review on the Mojave IRWM Plan website at: <http://www.mywaterplan.com/irwm-plan-documents.html>. Sandra Carlson, also with Kennedy Jenks Consultants, asked for a show of hands on how many had already visited the website, and a majority indicated they had.

Section 1, the Introduction, includes new text describing the Regional Water Management Group, and how the Plan will be developed and adopted. Section 2 is the Region Description. Although the content included in the previous Mojave Region Description section has not changed much since the last IRWM Plan, the updated Region Description includes new content required by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), such as land use, ecological process and environmental resources, demographics and population, disadvantaged communities and tribes in the Region, and climate change.

Mary Lou Cotton stated that guidance on how to provide feedback for these draft sections was described in Meeting Handout #1. Comments should be provided to the Plan Development Team via comments@mywaterplan.com. It was requested that comments be submitted either as a Word document or as email text with the handout # or section #, page #, and paragraph # included for each comment.

Status of Potential Mojave IRWM Region Expansion

Ken Kirby set the context for this discussion topic. In 2004, DWR had accepted the boundary of the MWA service area as the boundary for the Mojave IRWM Region (also sometimes referred to as the Mojave IRWM Planning Region). During the 2009 Regional Acceptance Process (RAP), DWR approved the proposed Mojave IRWM Region and at that time DWR strongly suggested that the Mojave Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) “expand their Region boundary to include the upper watershed (Lake Arrowhead area) and the lower watershed (Afton Canyon).”

If the Mojave RWMG decides to include the recommended geographic areas within the Mojave IRWM Region, these areas do not become a part of the MWA service area. It is important to DWR that the entire state be covered by an IRWM Plan, as any areas not part of an IRWM plan are not eligible to access DWR IRWM grant funds. However, DWR has emphasized in recent conversations that while DWR has “strongly suggested” that these areas be included, the decision of whether to include them is to be made by the stakeholders involved. DWR has requested that the Mojave RWMG inform DWR by letter of the decision about the potential expansion of the Mojave IRWM Region boundary and the reasoning associated with that decision.

Lance Eckhart and Tim Gobler from the Mojave Water Agency provided an update on the status of communication and coordination regarding this potential expansion of the Mojave IRWM Region that had occurred since Stakeholder Meeting #2. In general, a positive response had been received in response to letters that had been sent to stakeholders in these adjacent areas to see if they were interested in exploring the possible changes to the Mojave IRWM Region boundary further. This introduction and status update was followed by an extensive round of comments and questions from meeting participants, including the following:

- If the Mojave IRWM Region does expand into new geographic areas, will MWA then be required to financially assist and/or take the lead on projects that are located outside its service area?
 - The answer to that is no, MWA will not be required to assist with projects; however they could choose to participate if the proposed project provides benefits for the MWA service area. In fact, MWA does not even need to be the lead for IRWM projects within the current Mojave IRWM Region which currently coincides with the MWA service area.
- Who identified the new area boundaries?
 - DWR identified the target areas adjacent to the Mojave IRWM Region that they suggested be included. If the Mojave IRWM Region boundary is

changed, it will be the result of a collaborative process among stakeholders within the current Mojave IRWM Region and between stakeholders in these adjacent areas. At this stage, the Plan Development Team is exploring whether there is interest in expanding the boundary of the Mojave IRWM Region.

- There are many federal agencies located within the adjacent areas that are being considered for inclusion in the Mojave IRWM Region. Do we know what the implications or potential benefits of this might be?
 - It is difficult to know today but it does suggest that there could be advantages with federal agency participants. The DWR Prop 84 funding represents seed money and is not nearly enough to do all that is necessary in the Region, which likely will cost more than a billion dollars.
 - The real benefit of the IRWM Plan stems from identifying what we can do collectively working together with all the stakeholders to manage water and related resources to help the Mojave Region thrive over the long term.-
- Are these adjacent areas all unincorporated areas?
 - No, they include a mix of incorporated and unincorporated areas.
- Who is in charge of monitoring unauthorized water pumping in these areas?
 - Expansion of the Mojave IRWM Region boundary would not change the existing authorities now operating in these areas.
- What are the drawbacks of bringing these adjacent areas into the Region?
 - It will increase the cost of updating the Plan.
 - It means project proponents in these areas will be eligible to compete for DWR grant funding. (Although if the Mojave RWMG decides not to include the recommended areas, they may be able to establish another accepted Region and also qualify for IRWM grant funds.)
 - It was recommended that if the Mojave IRWM Region boundary is expanded that the recommended areas not be subdivided. In other words, if the upper watershed portion of the Mojave IRWM Region is adjusted, that it be adjusted to include the entire boundary of the upper watershed. And likewise, if the Mojave IRWM Region boundary is expanded to include the lower watershed portion of the Region, that the Mojave IRWM Region boundary be adjusted to include the entire portion of the lower watershed.
- Do these areas have to agree to be included and who in these areas is involved in that decision?
 - It is a joint decision. The current Mojave RWMG cannot impose the decision on stakeholders located within the areas recommended for inclusion.
 - A majority of the interested parties within these geographic areas will need to agree to the decision to join.

- What are some of the benefits of adding their projects to the Mojave IRWM Region Plan?
 - They will become eligible to receive currently available State grants and other future grants from the State.
 - The real long term benefit is to encourage integration by enabling stakeholders with similar projects to work together.
 - It is possible that DWR will view the Mojave Region more favorably by expanding into these adjacent areas located within the Mojave watershed, which could attract more funding to the Region.
- Given the likely increase in costs that will be incurred to develop the Mojave IRWM Plan with the addition of these adjacent areas, what will be the basis for allocating this additional cost to the new areas? Will it be on the basis of “incremental costs” versus their “fair share” of the additional costs (given their potential share of full IRWM Plan benefits)?
 - We will need to have a conversation to determine a reasonable and fair basis for allocating the additional cost that will arise.
- There is concern about what will be the win/win balance between new outside areas that may join the Region and areas located within the original Region. Are we diluting our potential share of future grant funding?
 - In fairness, there is going to be only one grant application from the Mojave IRWM Region and the Mojave IRWM Stakeholder Group as a whole will decide for the Region on the projects that will be included in that grant application.
 - Also, the currently available funds that the Mojave IRWM Region is eligible for is allocated across two funding areas: Colorado and Lahontan. Other IRWM planning regions within the funding areas will be competing for these same funds.
- What are the advantages for us?
 - Good planning
 - The mountain ranges are our headwaters. For that reason alone it is very important to include them in the Mojave IRWM Region.
 - We need to be concerned about the impact these outlying areas may already be having on our water quality (e.g. septic tanks in the Wrightwood area). So, working with them as part of an integrated planning process in search of collective solutions will be to our benefit.
 - We should recognize the progress that we have already made by working together as a Region and that our water resources are impacted by the plans in the upper watershed area. We will be better off as a Region if we can work with them.

- We should simply see ourselves as one hand with many fingers; we can all benefit by recognizing we are already joined together in reality. An expanded Mojave IRWM Region simply reflects that fact.
- Are there other disadvantaged communities in these outlying areas?
- What will it cost us to participate? (question from a representative of Arrowhead, one of the adjacent areas that is being considered for expansion of the Mojave Region)
 - A cost estimate will have to be made following an inventory of water resource and infrastructure information available for the IRWM planning process; this is a task the Project Team will complete.

Status of Salt and Nutrient Management Plan

A brief update on the status of the Salt and Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP) was provided. Data being used for the SNMP will be provided in forthcoming meetings. The current challenge is synthesizing available data that now exists but in multiple different data sets that have been collected for different purposes and in different ways.

A key purpose of the SNMP is to determine the assimilative capacity for salt and nutrients of groundwater throughout basins in the Mojave Region. This is critical information that is needed to ensure the long term sustainability of the Region, and will help with the project selection process.

Approach for Project Identification, Screening, Selection, and Prioritization

Ken Kirby reviewed steps in the proposed process that will be used to identify projects, as outlined in Handout #2. This included explaining why identifying and then prioritizing Plan objectives is so important, as it will be very difficult to prioritize projects if the stakeholder group has not first prioritized objectives. The principal recommendation to prioritize projects is to assess the extent to which they contribute to the high priority objectives.

In addition to reviewing the proposed 11-step process for identifying projects, Mr. Kirby presented the proposed screening criteria that projects would need to meet to be included in the Mojave IRWM Plan, and the project review and prioritization factors that could be applied to projects that pass the screening criteria.

Mary Lou Cotton then introduced a matrix (Handout #3) that project proponents can use to help think about their proposed projects when putting together an application. The matrix is a tool designed to help project proponents to identify which Plan Objectives, as well as which IRWM Plan Preferences from DWR, their proposed project will address. It

also will help proponents to identify the California Water Plan Water Management Strategies that will be utilized by their proposed project.

Ms. Cotton emphasized that projects will be selected for inclusion in the Mojave Region IRWM Plan based on the proposed criteria; primarily the Plan Objectives identified and prioritized by the stakeholder group. Considerations about which projects to include in future grant applications will come into play later during the grant application phase, after the IRWM Plan has been developed and adopted.

Ms. Cotton then reviewed two proposed forms that are to be used by project proponents to submit their projects for consideration in the Mojave IRWM Plan. The Project Identification –Short Form (Handout #4) is a two page form that captures the minimum amount of information required to submit a project, although more information will likely be required at a later date. The Project Identification – Long Form (Handout #4b) is a more comprehensive form that can be used for well-developed project proposals. The deadline for submitting either project submittal form is August 1.

Questions and comments concerning the project identification and prioritization process included the following:

- What is meant by “integration” which is referred to in step #4 of the process?
 - The principle is to encourage project proponents to talk to each other about their ideas before submitting their projects. Talk first then submit.
 - There are three types of integration – (1) stakeholder/institutional integration where two or more agencies work together on a project, (2) resource integration where project proponents are sharing funding, personnel and expertise, and (3) project implementation integration designed to achieve multiple objectives.
- If a project idea is not technically feasible today but may be in the future should we go ahead and submit promising concepts to be explored in the future?
 - Yes
- Can Plan priorities change over its 25-year timeframe?
 - Yes. The Mojave IRWM Plan will include a process that details how the Plan can be updated in the future.
- Who will prioritize the projects?
 - The Project Team will review project submittals and make recommendations which are then presented to the Stakeholder Group for review, refinement and revision.
- Can we resubmit projects from the current IRWM Plan project list?

- Yes
- Prioritization criteria reflects State and not Federal guidelines
- Now is the time to submit project ideas (e.g. Hinkley). If in doubt, submit it and we can discuss it later.
- Is the Plan a living document that will change as new funding sources become available?
 - Yes, the Plan can and will be updated as conditions change.
- How to get the County involved when needed to implement projects located in unincorporated areas?
 - We recommend that if you have an idea for a project or program that the County should be involved in that you approach the County and request that they participate in developing and submitting the project. If they do not respond, you can submit the project anyway, but it would be better to include them early in the process.

Refine Plan Objectives

Following the review of the project identification and prioritization process, Ken Kirby introduced the latest revised version of the IRWM Plan Objectives (Handout #5).

Comments and questions concerning the list of 16 proposed objectives include:

- Concern was expressed about exceeding State conservation goals, as described by Objective #2. In the past, early adopters of water conservation often found themselves penalized by new conservation regulations. A new baseline was set after they had already implemented conservation measures (rather than before these measures went into effect), so they were more likely to fall short of the new targets and be penalized by higher water rates.
 - Kirby Brill, MWA General Manager, stated that the Mojave Region already meets State water conservation goals and that water conservation is an important goal for us as a Region. Ken Kirby added that water conservation is an important part of our overall portfolio of water resource management strategies.
- It was observed that there are possibly too many objectives and that they somehow be consolidated to reduce the number from the current sixteen objectives.
- Ken Kirby then asked the group to participate in an initial prioritization exercise for the proposed objectives. Objectives and projects can be ranked in terms of two factors i.e. their (1) importance and (2) urgency.
 - Importance reflects the relative significance or consequence of achieving a particular objective, when compared to the other objectives.

- Urgency reflects the degree to which an objective warrants speedy attention or action, when compared to the other objectives.
- Objectives can be grouped into different tiers of priority based on whether they are of high, medium or low importance and high, medium or low urgency.
 - Objectives can be grouped in up to four tiers based on the intersection of importance and urgency
- It was observed by a participant that “urgency” seems to carry more weight than “importance”
 - Reflects the reality that timing is essential when responding to an urgent need or opportunity.
- The group was asked through a show of hands to indicate in which of four tiers they believed a particular objective should be grouped based on what they saw as its importance and urgency.
- Voting results are shown on the next page. There was not sufficient time during the meeting to vote on the priority for all Plan objectives.

Informal Vote on Revised Objectives for Mojave IRWM Plan – Results

URGENCY	HIGH	TIER 2	TIER 1 Obj. 4 – (3 votes) Obj. 2 – (5 votes) Obj. 3 – (1 votes)	TIER 1 Obj. 1- Balance average future water demand (34 votes) Obj. 2 - (2 votes) Obj. 3 - Maintain stability in previously overdrafted groundwater basins (17 votes) Obj. 4 - (5 votes) Obj. 5 - (7 votes) Obj. 7- Provide tools to DAC (16 votes) Obj. 9 – Improve stormwater management (11 votes) Obj. 12 – Obtain financial assistance from outside sources (8 votes) Obj. 14 – (3 votes)
	MEDIUM	TIER 3 Obj. 6 – (6 votes)	TIER 3 Obj. 2 – (5 votes) Obj. 3 – (3 votes) Obj. 4- Reduce reliance on the Delta (10 votes) Obj. 5 - Optimize use of region’s assets to maximize available SWP supplies (15 votes) Obj. 7 –(1 votes) Obj. 9 - (5 votes) Obj. 14 – (3 votes)	TIER 2 Obj. 1 – (2 votes) Obj. 2 – Continue improve regional water use efficiency (12 votes) Obj. 3 – (10 votes) Obj. 4 – (6 votes) Obj. 5 – (7 votes) Obj. 7 – (10 votes) Obj. 9 - (8 votes) Obj. 12- Obtain financial assistance from outside sources (12 votes) Obj. 14 – Increase use of recycled water (13 votes)
	LOW	TIER 4 Obj. 6 – Prevent land subsidence (12 votes)	TIER 3 Obj. 4 – (2 votes) Obj. 6 – (8 votes) Obj. 9 –(2 votes) Obj. 12 –(1 votes)	TIER 2 Obj. 2 – (4 votes) Obj. 4 – (3 votes) Obj. 9 – (3 votes) Obj. 14 – (6 votes)
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
			IMPORTANCE	

Conclusion/Meeting Wrap Up

The meeting concluded with a reminder of what the group was being asked to do and of upcoming dates and deadlines.

- **June 14** – submit questions, comments or suggestions concerning the following items:
 - 1st two sections of the IRWM Plan (Draft Introduction and Region Description)
 - Proposed process for project identification, screening, selection and prioritization (Handout 2)
 - Draft Project Submittal Forms (Handouts 4 and 4b)
- **July 1**- Call for Projects
- **August 1** – Deadline to submit project proposals
- **August 20** – Stakeholder Group Meeting #4, which has been rescheduled from the original August 1 date to provide the Plan Development Team the time needed to review the project submittals.

Scott Weldy, Chairman to the TAC for the MWA, closed the meeting by remarking that a great product depended on receiving great input from the members of the Stakeholder Group.