

Tulare Kern Funding Area
Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM)
Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP)
Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
October 18, 2018, 9am-12pm
Provost & Pritchard, 130 N. Garden Street, Visalia, CA

MEETING SUMMARY

ATTENDEES

Project Advisory Committee Members

- Mike Camarena, Kaweah IRWM - DAC Rep
- Ralph Gutierrez, Tule IRWM - DAC Rep
- Soua Lee, UKIRWMA IRWM
- Jim Maciel, UKIRWMA IRWM - DAC Rep
- Frank Ohnesorgen, Poso IRWM - DAC Rep
- Jackie Takeda, Poso IRWM
- Stephanie Hearn, Poso IRWM - DAC Rep Alternate
- Jeff Eklund, Kern IRWM
- Regina Houchin, Kern IRWM - DAC Rep
- Danny Wade, Westside San Joaquin IRWM

Project Team

- Denise England, Tulare County
- Maija Madec, Provost & Pritchard
- Malka Kopell, facilitator, Consensus and Collaboration Program, CSUS
- Mark Thompson, Provost & Pritchard
- Gavin O’Leary, Provost & Pritchard

For others in attendance, see Appendix A.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Malka Kopell, Collaboration and Consensus Program, Sacramento State, introduced herself and reviewed the agenda. Ms. Kopell, replacing Stephanie Lucero, is the neutral facilitator provided by a grant from the Department of Water Resources (DWR). Project Advisory Committee (PAC) members and members of the public introduced themselves. Ms. Kopell reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Ms. Kopell asked for public comments. There were none.

2. NOMINATION OF NEW PAC MEMBER: DAC MEMBER FOR KERN IRWM

***PAC Action:** Nomination of Kevin Hamilton and Regina Houchin as a new PAC member and new Disadvantaged Community (DAC) representative, respectively, for Kern IRWM.*

Ms. Kopell asked for public comments regarding the nominations; no public comments were made.

All PAC members were in favor.

3. REVIEW OF DAC ENGAGEMENT, PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS REPORT

Maria Herrera, Self-Help Enterprises (SHE), reviewed the content of a report on present circumstances and recommended actions for DAC engagement. Ms. Herrera laid out two phases of DAC engagement: conducting an assessment of current DAC participation in IRWM and supporting needs assessment activities. Currently, the assessment of DAC engagement and participation in IRWM is underway and is providing improved understanding of the challenges to DAC participation in IRWM. The assessment focuses on both DACs that are involved in IRWM as well as others that are not currently involved or have never participated. Additional research needs to be done, given the broad scope of the funding area, which has approximately 500 communities.

A meeting participant asked how many of the communities are currently participating in IRWM groups. Ms. Herrera said that this has not yet been determined.

Ms. Herrera said that all regions in the Funding Area have DACs and SDACs within them and there are also additional DACs in areas that fall outside IRWM regions. The assessment compares incorporated and unincorporated DACs, finding that incorporated communities participate at a higher rate than unincorporated communities, particularly when looking at participation on IRWM boards and committees. Different IRWMs have different options for participation and they do not present the same opportunities for communities' participation. Additional work is needed to assess participation among other categories and to vet the data.

The report presents several recommendations for DAC engagement as well as looking at past studies of DAC engagement efforts and recommendation. SHE has a recent Rural Communities Leadership Institute Stakeholder Perspectives report that convened focus groups of DAC water leaders who are involved and/or interested in IRWM or SGMA and will convene an institute to build DAC water managers. The assessment includes a survey tool will gauge interest, knowledge, and challenges of participation in IRWM. Surveys have also been sent out and feedback has been solicited from non-DAC and agency water managers as well.

A PAC member asked for an update on the status of outreach. Ms. Herrera said that no outreach has yet begun, as the focus has been on conducting the assessment. She noted that SHE was working toward providing the report to the PAC in November 2018.

A PAC member asked whether it had been determined which communities had received funding from IRWMs. Ms. Herrera noted that the first two recommendations include providing additional time and funding to continue the assessment gain further information covering all the DACs in the area. She said that further work, if approved and funded, would include meeting with IRWM representatives to present the data gathered and get additional data from them about past DAC engagement efforts, challenges, and interests.

A PAC member asked whether the survey tool being developed would be taken in-person or through an online form. Ms. Herrera said that the tool is on a Google Form and would be emailed out, as well as mailed in hard copy to some communities and taken to events in communities, plus phone call and in-person follow-up where needed.

Ms. Herrera reviewed additional recommendations from the report, including identifying different kinds of DACs and strategies for engaging them; funding for additional bilingual communication and educational tools, in response to requests from communities for brief informational materials such as case studies of successful projects; and determining engagement approaches for DACs outside of IRWM

regions.

A member asked whether SHE was considering how SGMA efforts are addressing white areas, for example white areas in Kern working with an existing district to gain coverage. Ms. Herrera noted that another recommendation in the proposal references other ways that communities in white areas have been incorporated into programs in other contexts, and SGMA is one that could be explored.

A PAC member noted that in some cases where management areas are being extended, it is related to irrigated lands, pumping, and water use, rather than covering DACs, although this can be an outcome of the extended boundaries. Another member said that they were aware of places where this was done in order to incorporate communities in white areas.

Ms. Herrera reviewed additional recommendations, including creating a staff position for a DAC coordinator; utilizing nonprofits and other community connections to reach communities; providing technical assistance and trainings to DACs to prepare grant applications, especially in light of DWR's draft PSP and proposed changes to how solicitations are received; and conducting educational water management tours and video series to educate communities and facilitate positive working relationships.

A participant suggested that representative samples be taken in-person in communities that lack connectivity through internet and "snail" mail. The participant also suggested including a map of the IRWMs in the funding area so that people can identify whether they fall within any of those boundaries. Ms. Herrera noted that the survey will have a "don't know" option, because it is important to identify who needs additional information. A single-page information sheet about the IRWM effort has also been created and can be distributed, and information sheets can also be created about each of the IRWM groups. The group discussed the option of including a map and also an option for respondents to note whether they had this knowledge beforehand.

A participant asked what percentage of people are interested in being involved versus wanting water to be managed by others and provided to them. Ms. Herrera said that there are not a lot of people who want to be involved at the level of serving on a board or committee, but there are always leaders within DACs who are interested in being involved and willing to invest their own time into improving the process. She noted that it is important to focus on those who are interested in participating and facilitating participation so that it is easier for anyone who has interest, including through communities working together to have their collective interests represented.

The PAC reviewed the changes in the amended Phase One DAC Engagement and Education Program (DACEEP) Proposal recommendations, which Ms. Herrera reviewed in her presentation (see Appendix B). The amendment adjusts Tasks 1, 3, and 5, adds additional tasks, and requests additional funding to carry out the changes.

A PAC member asked whether there would be enough funding for Phase Two without exceeding the total allocated budget of \$550,000. Ms. Herrera confirmed that Phase Two activities would then be covered with the remaining balance.

Ms. Kopell asked for public comments about the proposed changes.

The group discussed that options for approving the amended proposal included approving it as presented or tentatively approving the changes on the condition that comments provided to SHE by PAC members over some specified timeframe following the meeting be addressed. Ms. Kopell noted that PAC members would not be able to discuss the amended proposal or its approval outside of the meeting, so if the latter route were chosen, comments would need to be provided directly to Maija Madec of Provost & Pritchard.

A PAC member acknowledged that the work being undertaken is time consuming and therefore the request for increased funding is not unexpected.

The PAC moved and seconded approval of the amended proposal and modified budget. Floor was opened for discussion.

A PAC member asked whether the funding changes would limit Phase Two activities and whether Ms.

Herrera believed that focusing on Phase One work is more important. Ms. Herrera said that some of this covers activities in Phase Two and that the Phase One work, carrying out a comprehensive assessment, is foundational for taking the next steps. A PAC member asked whether these building blocks are critical to future effectiveness; Ms. Herrera said that she believes they are.

A participant noted the need to move forward on DAC involvement, given the short timeframe before DWR begins accepting funding proposals. The participant expressed support for the changes as long as they will be able to stay within budget. Ms. Herrera noted that many of the tasks are ongoing, with the assessment to be completed in early 2019, and that adjustments can be made if needed as findings are understood.

A member asked whether grant application and pre-application support and workshops would occur in each IRWM region. Ms. Herrera said that it would not be possible to do in each region, so the effort would be centralized.

PAC Action: Approval of the amended Phase One DACEEP Proposal, including the proposed budget modifications.

Ms. Kopell asked for public comment; none was made.

All PAC members were in favor.

A member asked for a copy of the survey to distribute. Ms. Herrera said that it would be sent electronically.

4. UPDATE ON NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Ms. Madec pointed out the project schedule for the needs assessment. Gavin O’Leary gave a report on the needs assessment activities completed thus far, including a large component of spatial data to look at where DACs are located and how the attributes around them might affect them. He reviewed how the current study is using DWR and Census data to map DACs and collecting spatial data to help IRWMs assess needs quickly through a user-friendly “story map.”

A participant asked whether the tools are publicly available. Mr. O’Leary said that they are not publicly available.

It was suggested that functionality be added allowing filtering by IRWM, by county, and to display only DACs.

Mr. O’Leary then reviewed a part of the tool that focuses on water quality.

A PAC member asked what “high” contamination levels means; Mr. O’Leary said that a link would be included that would explain what that meant for each case. Another member asked whether the contaminants included corresponded with those referenced in AB 1249. Mr. O’Leary said they are, noting that there are additional data in the database that are not displayed in the map at this point. A participant asked whether information about treatment processes installed would be included. Mr. O’Leary said that this information could be attached to a community’s report, along with other information about funding received and other efforts. Another participant suggested that there could be variables that display levels that exceed the State’s maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) and compliance orders to identify where there are consistent issues versus high levels read in a single specific instance.

Mr. O’Leary said that the Water Board has a data portal that shows whether water systems are in compliance, out of compliance, or returned to compliance, but the spatial locations of the water systems are not accurate. This information has been related to communities on the IRWM maps. Additional information about reasons for lack of compliance will also be added to this. Mr. O’Leary noted that they

are striving for a balance that enables users to dig into data to some extent and links out to other information sources, like from the State Water Boards, for additional details.

Further work includes reviewing private well and/or septic communities; a rural residential address point data set is being developed.

A member noted that the USGS conducted a study about septic tank density within the radius of wells and offered to send an example of this kind of information, which she suggested could be overlaid in the mapping tool.

Ms. Kopell asked for public comment; none was made.

5. UPDATE ON PAC ROSTER AND MEMBERSHIP

Denise England, of Tulare County, provided an update on Tribal involvement. Bobby Kamansky provided edits to the Tribal Invite Letter. Ms. England noted that he also had feedback about who to send the letter to.

Action Item: CCP will follow up with Mr. Kamansky and Stephanie Lucero of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution regarding who the letter should be sent to.

Ms. Kopell opened the floor for public comment; none was made.

6. NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING

The PAC reviewed meeting schedule and affirmed the next meeting would occur on January 17, 2019. Ms. Kopell noted that the meeting schedule includes agenda items, that PAC members could send additional items to CCP to be added to the agenda, and that the January meeting would include updates about the topics discussed during this meeting.

A member requested that the March PAC meeting be scheduled, noting that review of projects would begin during the March meeting.

***PAC Action:** The second meeting of 2019 was scheduled for March 28th, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.*

Stephanie Hearn, Poso IRWM, offered to provide information to the PAC regarding the Community Engineering Corps of the American Water Works Association, which conducts project development and could assist with evaluation.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Appendix A: Additional Attendees

- Bethany Soto, CRWQCB
- Maria Mejia, SHE