

Mojave Region Update of Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

Stakeholder Group Meeting #8 - Summary

May 19, 2014

Mojave Water Agency Headquarters
Apple Valley, CA

Meeting Purpose and Overview

This was the eighth of nine scheduled meetings of the Stakeholder Group for the Update of the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan for the Mojave Region. Objectives for the meeting were to:

- Review the IRWM Plan development process
- Present and discuss the public review draft of the Mojave IRWM Plan
- Provide an update on the Salt & Nutrient Management Plan
- Provide an update on the MWA Groundwater Management Plan
- Discuss remaining steps to complete the IRWM Plan
- Discuss the DWR Prop 84 Drought Grant Funding opportunity

As the next to last meeting of the Stakeholder Group, this session provided an opportunity for the group to finalize and check-in by reviewing the progress that had been made over the past fifteen months since the inception of the planning process, and to review the Plan itself. During this meeting the Stakeholder Group also discussed the status of other related plans that have been under development in conjunction with the IRWM Plan, and assessed a new funding opportunity which completion of the IRWM Plan will enable them to pursue if they choose to do so.

There were 48 individuals in attendance at the meeting as indicated during the introductions. Ken Kirby, of EVOTO Company and a member of the Consultant Team, served as the facilitator for the meeting.

Introductions

Chuck Bell, Vice Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the Mojave Water Agency (MWA), opened the meeting with a statement in recognition of Scott Weldy, the TAC Chairman, who had unexpectedly passed away since the last Stakeholder meeting held in February. Following introductions by all those in attendance and

approval of the February 6, 2014 Stakeholder Meeting Summary, Mr. Bell turned the meeting over to Ken Kirby.

IRWM Plan Development Process

After reviewing the agenda and objectives for the meeting, Mr. Kirby stated it was important to reflect on how we had reached this point in the planning process. He posed the question, “did we do what we said we were going to do?” Upon reviewing the status of the thirteen planning process goals which were to be accomplished by the time the Updated IRWM Plan was adopted (Handout 1), the Stakeholder Group agreed they had largely succeeded in doing what they originally set out to do, with a few qualifications. For instance, communication and relationships with disadvantaged communities (Goal 8) were better than they used to be, but several participants in the meeting emphasized that more attention and effort is still needed on this topic. The Stakeholder Group thought the IRWM Plan was definitely not just a wish list of projects but was definitely grounded in economic reality (Goal 10). However, only time will tell how well they had succeeded in that regard. Also, the need to anticipate and meet projected future needs (Goal 12), including preparations for potential disruptions to the water supply, was now front and center in their concerns.

Mr. Kirby also recapped the overall approach they had taken as a group to develop the Plan. It was an iterative process where each meeting was organized around plan topics and feedback during and between meetings enabled them to present, discuss and write the Plan, section by section, over the course of the last year. In addition, the process for decision-making had been based on the principle of working toward broad agreement rather than pure consensus. Because this group had already forged strong, collaborative working relationships with each other during their first IRWM Plan development process in 2004, and they have continued to work together in this way since then, this collaborative planning process moved forward smoothly and on schedule.

Significant Changes in draft Mojave IRWM Plan

Following this overview of the planning process, Mr. Kirby then summarized significant changes that had been made to the Draft IRWM Plan since the various sections had been distributed to the Group and posted to the website through the planning process. He went through each of the sections highlighting the changes that had been completed in time for the Public Review Draft as described in Handout 2. Some of the key changes presented were:

- Removal of the term “goals” from Section 4 since the Plan only includes Plan objectives.

- A new table was added in Section 5 to show the relationship between the State required Resource Management Strategies (RMS) and the 14 Mojave Plan objectives.
- Changes to Section 8 addressing comments about how often the Implementation Support Team (IST) will meet and how often they commit to invite changes to the IRWM Plan project list.
 - Based on stakeholder review comments, the commitment in the Plan to hold Stakeholder Input meetings was changed from a minimum of once per quarter to a minimum of once every six months. Mr. Kirby clarified that the IST can call Stakeholder Input meetings more frequently if they choose to do so, but they are committing to host Stakeholder Input meetings at least once every six months. This change was discussed and the Stakeholder Group agreed with the change.
 - Based on stakeholder review comments, the commitment in the Plan to invite stakeholders and project proponents to submit additional projects for consideration to be included in the IRWM Plan or updates to projects already included in the IRWM Plan from at least once every year to at least once every two years. Mr. Kirby clarified that the IST can invite stakeholders to submit potential changes to the project list more frequently if circumstances warrant that, but they are committing to do it at least every two years. Also, stakeholders can make a request to the IST to consider new funding opportunities if and when they arise and the IST will consider that request. This change was discussed and Stakeholder Group agreed with the change.
 - Names of the IST members will be posted on the project website (mywaterplan.com) so stakeholders can know who to contact to make requests.

Overview of Public Review Draft of 2014 Mojave Plan

Sandra Carlson from the Kennedy/Jenks Consultant Team provided a summary of the Draft IRWM Plan during and highlighted chapter by chapter the significant difference between this Plan and the previously adopted 2004 Plan (Handout 3). Ms. Carlson noted that some people had already started reviewing the draft document since she was already receiving comments. However, it is a very large document (400 pages +). She asked that at a minimum, people do a word search of their agency name to verify that any relevant information about their agency was correct as it appears in the Plan. She also pointed out that Section 2 (Region Description) and Section 3 (Water Supply and Water Demand)) contain the most substantive factual information about the Region and suggested reviewers may want to focus here if they do not have an opportunity to review the entire

document. Ms. Carlson provided a comprehensive review of the first 11 sections of the Draft IRWM Plan. Most of this material was already familiar to meeting participants and did not prompt any questions or comments.

Climate Change

Section 12 is a new section added to the IRWM Plan in keeping with DWR requirements that the IRWM Plan address the impact of climate change on the Region and where possible consider how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when developing and implementing projects. At the last meeting a Climate Change Vulnerability Checklist required by DWR was distributed. The Checklist contains seven different vulnerability areas (water demand, water supply, water quality, sea level rise, flooding, ecosystem and habitat vulnerability, and hydropower), along with subtopics in each area. The objectives in the Mojave Region IRWM Plan each address one or more of these subtopics. In order to prioritize climate change vulnerabilities for the Mojave Region, Ms. Carlson used associations between the Checklist vulnerability areas and the IRWM Plan objectives, all of which had been previously ranked by the Stakeholder Group, to prioritize the sub-topics for each vulnerability area. The result of this analysis is that Water Supply is ranked as the number one climate change vulnerability in the Mojave Region. All other vulnerability areas (excluding sea level rise, of course) tied for second place. Ken Kirby added that this result was not surprising given that the Stakeholder Group had already identified the Water Supply objective as their primary concern, recognizing that the Region's water supply is highly dependent on snow melt diverted through the Delta and imported to this Region through the State Water Project and snow melt from the Mojave River watershed, a vulnerability which residents in the Region are experiencing even now. Questions and comments raised at this point include:

- What is the intent of the Climate Change vulnerability ranking?
 - At this point, DWR simply wants each IRWM Region to start thinking about how climate change will impact the region and this is a simple tool they have provided for that purpose.
- Did the climate change vulnerability assessment take a look at how climate change may impact our headwaters (i.e. changes within the region's hydrology)?
 - Not specifically.
- Was the intent to see if our objectives somehow fit these vulnerability areas and if they do fit to then suggest actions to deal with these vulnerabilities?
 - The Plan suggests ideas and alternatives for dealing with these vulnerabilities.
- How does this relate to the work that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) has been doing?

- The Bureau of Reclamation has developed a model to assess climate change impacts in the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains and has extended that model to the dry side of the mountains. The findings mirror the affects that are anticipated in northern California where we are less likely to see the types of storms which benefit the snowpack. A summary of the USBR report completed specifically for the Mojave Region is included in Section 12 of our IRWM Plan, along with the results of the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Ranking.
- We have a Board member who is advocating Indirect Potable Reuse (IPR) (recycled waste water) in Lake Arrowhead. Does the IRWM Plan take into account the potential impact of such a project on downstream water quality supplies?
 - We are not aware of that particular project being included in the IRWM Plan but DWR definitely considers IPR as a legitimate resource management strategy which will likely grow in importance as a way to improve local water supply sufficiency.
- Given this climate change assessment, can the State dictate to us the actions we need to take in response?
 - The State is not going to tell you what you need to put in your Plan to respond to these climate change vulnerabilities. However, the state laws that deal with groundwater management are likely to change this year and if those laws change then on that basis the State may require changes in local management actions. Portions of this Region are already adjudicated so the impact may not be significant but there may be other changes the State may require that address water quality or how water is moved around which affects greenhouse gas emissions, which could impact how things are done in this area.

Request to Upgrade Project Priority

There was a request to reconsider the priority ranking of Project 57 – Recycled Water Distribution System (City of Hesperia) from Tier 3 (Medium Importance, Medium Urgency) to Tier 1 (High Importance, High Urgency). It is a companion to another project (project 93 – Apple Valley & Hesperia Subregional Water Reclamation Facilities) which is listed as Tier 1 (H, H). A representative from the City of Hesperia provided an overview of the project and explained why they were requesting a change in its priority ranking. When first submitted the project had a low Get Real Index as funding was uncertain. However, since submitting the project proposal, much progress has been made to arrange funding and the project is now much further along in its development than originally described (construction will start next April). It is also clear that the primary focus of the project is much more about increasing the water supply rather than improving water quality (as was indicated in the original project proposal). The project will free up potable

water that is now being used for a golf course for other domestic water uses. Questions and comments included:

- Do you have any agreements for coordination with the Victor Valley Reclamation Authority?
 - Yes, there is a written agreement.
- What objectives will this project affect the most?
 - When this project was first submitted it seemed to mostly address water quality but now it is clearer that it will impact water supply by providing a substitute water supply.
- Will changing the ranking of this project impact the ranking of any other projects?
 - This will not change the ranking of any other projects now listed in the Plan.
 - Today is the last chance to update the project list before the Plan is finalized and comes out in June.
- Will changing the ranking of this project impact the grant funding prospects for other projects?
 - The decision being considered today must focus on Plan priority project rankings only based on the merits of the project and not on potential eligibility for specific grant funds.
- As those of us in the Lake Arrowhead area had only two or three days to submit projects to be included in the Mojave Region IRWM Plan is there still an opportunity for us to submit our project proposals?
 - We appreciate that it was harder for those in the newly expanded areas to become engaged in the IRWM planning process but when those areas were added to the Mojave IRWM Region they were given over a month to submit project proposals. In order to stay on schedule and adopt the Plan in June, we cannot accept any new project submittals at this time. However, once the Plan is adopted, the Stakeholder Group can at any time agree to modify the project list and may want to do so to accommodate those in the expanded areas with project ideas.

Following this discussion, Mr. Kirby asked to see if the group was willing to change the ranking for project 57. In response, there was broad agreement within the group that Project 57 ranking should be moved from Tier 3 to Tier 1. No one indicated they were opposed to the change. An amendment will be posted to the project website alerting reviewers of the public draft of the change.

Additional Comments or Questions about the Public Review Draft Plan

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Kirby asked the Stakeholder Group if anyone had questions or comments about the Plan before they began their review. Also, if there were others who had already reviewed the document and had comments/observations they wanted to share with the group, he invited them to do so at this time.

- How much time is still available to submit comments?
 - Comments have to be submitted within 2 weeks from this meeting, which is by June 2
- The upper watershed that was recently added to the Mojave Region is considerably different from the rest of the Region. Much of the current information in the Plan that characterizes the upper watershed areas needs to be updated and deepened to provide a more accurate portrayal of our conditions and needs. In particular, the description of how climate change may impact our parts of the Region and our water supply requirements needs clarification. Also, the priorities in our subregion will be different from priorities in the rest of the Region. I would hate to have to wait 10 years before this Plan content could be updated.
 - There is an opportunity right now over the next two weeks to provide comments to better interpret the data we have now which has been used to describe and portray the water related needs in your and other the recently added areas.
 - The Mojave Region IRWM Plan reflects considerable stakeholder participation and input over the past year. If there is a need to gather additional data or make other changes to the content of the Plan, and the stakeholders in the Lake Arrowhead area work together to initiate those changes, then the full Stakeholder Group for the Mojave Region will be open to considering a Plan Update.

Updates on Salt and Nutrient Management Plan

Lance Eckhart from MWA provided an update on the Salt and Nutrient Management Plan. Mr. Eckhart explained that the SNMP had been de-coupled from the IRWM Plan both for timing reasons and because with the addition of the expanded regions to the IRWM Plan the boundaries for the SNMP and the IRWM Plan were no longer the same.

All the data required for the SNMP has now been collected and assimilated. The SNMP team is currently setting up the SNMP Model and reviewing its underlying assumptions with representatives from both Regional Boards in the Mojave Region to make sure the Model will provide the desired information. The SNMP Team is about to run the Model after which the next step will be to determine what they should do with results from the Model. They expect to complete the SNMP and have it available to the public by the end of

this calendar year. There were no questions or comments from the Stakeholder Group at this time.

Update on the MWA Groundwater Management Plan

Sandra Carlson provided an update on the status of the GWMP. Ms. Carlson emphasized the Consultant Team has made good progress in the development of the GWMP. Since the territory covered by the GWMP includes only the Mojave Water Agency service area, they have been able to draw heavily on information already developed for the IRWM Plan. However, the Consultant Team is now pausing to evaluate the possible impact of potential changes in State groundwater management laws before adopting the new GWMP. They are currently reviewing pending legislation in an effort to anticipate and incorporate new elements into the GWMP so as to position it as well as possible relative to possible new regulations. There were no questions or comments from the group.

IRWM Plan Adoption Process

Sandra Carlson provided an update on the IRWM Plan adoption process where she reviewed the Plan adoption schedule (Handout #5) and explained who needed to adopt it. The Final IRWM Plan will be presented to the Stakeholder Group at the next and final meeting on June 23. It will then be brought to the Mojave Water Agency to consider it for adoption at the MWA Board of Directors meeting scheduled for June 26. All member agencies of the Regional Water Management Group are encouraged to adopt it as soon as possible. All RWMG members have to adopt the Plan before it can be sent to DWR for review. It was hoped that representatives from the RWMG agencies will alert their Boards in advance by placing this matter on their Board agendas so they can be prepared to consider adoption ASAP after the MWA Board meeting of June 26. Ms. Carlson then stated that they are asking all project proponents, the boards of those agencies, to adopt the Plan. Project proponents can adopt the Plan at any time but they will be required to formally adopt the Plan if they wish to be a part of any Proposition 84 grant applications.

After the Plan has been adopted by the RWMG and other project proponents, it will be submitted to DWR later in June or July. DWR will then review it over a 60 day period, after which it will release it for a 30-day public review period. The DWR public review period should be completed in either September or October. This timing is especially important in order to qualify for upcoming grant opportunities, in particular Prop 84 Drought Grant Funding. Questions and comments at this time:

- Do we know what the timing will be to ensure we are eligible to apply for Drought Grant Funding?

- DWR has not yet set an application date for the Drought Grant Funding. However, we know that in order to be eligible for the grant, the Mojave IRWM Plan must be submitted no later than 45 days after the grant application due date which is thought to be July 1. If that is the case, then we will need to submit our IRWM Plan to DWR no later than the mid-August. That suggests that the Mojave Plan would need to be adopted by all the Regional Water Management Group agencies before the middle of August. We are still waiting for specific details from DWR on this question but we believe that we should still qualify for the grant.
- Regarding the GWM Plan is there an opportunity for us to influence the legislative updates that are expected to come out of Sacramento?
 - MWA is currently working through the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) to do just that. ACWA is providing documents with recommendations for state leaders on how groundwater should be managed in California rather than waiting for the California legislature to develop an approach on its own.
- Is there a way for other local water districts to help?
 - There will be opportunities for you and other agencies to submit your comments through the legislative process to which MWA staff can direct you.

Prop 84 Drought Grant Funding

Sandra Carlson provided an overview of the new grant funding opportunity that the State has initiated as an emergency response to the current drought. Prop 84 funds are one of the principal sources for funding this emergency response. Between the Lahontan and Colorado River Basin Prop 84 Funding Area Regions there is approximately \$26 million available but this amount is split with other neighboring IRWM Regions in these two funding areas. Ms. Carlson stated that the key question was whether the Mojave Region IRWM Stakeholder Group will want to apply for all their remaining Prop 84 funding on this particular opportunity keeping in mind one more round of Prop 84 funding is expected to take place later in 2015. Only certain project types will be eligible for the drought funding but projects that feature more than one of these elements will be the most attractive:

- Provide immediate regional drought preparedness
- Increase local water supply reliability and the delivery of safe drinking water
- Assist water supplies and regions to implement conservation programs and measures that are not “locally cost effective” (i.e. they cost more than the cost of water provided by the State Water Project but which will have the benefit of saving water or reducing demand)

- Reduce water quality conflicts or ecosystem conflicts created by the drought

Questions and comments in response included:

- What will be the impact of drought funding awards on remaining Prop 84 funds, especially if we succeed in obtaining some of those funds?
 - It is uncertain. \$200 million dollars has been allocated by the State for the drought relief efforts. More than \$200 million is left in Prop 84 funds to assist in IRWM Plan implementation. However, at the same time DWR is not changing the allocation formula between regions.
 - DWR may allocate the \$200 million in emergency drought funds evenly among all regions in the state or it may choose to allocate those funds specifically to those areas that have been hardest hit by the drought.
 - It is conceivable that there will be no funding left for a third round of Prop 84 funding next year, especially if other IRWM regions in either the Lahontan or Colorado Funding Regions apply for and win those funds. So, there is a question as to whether we choose to apply now in response to this new funding opportunity or take our chances that there will be Prop 84 funding left next year.

Lance Eckhart then explained that the Project Team had reviewed all the projects in the IRWM Plan to identify ones that appeared to be good candidates for the drought grant funds, including the fact they were close to being shovel ready. Three potential Prop 84 Grant Drought Projects were identified as highlighted in Handout #6:

- 18R – Commercial/Industrial/Multi-Family Cash for Grass Program
- 57 – Recycled Water Distribution System (City of Hesperia)
- 1006 – Capital Water Main Replacement Program (Hi-Desert WD)

In addition, Mr. Eckhart indicated that MWA is talking to neighboring IRWM regions in both the Lahontan and Colorado Funding Regions in an effort to coordinate their grant application strategies.

- Does a project have to be in the IRWM Plan to be considered for the grant funding application? We have a “Cash for Grass” project underway in the Lake Arrowhead area but it is currently not a part of the IRWM Plan.
 - It is one of the criteria for the Drought Funding Grant that the project must be part of an approved IRWM Plan. However, the “Cash for Grass Program” in the MWA IRWM Region Plan is an umbrella project that is meant to cover the entire IRWM Region. So, a cash for grass project in an expanded sub-region may already be covered within the project in the Mojave IRWM Plan.

- Do we know whether projects will be prioritized based on their specific qualifications or on whether they are located in areas which have been most severely impacted by the drought? If the latter is the case, then it is very likely that all or most of the drought funding will go to the Central Valley rather than other regions in the state, meaning there will still be Prop 84 funds to compete for in the Colorado and Lahontan Funding Regions when the third round of funding takes place next year.
 - That is a possibility but we simply do not have enough information at this point to know what DWR is likely to do.
- Will projects with a higher percentage of match funding score higher? Is that one of the criteria?
 - There is a requirement for a match but no extra points for a larger funding match.

Ken Kirby then asked if the Stakeholder Group was generally supportive of the Project Team moving forward to compete for these funds. They indicated they were OK with the proposed response to this unexpected funding opportunity.

Lance Eckhart added that this was a good example of the importance of having project plans ready in order to take advantage of new funding opportunities when they arise.

Next Steps, Concluding Remarks and Other Business

At the end of the meeting, Ken Kirby reminded the group to submit their comments or suggestions concerning the Public Review Draft by June 2. He also suggested that they pay particular attention to potential factual errors, requested suggestions for improvements, and asked whether they agreed with the ranking of climate change vulnerabilities. In addition, he stated comments for the GWM Plan materials presented during the meeting can be submitted by May 26. The next and final Stakeholder Input meeting for the IRWM Plan update process will take place on June 23.

Under other business, Logan Olds from the Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority requested a letter of interest from the MWA TAC to the EPA indicating their support for a proposed endeavor by the VVWRA and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board to pursue watershed based Clean Water Act solutions. After providing examples of how this watershed based water quality cleanup process would work (as opposed to the more usual point source approach), he made a request for a show of hands to see if there was broad agreement within the Stakeholder Group for this proposal. Based on the general support indicated by those attending the meeting, VVWRA will describe support from the MWA TAC for VVWRA to move forward with this initiative.

At the end of the meeting, Chuck Bell discussed his concern that if he remained the Interim Chair of the MWA TAC that there could be a perception of a conflict of interest on his part. In discussions with other members of the MWA TAC Executive Committee, it was his recommendation that they place on the agenda of the June 23 stakeholder meeting the election of a new TAC chairman. He noted that Executive Committee would be meeting after the TAC meeting and if consistent with the bylaws of the TAC, the election would be held at the start of the next TAC meeting (on June 23), enabling the newly elected TAC chairman to then oversee the review of the Final Mojave Region IRWM Plan during the rest of that session.

Ken Kirby concluded the meeting by congratulating everyone on a job well done.