



## Is Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Just a Grant Program?

### *Taking Stock of IRWM in 2016*

Compiled by IRWM Statewide Roundtable of Regions

*"The value of IRWM is measured by the people who have invested in it...the millions of person hours that have been dedicated to the effort across this state since the inception of IRWM in 2002...the tens of thousands of unreimbursed hours and expenses invested by people, organizations and agencies who believe in the need for and potential of IRWM...the millions of dollars that California tax payers have committed to a vision articulated in consecutive bond measures – on faith – towards implementing hundreds of projects that serve to build resilience and sustainability in an incredibly complex water delivery system." - A Roundtable Member's Perspective on the Value of IRWM (Yuba Region)*

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) was a vision of California legislators and water officials to plan for and manage water resources collaboratively at a regional level, rather than in siloed single-purpose agencies using a top-down approach. But now we are at a turning point for IRWM as a paradigm for water management. The 48 IRWM regions of the state have been working together for a decade or more, since Propositions 50 and 84, to build collaborative programs to improve water resources for the people in their regions, enhance environmental quality, and build human and organizational capacity. However, state funding for basic IRWM program operations is not currently available, and there is a very real danger of some of these IRWM programs ceasing operations if funding is not found. Further, availability of bond funding is inconsistent, which impacts their ability to maintain capacity. As a state, we must provide for the continued success and sustainability of IRWM programs if we want to continue to enhance regional self-reliance and water sustainability.

*"The level of coordination and collaboration in our region have increased substantially as a result of this (IRWM) program. The grant funds were a carrot that leveraged a higher level of local collaboration, and we now have a better forum for information sharing and problem solving that goes beyond seeking grant funds for local projects." -A Roundtable Member's Perspective on the Value of IRWM (Antelope Valley Region)*

## 1.0 IRWM Overview and Background

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a paradigm for managing water resources that began with the passage in the IRWM Planning Act in 2002. This approach integrates at a regional level the many facets of water resources management, including water supply, water quality, flood management, ecosystem health, and recreation through enhanced collaboration across geographic and political boundaries with diverse stakeholder groups. IRWM regions formed across California to develop plans that identify water management challenges, resolve conflicts over the best use of resources, bridge gaps in data, find common ground, and seek innovative solutions among stakeholders. A primary goal is implementation of projects and programs that effectively address water management priorities.

*"Integrated Regional Water Management is a comprehensive and collaborative approach for managing water to concurrently achieve social, environmental and economic objectives. This integrated approach delivers higher value for investments by considering all interests, providing multiple benefits, and working across jurisdictional boundaries at the appropriate geographic scale. Examples of multiple benefits include improved water quality, better flood management, restored and enhanced ecosystems, and more reliable water supplies."*  
California Water Plan Update 2013

The availability of substantial amounts of funding through the IRWM Grant Program provided significant motivation for formation of IRWM regions, which are as diverse as the state itself. The grant funds made available through Proposition 50, Proposition 84 and more recently Proposition 1, have leveraged, and continue to leverage, local funds for planning and project implementation. These funds have helped communities throughout the state

The Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Act, CWC Sec 10530 et seq., provides a general definition of an IRWM plan as well as guidance to DWR on what IRWM program guidelines must contain. CWC Sec 10541(f) states that the guidelines shall include standards for identifying a region for the purposes of developing or modifying an IRWM plan.

At a minimum, a region is defined as a contiguous geographic area encompassing the service areas of multiple local agencies; is defined to maximize the opportunities to integrate water management activities; and effectively integrates water management programs and projects within a hydrologic region defined in the California Water Plan, the Regional Water Quality Control Board region, or subdivision or other region specifically identified by DWR (Public Resource Code Sec 75026.(b)(1)).

to enhance the availability of clean water supplies for the benefit of people and the

environment, to protect communities from flood damage, and provide access to water-related recreation opportunities. Communities in IRWM regions benefit from the cost-sharing, collaboration, and effective problem-solving opportunities made possible by working together. In light of the historic drought beginning in 2012, a major benefit has been development of local water supplies which have minimized the impact of shortages.

IRWM is a process built on collaboration and coordination among the people and interests in each region. This process brings together stakeholders that in the past may have worked in parallel (or separate silos), rather than working closely together to identify and solve water-related problems and to build trust. IRWM offers a framework for addressing complex water resource management issues that incorporates science, engineering, history, natural processes, planning, culture, and economics. The integration of these disciplines and a new approach to identifying and implementing water resource management projects have resulted in new synergies and solutions that expand the possibilities for managing our scarce water resources.

Throughout this document we refer both to the IRWM Grant Program and IRWM as an approach to managing water resources at the local level. A central question is whether or not IRWM as an approach is sustainable if and when the IRWM Grant Program ends (i.e. there are no future voter approved water bonds with funding for IRWM) or if the state no longer provides support for the IRWM.

### **IRWM Helps With:**

- ◆ Building trust
- ◆ Building and enhancing relationships
- ◆ Minimizing conflict
- ◆ Addressing disadvantaged community needs
- ◆ Planning and implementing at watershed / regional scales
- ◆ Resolving water management challenges/finding solutions
- ◆ Collaborating to develop integrated, multi-benefit projects
- ◆ Working together to break down institutional, topical, and/or cultural barriers to effective solutions
- ◆ Creating cost-effective opportunities for funding projects
- ◆ Developing a regional “voice” to identify shared project and policy priorities
- ◆ A vehicle for rural and sparsely populated communities to build partnerships to address needs at a regional level.

## **2.0 About the IRWM Roundtable of Regions**

The IRWM Roundtable of Regions (Roundtable) is an all-volunteer forum for IRWM “regions” engaged in preparing and implementing Integrated Regional Water Management Plans to network, share ideas, and provide feedback to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) on the IRWM program. IRWM Regions are self-appointed, geographically-based groups of entities accepted by DWR as Regional Water Management Groups (RWMGs) for the purpose of developing regional priorities, identifying shared opportunities, and speaking with one voice for regional self-sufficiency. IRWM Plans also operate as a door to state funding for much-needed grants for water-related infrastructure, watershed health, and in-region capacity building. Among the more than 130 Roundtable members are representatives from 43 IRWM RWMGs throughout the state. For more than eleven years, Roundtable members have been actively engaged in preparing and implementing IRWM plans, applying for and administering IRWM grants, and integrating IRWM activities with other local, state, and federal programs at the local level. Functionally, the Roundtable serves as an association of professionals engaged in IRWM activities.

Since 2004 when the Roundtable formed, members have participated in numerous conference calls and summits, and the Roundtable has conducted four comprehensive surveys of the membership. These activities provide an opportunity for members to share successes and challenges and to advise DWR regarding the IRWM grant programs.

One important role played by the Roundtable in recent years was participation in the development of a strategic plan for the future of IRWM, developed by DWR with the help

of a focus group. Five members of the Roundtable participated on the focus group established to guide development of this IRWM Strategic Plan. In May 2015, DWR released a document (titled Conference Exhibit) that contained highlights from the IRWM Strategic Plan that were presented at the IRWM 2.0 Conference in San Diego. The full IRWM Strategic Plan has yet to be publicly released. This Strategic Plan could play an

*"Over a period of more than two years, the California Department of Water Resources engaged IRWM practitioners and other stakeholders in an extensive dialogue about the practice of Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) and its future. What emerged from stakeholder input is a draft Vision for the Future of IRWM and a comprehensive set of strategies and actions necessary for sustaining and broadening the practice of IRWM into the future. This conference exhibit provides an advance look at the draft vision, strategies, and actions to be included in the upcoming report, Strategies for the Future of Integrated Regional Water Management in California. This information is intended to enrich conference discussions about IRWM."* Draft Strategies for the Future of IRWM May 2015, DWR

important role in determining the future level of support for IRWM at the statewide level and the Roundtable strongly supports its release.

### **3.0 About the 2016 IRWM Roundtable Survey**

Recognizing that IRWM – both as a grant program and as an approach to water management – was at a crossroads, in 2016 the Roundtable conducted a survey of its members to ascertain how well the California IRWM Program was working, and whether or not it has lived up to its promise of increasing local water supply reliability, improving management of water resources on a regional level, enhancing watershed health, and increasing collaboration and regional self-reliance. The survey gathered quantitative and qualitative feedback about IRWM experiences and successes with the intent of determining if IRWM is a sustainable long-term approach to water management for California.

This report contains highlights of the results of the survey. This report will be used to inform State officials, legislators, and the public (voters) of the value of the IRWM program.

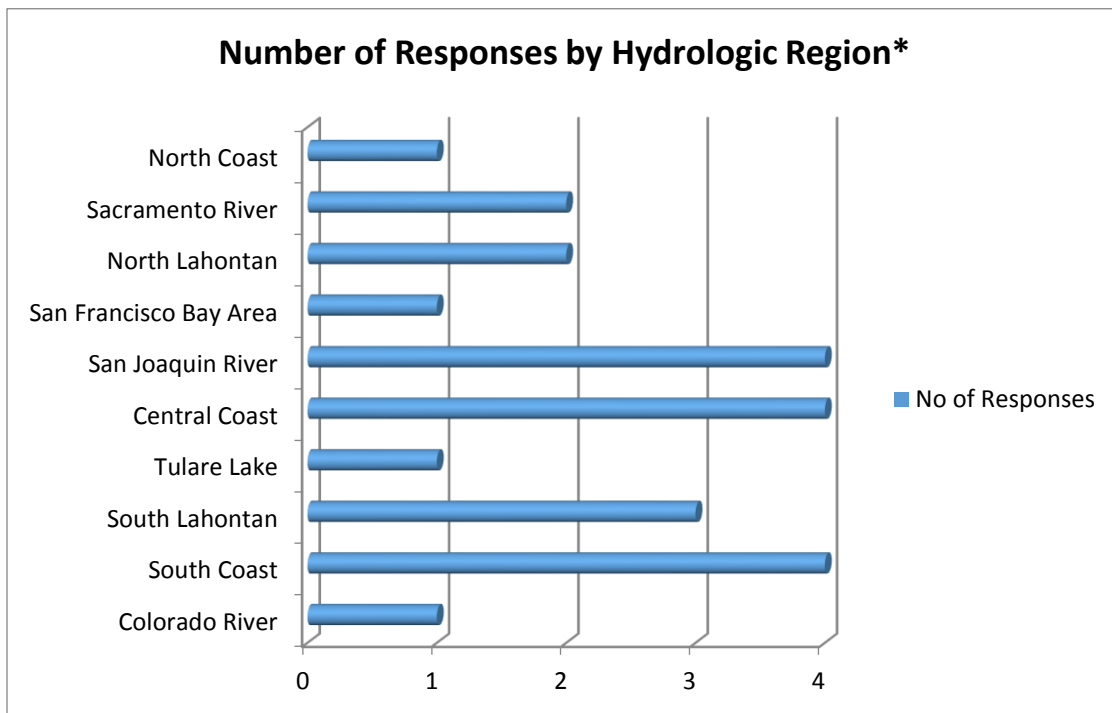
Two of the questions this survey was trying to answer were: is the IRWM merely a grant program, and will the IRWM approach be sustainable with consistent funding? Some critics of the IRWM Program contend that it is all about grant funding and has not led to meaningful long-term improvements in the way water is managed in California. Further, critics have suggested that many areas of the state, particularly those that are rural or have significant numbers of low income residents (“disadvantaged communities”) have not been able to access their share of this funding since they lack capacity to design and develop projects and participate in the challenging and costly grant application process.

#### 4.0 IRWM Survey Results

Twenty-two of the 48 IRWM Regions completed the survey. This report contains the highlights of the results.

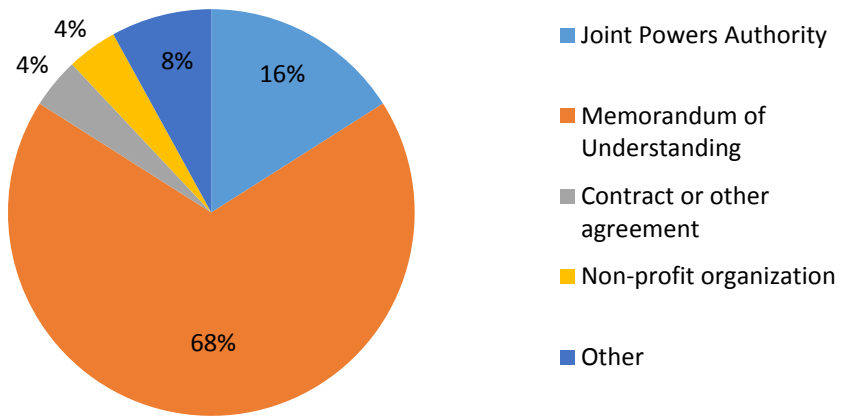
##### Survey Statistics:

- ◆ Number of regions responding: 22 (out of 48; 46%)
- ◆ Population represented by responding regions: 33.9 million (out of 42.2 million; 80.3%)
- ◆ Geography represented by responding regions: 91,527 square miles (out of 141,690 square miles; 64.6%)

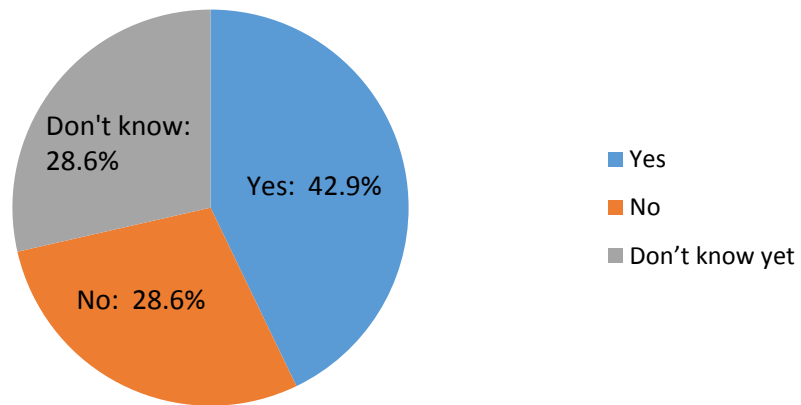


\*Hydrologic Regions (Not Funding Areas) as defined by DWR

## Governance agreement



## Secure funding over the next 2-3 years?



Questions 15-16	Yes	No	Not sure
Does your IRWM Region include reservation land or other land owned (i.e., allotment land, fee simple) by California Indian Tribes?	57.1%	33.3%	9.5%
Does your IRWM Region include California Indian Tribes that are also Disadvantaged Communities?	38.1%	42.9%	19.0%
Does your IRWM Region have contact information for California Indian Tribes with ancestral and other cultural resources interests (i.e., ceremonial sites, traditional or subsistence fishing, etc.) in your geographic region (per AB52)?	78.9%	0.0%	21.1%
Are representatives of Tribal interests participating in your regional water management group?	61.9%	38.1%	0.0%

### What have regions accomplished through IRWM?

Regions responding to the survey indicated that IRWM efforts have helped them accomplish positive outcomes, as shown below.

Outcome	Regions Claiming This Result
Received funding	100%
<b>Improved integration of projects and benefits</b>	96%
<b>Initiated projects</b>	96%
<b>Completed projects</b>	96%
<b>Enhanced trust</b>	91%
<b>Established relationships</b>	100%
<b>Improved water quality</b>	83%
<b>Improved water supply reliability</b>	83%
<b>Enhanced local environmental resources</b>	87%
<b>Developed data and information</b>	91%
<b>Improved communication</b>	100%
<b>Engaged new stakeholders</b>	96%
<b>Increased diversity and inclusiveness</b>	91%
Reduced water-related conflicts	52%

### IRWM Success Stories Survey Highlights of Responses

This section of the report focuses on the qualitative input from those responding to the survey. This part of the survey was designed to solicit stories from IRWM regions about how IRWM - as an approach and as a grant program – is working for them, stories that can help guide us into the future as we consider how to sustain IRWM programs in the long term. We believe that these stories should be told – for our own benefit, and for the benefit of our leaders – legislators, water



officials and the governor's office. These responses should be of particular interest to the legislators and their staff members responsible for introducing the bill that resulted in Proposition 50, back in 2002. We believe the IRWM program has proven to be a valuable tool in helping address the state's water challenges.

Highlights of the responses are included here:

**Please share an example of a successful non-project outcome from your region's IRWM process.**

Anonymous: "Collaboration through IRWM has streamlined and strengthened development of other separate but related efforts such as regional outreach and education, coordinated groundwater monitoring, regional SGMA implementation and the development of two hydrologic models for the region."

Antelope Valley: "The level of coordination and collaboration in our region have increased substantially as a result of this (IRWM) program. The grant funds were a carrot that leveraged a higher level of local collaboration, and we now have a better forum for information sharing and problem solving that goes beyond seeking grant funds for local projects."

Anonymous: "We have increased education and relationships connecting the foothill areas with the valley areas within our region. The two areas now talk and the valley members now understand that the water comes from the foothills with the foothill members understanding that the water is needed for the agriculture and other uses in the valley."

Upper Santa Clara River: "The IRWM stakeholder process established a network of agencies with responsibilities and interest in water-related activities and provided a forum by which other stakeholder activities in the Region could take place. Examples include the Salt and Nutrient Management Plan Task Force and outreach for the City of Santa Clarita's Enhanced Watershed Management Plan."

**What are some examples of unanticipated benefits, altruism or successes that have come out of your IRWM process?**

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County: "One key example is that our stakeholders are often able to put the interests of other stakeholders over their own. Frequently when choosing projects to put forward in our suite of projects for IRWM funding, group members with projects being considered for funding sometimes defer to the greater good of the region, rather than their individual needs - voting to support other agencies projects over their own."

Inyo-Mono: "We have had many examples of unanticipated altruism through the course of the Inyo-Mono Program. Several examples fall under Implementation project funding. First, the RWMG evaluates and ranks projects ahead of developing Implementation grant applications. Although it would seem logical that project proponents would rank their project(s) highest, we have found that projects that (1) benefit disadvantaged communities and/or tribes and (2) address high-concern water supply or water quality needs consistently rank the highest. Second, when we have been awarded partial funding and are not able to fund all of the projects included in the application, the project proponents that would have been fully funded (because they were more highly ranked) have been willing to accept a smaller award so that we could fund more

projects and thus address additional high-priority needs in the region.”

**Please share an example of a successful project, effort or interaction that has taken place through the IRWM process with a DAC in your region.**

Santa Ana: “The outreach that SAWPA conducted working with a DAC that was experiencing failing septic systems helped forge a partnership with a local water agency that resulted in a successful IRWM grant of \$2 million to assist their efforts for a new wastewater distribution system to support the DAC.”

Anonymous: “Using Prop 84 grant funds the IRWM was able to provide professional technical assistance to small water system operators to help prepare grant applications, create construction estimates, prepare emergency response plans and other needed services.”

San Diego: “We have funded (three different Prop 84 rounds, total of \$5.5 million) the Rural Communities Assistance Corp., which will use the funds to support approximately 15 small rural projects (including some from tribes) in the areas of supply and quality that would not otherwise have occurred. We worked with RCAC in this manner because these small rural entities otherwise lacked the capacity and technical expertise to successfully apply for and carry out an IRWM project funded by DWR.”

**Please share an example of a successful project, effort or interaction that has taken place through the IRWM process with a tribal community.**

Anonymous: “The American Indian Council of Mariposa County has so far submitted three projects through the Yosemite-Mariposa IRWM process: The Bear Creek Water Storage Project, Mariposa Creek Native Plant Restoration, and Wawona Restoration. The challenge is finding funding and technical assistance to implement all projects and support continued involvement by the Tribes.”

North Coast: “There are 34 distinct California Tribes in the North Coast, which are represented by six seats (and their alternates) in the NCRP governance structure; 3 on the 16 seat PRP and 3 on the 16 seat TPRC. Representatives of North Coast Tribes are active participants in the NCRP PRP and TPRC via designation per the PRP-approved “Tribal Representation Process” that was endorsed by 20 Tribes. A Tribal Outreach Coordinator has been retained to ensure the NCRP continues to incorporate Tribal priorities into its planning processes and implementation projects. The goal is a continually improved NCIRWM Plan that utilizes indigenous knowledge and expertise, represents the needs of North Coast Tribes, and is sensitive to Tribal concerns. Twenty of the 88 awarded IRWM projects benefit Tribal lands with a combined funding amount of \$9 M out of over \$60 M awarded to the North Coast for project implementation; 11 projects are sponsored by Native American Tribal Groups.”

**Please share an example of a successful project that you’ve implemented in your region.**

San Diego: “El Capitan Reservoir Watershed Acquisition & Restoration Program, sponsored by the San Diego River Park Foundation, used \$1.8 million in Prop 50 IRWM funds to buy and remove from possible future development four parcels encompassing 343 acres in key locations in the El Capitan Reservoir watershed, thus enhancing watershed protection in the second largest reservoir

in our region.”

Anonymous: “We have completed the “Sierra National Forest Fuel Reduction Program.” This was the first project of its kind that took the entire watershed into account. By cleaning up the Forest portion of the Region using Healthy Forest Management practices it is able to assist the watershed from the top to the bottom.”

Inyo-Mono: “While we have now funded almost twenty planning and implementation projects in the Inyo-Mono region, one that stands out as particularly remarkable is an implementation project conducted at the Coleville High School campus in Coleville, CA. The school well in this disadvantaged community has uranium levels that exceed the state maximum contaminant level, and for the previous 15 years, students had been drinking bottled water that was imported into the community. With Proposition 84 IRWM Implementation funding, we were able to install an ion exchange system to remove the uranium from the water. We also installed two storage tanks – one for treated water and one for untreated water – to store both drinking water and fire-fighting water in case of emergencies. This project significantly increased the water supply reliability and water quality for the school and the entire community.”

Anonymous: “Rio Alto Water District, in northern Tehama County, developed a grant and loan package to upgrade their sewage treatment plant and build a series of ponds to receive treated waste water. The 2014 Prop 84 drought grant was an integral part of funding. The project served to get the discharge out of the Sacramento River (with ever increasing regulatory demands), supplement the groundwater basin and create new habitat on the Pacific Flyway.”

**Has your IRWM effort resulted in changes/improvements to a project that otherwise may not have occurred?**

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County: “The changes and improvements have come more in the combination of projects that have been implemented and how they fit together. We have seen integration within and among our region's implementation efforts. Of course, some project concepts started out with one primary focus and were enhanced and integrated through coordination among local project proponents (i.e. adding habitat restoration benefits to a flood management project, adding trails to a restoration and water quality improvement project). Several local flood protection projects have been re-designed so that they enhance or restore habitat areas.”

San Diego: “We have funded two phases (\$4.9 million) of the North San Diego County Regional Recycled Water Project, which is in effect a mini-IRWM for recycled water development involving 10 public water and wastewater agencies. These agencies were all going to do their own recycling projects, but, with the promise of IRWM funding as an incentive, agreed to work together to regionalize recycled water systems by identifying new agency interconnections, seasonal storage opportunities and indirect potable water use that will maximize supplies, reduce wastewater discharges to ocean, reduce energy consumption due to diminished delivery of imported water.”

**What is an example of a partnership or working relationship that has developed because of the IRWM process that would not otherwise have come to fruition?**

Santa Ana: “From our leadership and collaboration, we were able to forge one of the first

cooperative agreements between an IRWM and the U.S. Forest Service in the State of California to promote mutual understanding and support efforts to manage forest fuels reduction and other forest management activities to promote improved downstream water recharge and water quality improvement.”

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County: “Probably the most notable for us has been the close working relationship we have established with local environmental groups such as The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club, who were not previously partners with the local water community in developing projects and programs. We are also working closely with the University of California Santa Barbara to support research efforts in our watersheds – and they (and The Nature Conservancy) are now project proponents – receiving funds from Prop. 84 to implement projects.”

Mojave: “Working closely with Cal Rural Water Assoc. (non-profit) to assist our Small Water System DAC focused program. This organization specifically targets stakeholders that larger entities don’t have the capacity to service. Needs identified during the IRWM process could only be addressed with outside help. This has resulted in a partnership that has had major success in the region.”

**What is an example of how a water-related conflict was avoided or resolved in your region as a result of your IRWM process?**

Santa Ana: “Downstream interests expressed concern that water coming down to them through WWTP discharges was already being recycled and recharged by them and that state grant funds should not be used in the upper watershed to try to duplicate this benefit for local needs such as new water recycling resulting in a conflict. Through our IRWM planning process, IRWM governance supported planning and implementation of water solutions that reflected more of a hydrologic and watershed-wide systems approach. This thinking was reflected in how project selection criteria was established and how eventual grant funding was directed to support regional integrated projects and programs that demonstrated watershed wide benefit, benefitting both upstream and downstream interests and needs.”

Santa Cruz: “Planning for a conjunctive use project funded by Prop 50 and Prop 84 brought together potentially competing water supply entities to agree on a regional approach to conjunctive use and to develop a strategy for amending and acquiring water rights to benefit the overall region without threatening an individual water right holder.”

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County: “We have faced many water related conflicts in the Region historically and some have been resolved successfully without IRWM, but our IRWM group has helped resolve some of our water quality and water supply conflicts through funding support for regional solutions such as the Salinity Management Pipeline, a regional water reclamation project on the Oxnard Plain, regional water use efficiency projects for urban and agricultural users, development of a watershed-wide management program – and also through ongoing dialogue and cooperation among local partners working together to develop effective solutions.”

Tuolumne-Stanislaus: “Prior to the trust-building that occurred and continues to be strengthened, there was a much greater likelihood that environmental groups would be left out of helping craft a project which could then lead to them objecting to projects. Because they are involved in the

Water Advisory Committee and therefore in project scoring, objective review, etc., their concerns are raised up-front and ways to address these concerns can be integrated on the front end.”

Upper Santa Clara River: “The chloride TMDL for the Santa Clara River has been a contentious issue within the Region. The IRWM Program provided a forum to disseminate information about compliance and has provided a means to help fund the necessary treatment plant improvements, lessening the impact on rate payers.”

### **How has water management in your region benefitted from the presence of IRWM planning?**

Santa Ana: “SAWPA has been engaged actively in collaboration and multi-agency task force development and management since we were formed in 1973. IRWM allowed us to take this premise to a new level in not just promoting and supporting studies but now regional (watershed-wide in our case) integrated planning and implementation. Through our efforts to establish this first under the Year 2000 Prop 13 Water Bond and then supporting the IRWM approach statewide, SAWPA’s foundational IRWM is seen as a model for others across the State. This in turn provided SAWPA with many new opportunities to garner additional funding and additional innovative projects and programs that would not have occurred without this leadership.”

Anonymous: “We now have regular communication with our water and community services districts, county government, watershed groups, tribal representatives and environmental organizations. All groups benefit from understanding each other’s issues and perspectives.”

Anonymous: “Better projects, better relationships, better dialogue, and new ideas”

Anonymous: “Members have a better understanding of the different perspectives and priorities that are represented on the RWMG, i.e., DACs, water agencies, conservation groups.”

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County: “As a result of IRWM the many organizations in the region have come together in a more cohesive fashion to collectively address our ongoing water and water-related challenges. There is a higher level of consensus among our very diverse and inclusive group of partners that this collaboration has led to development of very important and much needed projects and solutions which have multiple benefits, are integrated, and cost effective. Prior to IRWM we had some successful collaboration among water supply and water quality interests, but we didn’t have everyone at the table. There were more silos with less communication than we have today. Most significant is the inclusion of our non-governmental environmental organizations in the process of addressing regional issues.”

North Coast: “A regional framework such as the NCRP has the potential to achieve greater benefits than a series of individual efforts. This may occur as coordination among stakeholders to identify opportunities to extend and connect projects, resulting in greater economies of scale unachievable individually. The NCRP also helps target resources to projects with the greatest benefits. The organizational capacity offered by regional coordination provides resources and support to projects that might not materialize on their own, and over time helps identify and support the implementation of projects that yield greater benefits region-wide. For the rural and sparsely populated North Coast, individual diverse communities working together cooperatively at the regional scale has allowed the North Coast region to identify and further its unique goals

and priorities.”

### **How has the IRWM process helped you to address the water-related needs of your region?**

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County: “IRWM has resulted in local water leaders and organizations working closely together to identify the most critical water and related needs, and develop project and/or program ideas which have greater collective benefit. While grant funding is a large part of that, the engagement of and collaboration among a diverse group of stakeholders with common interests has been essential to that success.”

### **What are some of the successes you can attribute to IRWM?**

Here are some of the comments provided by Regions:

“The level of engagement and involvement across the region has significantly increased, with participation by a much wider cross-section of regional stakeholders.”

“In the most recent funding round, a high degree of altruism was shown by potential applicants for funding. Given the relatively small amount of funds remaining in the Funding Area several project proponents volunteered to remove their projects from the list of projects submitted – with the intention of assuring funding to a small number of projects, rather than trying to compete in an ‘all or nothing’ strategy.”

“The Gold Village project, proposed by Yuba County, was successfully funded in the final round of Prop 84, resulting in a single project that served a DAC and has resulted in major improvements affecting the sustainability of the project area. The project included: The conversations within the RWMG about each individual project as it was ‘vetted’ for inclusion in the Plan has resulted in: redesign of individual project components, integration of several projects with diverse project sponsors into a single project, and the identification of Plan-wide initiatives that have grown out of a single proposed project.”

“Relationships built during the IRWM Process have materially benefited the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) process. The candid, forthright and articulate communication style developed over the course of the IRWMP process has enabled many of the stakeholders who span both processes to engage in a level of dialogue that is supporting cohesive forward momentum in the very complex SGMA process.”

“Every single stakeholder in the IRWM process has articulated their preference for a collaborative local process vs. a state-directed process. Demonstrated ability to work together in a collaborative process, informed and enlightened self-interest, pragmatism and strong local identity have contributed to this perspective.”

“The drought heightened the need for collaborative problem-solving in the region. The Yuba region has complex water management dynamics – agriculture, environmental, and domestic water needs combine with a complex regime of surface and ground water management. While many of these dynamics are dictated by legal agreements and other external factors, the ability of the various constituents to meet in the IRWM venue has enabled stakeholders to engage in ongoing conversations and planning.”

## What are some of the challenges that lie ahead?

Here are some of the comments provided by Regions:

"The emergence of the SGMA program with the need for agencies and groundwater users to spend considerable time and energy on participating in both governance and Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan preparation activities has strained many of the IRWM members and reduced their capacity to stay involved in IRWM (as SGMA is perceived as having a larger potential impact to daily lives and revenues than IRWM)."

"The focus of recent grant rounds has discouraged many non-water agency participants, as they view the drought and/or DAC focus as eliminating the ability of natural resource related projects to compete for funding – since virtually all of the NGO Participants fall into this category there is concern that these entities may 'drift away' from the IRWMP process."

"Tribal participation has not been a success. The Update of the 2015 IRWMP will address new strategies for achieving a higher level of involvement."

## What is the overall value of IRWM as an approach to water management?

**Ninety-three** percent (93%) of those responding to the survey believe that the investment they have made in IRWM has been worthwhile overall. One Roundtable member provided the perspective below.

### ***A Roundtable Member's Perspective on the Value of IRWM (Katie Burdick):***

The value of IRWM is measured by the people who have invested in it:

- the millions of person hours that have been dedicated to the effort across this state since the inception of IRWM in 2002;
- the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of meetings in rooms large and small, luxurious and beat up, urban and rural, near and far - attended by 3 and attended by 50;
- the 100's of thousands of miles in late, late dark, early, early light, in rain, heat and snow traveled by thousands of individuals to attend innumerable meetings and events;
- the determination and willingness of interests that have not been in the same room together for decades to sit down at the same table to take on issues by the horns;
- the literally countless hours spent by volunteers at all levels of IRWM from governance to project development to Plan reviews and updates to ensuring public engagement;
- the willingness of innumerable dedicated individuals who put their time where their mouths are and endure 'meeting fatigue' over and over and over to build community and relationship;
- the steadfast dedication and commitment of people who 15 years ago had

never heard of IRWM;

- the commitment of rural community representatives to drive long lonely distances and urban reps to fight endless rush hour traffic to make IRWM work;
- the many, many, many gatherings of affluent water purveyors, impoverished water districts, overworked irrigation districts, hard-working nonprofits, committed agency staff, overcommitted Federal and state agency representatives, Spanish and Hmong-speaking representatives, and impassioned Tribal members trying one more time;
- the hard-headed communication around tables in rooms ragged and grand, rural and urban that legislators have never even seen, know little about and may seldom consider;
- the altruism displayed by IRWM members when projects are chosen to go forward for funding – frequently setting aside their own interests to support those of smaller or less affluent groups;
- the hundreds of plane flights flown unreimbursed and un-recognized;
- the parking lot conversations that have lasted into the night as sincere individuals seek to bridge diverse perspectives, motives and objectives and connect across differences;
- the millions of emails, texts and phone calls that keep the data and communication flowing;
- the tens of thousands of unreimbursed hours and expenses invested by people, organizations and agencies who believe in the need for and potential of IRWM;
- the lost vacations and holidays, late nights without cease, and relinquished family time that state DWR staff and IRWM members have devoted to a meaningful vision of collaborative water management;
- the targeted outreach to disadvantaged communities that are the neediest of the needy and who would otherwise languish and suffer in obscurity;
- the countless individuals who have been served with new/updated infrastructure who know who to thank, but aren't sure just how to do it; and,
- the millions of dollars that California tax payers have committed to a vision articulated in consecutive bond measures – on faith – towards implementing hundreds of projects that serve to build resilience and sustainability in an incredibly complex water delivery system.



## 6.0 Findings and Conclusions

The survey results clearly indicate that the IRWM Program has firmly established a new paradigm for regional management of water resources and is a success. Many IRWM Regions articulated that their successes goes beyond grant funding. It was also evident that the benefits of IRWM are realized at the statewide level as well as the local level. Improved local water supply reliability reduces the burden on state water management.

The findings and conclusions of the survey are highlighted below:

### **Benefits of IRWM:**

- ◆ IRWM has been successful across the state in delivering much-needed financial resources to local regions to improve local water supply reliability, help resolve conflicts and bring diverse interests together to collaborate on novel water management solutions, and ultimately benefiting all residents of California
- ◆ Integrated water management approaches and the IRWM Program have created or enhanced collaboration around addressing regional water challenges
- ◆ The IRWM Program has helped regions reduce water-related conflicts, improve water supply reliability, and enhance habitat (environmental resources)
- ◆ The model of integrated planning and implementation of multi-benefit projects has resulted in more cost effective and efficient use of resources, as well as more comprehensive and permanent solutions
- ◆ IRWM brings people together – building bridges, trust, and relationships
- ◆ Members of disadvantaged communities benefit from the program through development of drinking water enhancement, water quality improvement, flood management, community and individual capacity building, and access to nature

### **Sustainability of IRWM:**

- ◆ There is clearly strong support among most regions to continue IRWM into the future.
- ◆ IRWM was started as part of a state-run grant program made possible by voter-approved water bonds. Most regions have embraced it and benefitted from it beyond grant-funded planning and project implementation. The paradigm of integrated regional water management is becoming more a part of how regions manage water.
- ◆ Grant funding has “unlocked” cost share, or match, from project sponsors, helping public funds to go farther and making federal and private funding more accessible.
- ◆ Because the core concept of IRWM is engagement of all stakeholders at regional scales, the process functions best when appropriate investments are made in engagement and collective project development. These activities will require

ongoing financial and technical support from the state in many of the rural or disadvantaged regions that cannot provide sufficient resources to be successful or sustainable.

- ◆ Less than half the survey respondents have secure funding to maintain an ongoing IRWM program.
- ◆ In light of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act's emphasis on groundwater management, and the impacts of the statewide drought, IRWM will continue to play a vital role in regional water management and active stakeholder engagement.

## **7. Recommendations from the Roundtable: Strengthening IRWM Sustainability in the Future**

This survey was designed to solicit stories about how IRWM is working across California and how these experiences will help guide the future sustainability of IRWM programs in the long-term. These stories should be told for the benefit of the IRWM Regions and our leaders – legislators, water officials and the governor's office. IRWM has proven to be a valuable tool in helping address the state's water challenges, through increasing regional self-reliance, as well as the capacity building that has complemented outreach, development, and collaboration efforts. We therefore make the following recommendations:

- a) DWR should release the full findings and recommendations included in the Draft 2015 IRWM Strategic Plan which was never widely released, and immediately solicit feedback from a broad audience of stakeholders, rather than waiting for completion of the California Water Plan Update.
- b) Along with its partners, DWR should implement the recommendations contained in the 2015 IRWM Strategic Plan.
- c) DWR should integrate the recommendations from the IRWM Strategic Plan and recommendations from this survey into the California Water Plan Update 2018 and the California Water Action Plan.
- d) DWR should continue to support IRWM through technical assistance to regions.
- e) The Roundtable of Regions will seek opportunities to share the findings and conclusions of this survey to the appropriate committees in both chambers of the legislature and to the office of the Governor, to emphasize the important role IRWM has played in sustaining regional water supplies in the face of an historic drought, and to encourage future water bonds - or other funding support – and legislation that will help sustain regional IRWM programs and project implementation.

- f) DWR and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), as the agencies responsible for overseeing implementation of SGMA, should strongly encourage SGMA efforts to include IRWM as an integral component. In addition, IRWM should be recognized and included in other state planning and implementation processes that promote and enhance a collaborative watershed, or ecosystem, approach to natural resources planning and management.
- g) DWR, the State Water Resources Control Board, the legislature, and the governor should work together to address long-term funding support for integrated regional water management. The Draft IRWM Strategic Plan includes a recommendation for baseline funding for all regions. Some level of ongoing state support for IRWM that is separate from the bond process will provide an incentive to keep regions working together to address their own local challenges and take some of the burden off stressed state and federal resources.
- h) Baseline funding should be partially allocated based on the success of RWMGs' work on the disadvantaged community investment program, allowing these groups to continue engagement of disadvantaged communities and tribes in IRWM planning efforts, further enhancing the synergies that come with diverse and collaborative participation in planning and implementation efforts.
- i) State agencies responsible for addressing climate change should support IRWM regions in their efforts to adapt to, and mitigate, climate change impacts through their IRWM plans.

While IRWM has been successful by many measures, the ongoing value will lie in regions incorporating these concepts into all aspects of how water is managed, whether it is called "IRWM" or simply the embodiment of the principles of IRWM. Communities (the public, elected officials, public institutions, private sector) within each region will benefit from being more engaged and aware of IRWM. IRWM should be considered as synonymous with regional water management and not as a parallel process focused on funding. The Roundtable, with help from our stakeholders and the State, can help guide IRWM to a higher level – where policy issues are addressed more directly and collaboration among entities goes beyond project development and grant funding.

# APPENDIX A – IRWM SUCCESSES SURVEY

## Integrated Regional Water Management Successes of IRWM Survey April 2016

DWR released a document (titled Conference Exhibit) that contains information about the IRWM Strategic Plan in late May of 2015 at the IRWM 2.0 Conference in San Diego. The full document has yet to be publicly released. See the excerpt below for more information.

*Over a period of more than two years, the California Department of Water Resources engaged IRWM practitioners and other stakeholders in an extensive dialogue about the practice of Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) and its future. What emerged from stakeholder input is a draft Vision for the Future of IRWM and a comprehensive set of strategies and actions necessary for sustaining and broadening the practice of IRWM into the future. This conference exhibit provides an advance look at the draft vision, strategies, and actions to be included in the upcoming report, "Strategies for the Future of Integrated Regional Water Management in California." This information is intended to enrich conference discussions about IRWM.*



The purpose of this survey is to gather information from regions throughout the State regarding successes of their IRWM planning efforts in order to inform State officials, legislators and the public (voters) of the value of IRWM and to encourage release of the full IRWM Strategic Plan. The results of this survey will be tabulated and shared with all Roundtable participants as well as the Governor, legislators, and State water officials.

We have included a few questions about your Region’s funding and governance structure to inform our discussions regarding the Strategic Plan recommendation for base-level (ongoing) funding for qualifying regions.

Instructions: Please select **a few people** representing your region’s stakeholder effort to provide input regarding IRWM implementation successes in your region, but **only one person should complete the online survey for each region.** There are 33 questions in the survey. We hope you will complete all the questions, but if not, please complete as many as you can.

1. Region Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name and Agency of Person Completing Survey: \_\_\_\_\_
3. E-mail and Phone Number of Person Completing Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Year your IRWM Program was established: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do we have your permission to attribute quotes from your responses in any summary report(s) or presentation(s) we publish in order to share the survey results? Yes \_\_\_\_ Yes, but only if anonymously \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

6. What type of agreement is used in your region's governance structure for ongoing IRWM planning efforts (Please check all that apply)?

- Joint powers agreement (JPA)
- Memorandum of understanding (MOU) or agreement (MOA)
- Contract or other agreement
- 501(c)(3)/non-profit or other legal entity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do stakeholder entities in your Region, including non-governmental agencies, pay to participate (i.e. contribute funds toward ongoing cost of regional water management group, in order to submit projects for funding)?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

8. Do you pay or provide expenses for any category of stakeholders (e.g., DACs, Tribes) to participate in your IRWM program (i.e. stipends, travel expenses)?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

9. What is your Region's annual budget related to operating your ongoing IRWM program?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

9.a. Who pays for these costs (check all that apply)?

- All participants in stakeholder group, including non-profits and investor owned utilities
- All public entities involved in the stakeholder group
- A small number of members of the stakeholder group
- Grants
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you have secure funding to address your ongoing IRWM program needs (i.e. meetings, website and/or information management, planning, other program activities, etc.) over the next 2-3 years, or between grant rounds?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Don't know yet \_\_\_\_

11. What has your region accomplished through IRWM? (check all that apply)

- Received funding
- Improved integration of projects and benefits
- Initiated projects
- Completed projects
- Enhanced trust
- Established relationships

- Improved water quality
- Improved water supply reliability
- Improved local environmental resources
- Developed data and information
- Improved communication
- Engaged new stakeholders
- Increased diversity and inclusiveness
- Reduced water-related conflicts
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Please share an example of a successful non-project outcome from your region's IRWM process (e.g., a collaboration, information sharing, providing technical expertise, etc.).

13. What are some examples of unanticipated benefits, altruism, or successes that have come out of your IRWM process?

14. Does your IRWM Region include Disadvantaged Communities (DAC)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

14.a. If yes, please share an example of a successful project, effort, or interaction that has taken place through the IRWM process with a disadvantaged community.

15. Does your IRWM Region include reservation land or other land owned (i.e., allotment land, fee simple) by California Indian Tribes?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

15.a. Does your IRWM Region include California Indian Tribes that are also Disadvantaged Communities?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

15.b. Does your IRWM Region have contact information for California Indian Tribes with ancestral and other cultural resources interests (i.e., ceremonial sites, traditional or subsistence fishing, etc.) in your geographic region (per AB52)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

16. Are representatives of Tribal interests participating in your regional water management group?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

17. Please share an example of a successful project, effort, or interaction that has taken place through the IRWM process with a tribal community.

18. Share an example of a successful project that you've implemented in your region.

19. Has your IRWM effort resulted in changes/improvements to a project that otherwise may not have occurred? If yes, please explain.

20. How many projects have been funded in your IRWM region? Indicate how many projects were infrastructure projects and how many were non-infrastructure projects

21. What types of projects do you think are important for your IRWMP other than engineering infrastructure? Check all that apply:

- Data synthesis
- Forest health/land management for water yield and quality improvement (e.g., fuels reduction, tree thinning, prescribed fire)
- Pre- and post-monitoring data collection on water quality and quantity change for land management projects (e.g., meadow restoration, riparian improvement, fuels reduction, tree thinning, prescribed fire)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

22. What is an example of a partnership (perhaps unique or unlikely) or working relationship that has developed because of the IRWM process that would not have otherwise come to fruition?

23. What is an example of how a water-related conflict was avoided or resolved in your region as a result of your IRWM process?

24. How has water management in your Region benefitted from the presence of IRWM planning?

25. Why is IRWM a successful approach in your region as opposed to a state-directed approach to water management? Why is IRWM more cost effective and efficient?

26. Do you believe the investment you have made in IRWM has been worthwhile overall?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure yet \_\_\_\_\_

27. How has the IRWM process helped you to address the water-related needs of your Region?

28. What are your suggestions for other ways besides publishing and sharing the results of this survey that the IRWM Roundtable of Regions can build statewide recognition for IRWM?

29. Please share any other comments on the value of IRWM or thoughts that you were not able to include in other answers.