

MEETING SUMMARY | Southern Sierra IRWM Public Outreach Meeting

August 8, 2013

Sierra National Forest Supervisor’s Office, Clovis, CA

Table of Contents

1. Welcome and Introductions	1
2. Introduction of SSIRWM	2
3. Introduction to Sequoia Riverlands Trust and Projects.....	2
A. Projects.....	2
4. Public Outreach Workshop	3
A. San Joaquin River Watershed.....	4
B. Kings River Watershed.....	5
5. Attendees.....	6

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Bobby Kamansky, Southern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management (SSIRWM) Stakeholder Coordinator, and Mr. Chris Moi, SSIRWM Project Manager, welcomed participants to the meeting. Mr. Dorian Fougères, the facilitator with the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP), California State University Sacramento, reviewed the agenda items and ground rules.

During introductions, individuals addressed two questions:

- When was the first time you visited/moved to the watershed?
 - Childhood memories of recreation (lakes, river, camping, fishing, hiking, and hunting).
 - Professional involvement.
 - Working or volunteering on watershed restoration projects (for example, National Forest and Kings River project).
- What do you most value about the watershed’s resources?
 - Water is an undervalued resource; its importance needs to be recognized as the component that sustains all life.
 - Preserving and cleaning the watershed.
 - Upper watershed management and the connection with the lower watershed users. For example, noting the importance of snow packs, and its uses down stream.
 - Understand the lack of water available in the valley, and climate change issues.
 - Spiritual connection/religious significance associated with riparian areas and water.
 - All natural resource decisions involve water.

2. Introduction of SSIRWM

Mr. Bobby Kamansky presented the principles and process of the Southern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management (SSIRWM) process and Regional Water Management Group (RWMG). He had handouts for the attendees with his presentation materials. He reviewed the SSIRWM phases of work (pre-planning, planning, and implementation). In addition, information presented included the number of group meetings, water boundaries, milestones, and the project applications. He had a map of the watershed boundary created by the RWMG for individuals. Discussion followed.

- Lake Isabella is not included in the watershed map. There are areas that overlap with other watershed management organizations, and the Kern IRWM covers Lake Isabella.
 - Kern County Water Agency helps lead that IRWM. More communication between the Kern and Southern Sierra IRWMs is planned.
- Irrigation districts are also within the Southern Sierra IRWM boundary, such as those in Madera County, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, and the Kern and Kings River watersheds.

Mr. Kamansky reviewed the organizations represented in the SSIRWM, and the process of signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If any other organizations were interested in participating and signing the MOU, please contact Mr. Moi at chris@sequoiariverlands.org.

Mr. Kamansky reviewed SSIRWM group's governance.

- In response to a question, Mr. Kamansky noted that the term "statutory authority" means that an organization has legal authority over water resources. This may include water districts, flood control districts, and resource conservation districts.

3. Introduction to Sequoia Riverlands Trust and Projects

Mr. Moi presented information regarding Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT). He explained the organization's role as the grantee for the SSIRWM, including administering the grant, supervising contractors, plan development, and submitting grant reports. Provost and Prichard is the primary consultant for the plan.

Mr. Owen Kubit, Provost and Pritchard, presented information regarding the role of the technical consultant in the planning process. Provost and Pritchard has a strong background in water resources planning and engineering, and would be the lead for developing the technical chapters of the IRWM plan. Mr. Kubit reviewed the major components of the plan. Information referred to in the plan is from existing studies, other IRWMP groups, and the general public. Provost and Pritchard will develop new material as needed.

A. Projects

Individuals reviewed the handouts that summarized proposed projects, and the required criteria for ranking projects. The project submission form, resource management strategies, and methods were reviewed. Projects that have multiple benefits would be ranked higher. The project sponsor is to provide the information and must have some grant writing capacity in

order to prepare the necessary technical and application materials; this can be a challenging task. Discussion followed.

- Long Meadow restoration project was ranked highly, due to previous work done on site. The project had a budget included an in-house hydrologist, and had completed its National Environmental Policy Act review process.
 - Preliminary work makes the application process much easier than starting with a project from scratch.
- Funding cannot be used for maintaining previous project, but can be used to continue or start a new project.
 - Consider the use of volunteers for post-project maintenance (for example, Wild Places and High Sierra volunteer groups).
- A third round of project implementation projects would be solicited in mid to late 2014, so identifying potential projects should begin now in order to allow adequate time for preparing requisite materials.
 - Information regarding project solicitation is available on SSIRWM's website.
- Other projects included the Hume Lake Ranger District plan for decommissioning roads for sediment control, and the Springville Public Utilities District's disadvantaged communities project designed to plan for a low capacity water treatment plant
- Note that all the projects accepted by the SSIRWM Group for consideration would be necessary submitted to the Department of Water Resources for IRWM funding, so projects are carefully prepared, reviewed by the group, and given a ranking.
 - In particular, proposed projects must have their California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses complete to be eligible for consideration.
- The Tulare Watershed Initiative has a project list available on their website, which identifies projects that that particular effort thinks have value.
- The SSIRWM Regional Water Management Group has a communication plan, and will increase its public announcements as planning activities develop draft products for public input.
- Many resources are available for funding, and there are organizations that would match funding (for example, the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Program, SNAP).

Mr. Kamansky thanked members of the public for attending, and let them know the briefing was now complete; people could leave at this time if they desired. Everyone was also welcome to stay for the public workshop.

4. Public Outreach Workshop

Mr. Kamansky opened the public workshop. He explained that discussion would focus on the San Joaquin and Kings River watersheds. He asked individuals to consider the following questions:

1. What activities are going on in the watershed that concern you?
2. Are there other plans and studies of which we should be aware?

3. Are there other ongoing or planned projects of which we should be aware?
4. What scientific information would help plan water resources in the area?

A. San Joaquin River Watershed

Mr. Steve Haze presented information about the San Joaquin River watershed. He described the boundary (shown in map given to attendees), irrigation uses (both surface and groundwater uses), and organizations that manage the watershed. Many organizations work in the San Joaquin watershed, such as California State University Fresno students that worked on local groundwater studies. Other issues noted were hydrological, biological, and geological aspects of the watershed, based on a publication from the San Joaquin River Stewardship Program). Discussion followed.

- Groundwater is a finite resource. Efforts to understand and protect groundwater are important to upstream as well as downstream users.
- On tribal lands, groundwater resources may be contaminated by chemicals or naturally occurring compounds. It can be very difficult to drill wells, and the deeper one goes the higher the chance that naturally occurring metals and other compounds will contaminate the water.
 - Big Sandy Rancheria has researched and worked on many local groundwater issues. There is a potential for the SSIRWM Plan to advance tribal water security and protect tribal groundwater resources. The existing IRWM bond language does not make it easy for tribes to gain access to the funding, but it can be done through partnerships.
 - It is important to recognize and respect that Tribes have their own water rights and procedures. Partnering has to be done appropriately. Information can be shared between tribes and other communities to try and gain additional funding for groundwater protection and recharge.
- Ms. Wood McLaughlin cautioned members about getting involved with tribal water issues because the tribes have their own distinct process. Information could be shared from tribes and small communities to gain additional funding sources.
- Communities in the area should have their water analyzed. Among other things like water quality and contaminants, it also is valuable to understand the age of the water and its hydrogeology more generally.
 - Ms. Wood McLaughlin offered to share non-point source pollution information with attendees. A link will be shared with the SSIRWM email list; anyone interested in being added or receiving related information should email the project manager chris@sequoiariverlands.org
- Rainwater harvesting has potential to increase available groundwater supplies, but the technology is not always easy to implement.
- Education and transparency are critical to outreach. Many people are not familiar with SSIRWM planning. It will be important to clearly explain the purpose of the effort and how projects are developed and submitted for funding.

B. Kings River Watershed

Mr. Kamansky reviewed the map of the watershed and showed the drainage channels, lakes, dams, upper watershed, and private lands. He noted that there are constraints on development in the foothills. In one case, wells were condemned because minimum yields per minute were not met after properties were purchased. He reviewed both public and private water management agencies, and noted issues that they work on, like the impairment of water bodies and invasive aquatic species. He also provided a list of relevant plans and studies (e.g., Fresno County's General Plan).

Among others, project currently active in the watershed involve the following organizations:

- Pacific Southwest Research Station's Kings River Experimental Watershed
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Southern Sierra Critical Zone Observatory
- CSU Fresno
- Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Plan (SNAMP)
- Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Program
- Sustainable Communities Study for Fresno County (land use and vehicle study)

Discussion followed.

- Consider projects being developed by the Dinkey Collaborative and Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, on Sierra National Forest. Some of their work looks at meadows and meadow hydrology.
- Fresno County is revising its pump test ordinance. Officials believe the standards for minimum flow were too stringent.
- In some areas people are pumping water and shipping it out of the region for sale. This requires others to pump water from progressively deeper wells, which is more expensive because it requires more diesel fuel. The deeper water also has more chance of naturally occurring contamination.
- It is difficult to determine how much water exists in fractured bedrock. These geologic formations are different from aquifers, which are like large pools of underground water.
 - One of the big concerns about the future is about how changing precipitation and temperature patterns will affect local hydrology and opportunities for groundwater to recharge.
- The watershed has many aquatic invasive species, but there is not a lot of information about this topic. It would be good to assess the threats they pose to water resources and the associated native vegetation and wildlife.
- Marijuana gardens have also had increasingly large negative impacts to water supplies, because of the toxic chemicals that are used to cultivate the plants.
- In some situations open dumping of sewage or other waste occurs.
- It is important to educate people about how the upper and lower watershed are connected through groundwater and rivers, and how important healthy forests are to sustaining water resources in the Southern Sierra region. A healthy watershed requires everyone to be aware of these relationships.

- The Forest Plan Revisions for the Sierra, Sequoia, and Inyo National Forests should emphasize the connections between the forests and water resources. Now is an important time to make sure this topic is addressed in the plans.
- Seasonal visitors to the area have different water needs than people who live year-round in the watershed. Many people have vacation homes in the upper watershed. Increased numbers of summer homeowners and tourists can overload existing sewage systems and cause unwanted discharges.

Mr. Kamansky and Mr. Moi thanked participants for attending. They invited anyone to send them questions or provide additional comments on the SSIRWM work. Anyone who is interested is welcome to attend the SSIRWM Regional Water Management Group meetings; all meetings are open to the public. Anyone interested can contact Mr. Kamansky at southernsierrairwmp@gmail.com, or Mr. Moi at chris@sequoiariverlands.org with questions about the water resources, watersheds, or the SSIRWM planning process.

5. Attendees

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|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Miles Baty | 8. Jeannie Habben | 14. Ramiro Perez |
| 2. Jaime Collins | 9. Bobby Kamansky,
SSIRWM | 15. Justine Reynolds |
| 3. Michelle Dooley, DWR | 10. Owen Kubit, Provost &
Pritchard | 16. Cindy Whelan, USFS |
| 4. Dorian Fougères, CCP | 11. Bill Luce | 17. Kathy Wood
McLaughlin, SSIRWM |
| 5. Richard Garcia,
SSIRWM | 12. Chris Moi, SSIRWM | |
| 6. Gabriella Golik, CCP | 13. Dave Norman | |
| 7. Steve Haze, SSIRWM | | |