



IMPERIAL IRWMP

Water Forum Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday, January 19, 2012

Time: 9:00–11:30 noon

Location: SDG&E Renewable Energy Center,

Participants

See the attached sign in sheet.

Follow-up Actions

See “Resource Management Strategies” section of these notes for Follow Up items.

Summary of Decisions

Topic	Language	WF Decision
1.3 Improve Flood Management (Adopted Findings)		
1.3.1.1, 4 th bullet, 3 rd sub-bullet, delete “the broader”	<i>Imperial County has regional mission, powers and authorities over the larger geography of the Imperial Region.</i>	Accept
1.4 Practice Resources Stewardship (Adopted Findings)		
1.4.2 Water-Dependent Recreation, Remove from this document.	<i>During the review of CDWR strategies and as a result of the preliminary discussions...</i>	Remove
1 Improve Water Quality (Adopted Findings) - Salt & Salinity Management RMS Findings		
1.1.3.1.1, 1 st bullet – Delete “high “: change to read as recorded.	<i>Salt and salinity management are essential in the Imperial Region due to the salt content in the Colorado River water (1 ton of salt/AF of water).</i>	Accept
1.1.3.1.1, 2 nd bullet, 4 th change language, as recorded.	<i>Recycled Municipal Water RMS includes projects and programs that could change drain flows and potentially affect salinity.</i>	Accept

Meeting Notes

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, November Meeting Notes

Dale Schafer called the meeting to order at 9:10am. Agenda review. Questions and/or comments about the November meeting notes can be emailed to Dale Schafer at daleschafer@msn.com or Anisa Divine at ajdivine@iid.com.

Current Events

The March Water Forum meeting will be rescheduled so as not to conflict with the Imperial Valley Renewable Energy Summit & Expo

New River Improvement Project Update: Andy Horne reviewed the New River Improvement Project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) efforts, which Jose Angel presented to the Water Forum in February 2011. In December 2010, the New River Improvement TAC developed a vision document and a study was authorized to review New River improvement ideas. Federal funding is currently being used and the Cal EPA website has a public copy of the report. The vision for the New River project is to continue supporting municipal wastewater improvements in Mexicali with a proposed automated trash screen on either side of the international border and develop a disinfection facility on the U.S. side. The original vision was encasement of the New River, similar to sections flowing through Mexicali, but because of several regulatory compliance standards, this vision was deemed unfeasible. The committee will consider the IRWMP for project funding. The project may use wetlands to help clean the river. Contact Andy for further information.

Imperial Region Energy Projects Update: Andy showed a map of the region displaying several different proposed energy projects within the Imperial region. Seven projects have been approved by the County of Imperial and there is notable concern that these projects are located on farm land. There are roughly 15,000 acres of land proposed for energy projects. Andy said IID assured the County that water will be accounted for without negatively impacting its existing customers.

Andy said the number of proposed projects is misleading because there is not enough transmission capacity to build all of these projects. It is expected that over half of these will not come to fruition. Tom Sephton asked why farmland not in production on the west side of IID's Water Service Area is not utilized. Andy said the bombing range and Navy base limit potential project sites. The County was trying to identify strategic locations for energy projects but was restricted by a lack of resources to complete a general plan amendment. The County is trying to develop policies that encourage energy projects to stay away from prime farm land. Carl Stills added that IID is working on a transmission solution and economic development rate, which is expected to be complete in April; IID is working to get developers a competitive rate.

Linsey Dale asked how the logistics of water accounting will be handled if solar projects are considered temporary under a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). Andy said originally energy projects would be a permanent conversion of ag land, but the County's current permitting mechanism is a CUP with a specific timeframe. At the end of the timeframe, regardless of project type, the County can require that the project return back to farmland. Andy said that the process is complicated because IID can't make a permanent change of water accounting when the land might return to ag use. Andy thinks the water accounting can run similar to a Certificate of Deposit, but said that approach has not gained traction. Andy assured the WF that the County is not trying to tell IID how to manage its water. Anisa reminded the WF that a project can go out of production at any point; a CUP does not guarantee the project will last 30 years. Andy said that it is likely projects will stay in production for the length of their CUP because of Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) contracts.

Carl said these projects will have air quality standards to maintain, and questions whether excess amounts of Colorado River water will be used to suppress dust.

Linsey asked if County-approved solar projects have discussed water contracts with IID. Andy said they haven't. Linsey is concerned that projects are approved without ag guidelines set in place. Linsey questions how the County can make decisions without direction for guidelines, policies, or IID discussions. Andy said the County has told IID they are willing to add a condition to the permit requiring pre-approval from IID. Andy does not think that the County is putting the ag industry at risk because energy projects are a different land use with different water requirements.

Edie Harmon thinks that these issues are consequences of bad zoning and will have impacts on ag. Edie said it is imperative for the County to develop a reasonable plan that doesn't look at one project at a time, because zoning and planning should be about planning for the future.

Al Kalin explained that the County uses the State's method of categorizing farmland based on soil type. The Valley's tile drainage system allows lesser soils to be farmed; therefore, solar projects are taking out valuable farmland. Larry Grogan seconded Edie's comments, saying that this is a case of "unintended consequences". Larry said the Imperial region is 12 years late in planning because there wasn't interest in these projects a decade ago. Why aren't solar projects on the exposed Salton Sea shoreline? When the routes for transition lines were mapped, no one anticipated how much development would take place along these lines, and now we see the consequences. Larry hopes that we can plan for the next 12 years appropriately to avoid a repeated mistake.

QSA Update: Anisa reported that the Appellate Court is finished with QSA review. The next step for the appeals process would be for disaffected parties to go to the California Supreme Court. The County has requested California Supreme Court review.

IRWMP Work Plan Status & Milestones

Anisa reviewed the handout detailing the IRWMP Work Plan status and schedule. Grant cycles drive this tight schedule. The Imperial IRWMP should be adopted before elections in November.

Review Preliminary Project Ranking: what we have & what's next

GEI reviewed projects submitted during the Second Call for Projects, ranking projects that were past the concept stage (see handout for rankings), giving priority to those projects applicants said were in design and were nearly ready to proceed based on project starting construction within one year. As Larry suggested, we will plan for the future with these projects in mind. The ranked list is not a grant list nor does it determine which projects are shovel ready, rather it ranks projects based on how well they meet this region's goals, strategic priorities, readiness to proceed and state priorities. CDWR has hinted that the next round of projects will have less funding.

A "shovel ready" project has all agreements, funding, designs, environmental documents and permits, including CEQA/NEPA, completed. "Grant ready" means that the schedule, budget and work plan are complete and that the project is in process for getting final design, funding, agreements, environmental review and permits. Some regions use their IRWMP to help with the environmental process to expedite subsequent environmental review of projects, but until we can streamline mitigation regionally, individual projects within this region must get their own CEQA clearance and permits.

The PMT (Program Management Team – County, IID, City of Imperial; tasked with managing the work) will discuss how the PWG (Projects Work Group) look at project alternatives and make a preliminary finding on project ranking for the grant. The meetings are open to all stakeholders. The WF will be the ultimate decision maker about the priority of the projects to be included in the Imperial Region Grant application to DWR for Proposition 84 Implementation Grant funding.

Resource Management Strategies

- **Finalized Adopted RMS: Increase Water Supply, Reduce Water Demand, Improve Flood Management**

1.3 Improve Flood Management (Adopted Findings)

Decision: 1.3.1.1, 4th bullet, 3rd sub-bullet, delete “the broader” to read: *Imperial County has regional mission, powers and authorities over the larger geography of the Imperial Region.*

Matt reminded the WF that these discussions came from the Flood Workshop.

Follow up:

- Al Kalin would like to hear IID’s input on 4th bullet, p 29, which states that IID is not chartered as a flood control district; this might change how IID drains are operated and maintained.
- Marlene Best is OK with the ideas introduced in these findings, but she would like a statement at the end of the section explaining these are general concepts.
- Edie added that neither IID nor the County is ready for the emergency scenarios that can come from a flood and recommends section 1.3.1.2 include a comment stating: “County should not approve structural, residential, commercial, or industrial development in FEMA designated floodways.”
- David Bradshaw adding a statement about the Regional Water Quality Board, QSA, and pupfish being reasons to keep stormwater out of specific drains.
- Anisa suggested 1.3.1.1, 7th bullet, p 29 include a date to define the end of the 50 year plan.
- Carl suggested 1.3.1.2, 5th bullet, p 30 should read, “Initiate high level policy discussion between select members of the Board of Supervisors, IID Board of Directors, and representatives of City Councils to engage elected representatives in *possible* creation of a legal...”

Follow up:

- Anisa will send a WORD copy to tom, Edie and Linsey; edits are due January 27.

1.4 Practice Resource Stewardship and Other Strategies (Adopted Findings)

Decision: The section “Water Dependent Recreation” on page 32 will be removed from this particular document.

Finalized Adopted RMS - All other comments are due on January 27, 2012. Tom, Edie, and Linsey volunteered to review the document for content and editing.

Follow up:

- This document will be up for adoption at the March 2012 WF.

- **Draft Improve Water Quality RMS Findings**

1.1 Improve Water Quality (*grey boxes below are slides presented to WF*)

- **Drinking Water Treatment and Distribution RMS**
- **Matching Quality to Use RMS**
- **Other Water Quality Strategies Considered**
 - **Salt and Salinity Management RMS**
 - **Pollution Prevention RMS**
 - **Groundwater Remediation/Aquifer Remediation RMS (Practice Resources Stewardship not Improve WQ)**

No comment.

- **Drinking Water Treatment and Distribution**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ ~~To degree possible, seek to avoid competition between Imperial Region Cities for~~ **When applying for** IRWMP grant monies **to the extent possible** by identifying common needs and developing regional priorities, ~~and not simply providing money to the projects based readiness to proceed.~~
 - Define opportunities to interconnect the DWT systems to reduce the risks ~~from~~ **of** catastrophic supply interruption.
 - Address raw and treated water storage **needs and** opportunities.
 - Ensure each city has multiple connections to IID **delivery** facilities ~~for raw water sources to allow for canal maintenance.~~

Al noted stated that multiple city connections might be too difficult in cities with one water treatment plant (1.1.1.1, 1st bullet, 3rd sub-bullet). Matt noted that if all cities have a common need then we can look at the issue regionally. Rubin said the City of Brawley looks to the Bryant and Malan canals as possible connections. Dale suggested use of a word other than “ensure”. Steve Benson recommended adding the word “storage”. Rubin recommended adding “add additional storage”. Anisa recommended adding “where needed”

Follow up: WF accepted Marlene’s synthesis of suggestions: “Encourage and support multiple connections to potable and new water delivery and storage facilities from IID or other source for municipal water purveyors.

- **Drinking Water Treatment and Distribution**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ ~~Review~~ **Consider** opportunities to consolidate DWT treatment facilities.
 - ✘ ~~Provide~~ Imperial Region Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) need technical, management and financial support to design ~~and approve~~ projects so that they are ready to proceed to compete for state and federal funds.

1.1.1.1, 2nd bullet - Edie noted that in many parts of the west region there is no potential for individuals to connect to other water sources ().

- **Drinking Water Treatment and Distribution**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ The Imperial IRWMP should be used to inventory project-level investments to:
 - Address public health or environmental emergencies.
 - Repair, rehabilitate, or replace treatment, collection, or distribution systems.
 - Attain compliance with applicable federal or state regulatory requirements.
 - Meet applicable local service levels and future requirements consistent with the general plans.

No comment.

- **Drinking Water Treatment and Distribution**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ Use the Imperial IRWMP to identify funding sources and to match projects to available funds.
 - ✘ Define how local rates and assessments should be used to meet any local matching funds requirements for state or federal grants.
 - ✘ Develop the region's political capital needed to minimize local competition; establish regional priorities; and define integration opportunities and approaches to generating local funds to leverage state and federal monies and invest in needed infrastructure.

No comment.

- **Matching Quality to Use**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ The Water Forum strongly **should evaluate and** supports use and development of impaired quality **water** where cost effective and where such uses could provide economic benefits to the Imperial Region.
 - ✘ Conduct pilot and demonstration projects that demonstrate economic use of poor quality water to expand the water supply portfolio and support economic growth.
 - ✘ **Developing and adopting policies for BMPs for cooling water similar to the State for use of alternative sources of cooling water (recycled, desalination of brackish groundwater) in lieu of Colorado River supplies. This goes in the Energy WUE RMS**

No comment.

- **Matching Quality to Use**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ **Treating and recycling municipal wastewater to a level where it can be used for agricultural purposes in place of Colorado River supplies. Growers cannot do this. We have discussed this a lot.**
 - ✘ Extend the available supply by using saline and brackish water and matching water quality to appropriate uses, including promoting the use of saline and brackish water to produce algae, managing dust and particulates, and providing economic incentives to use recycled water.

1.1.2.1, 4th & 5th bullets - Charlene Wardlow reminded the WF that dozens of cities upstream of the Imperial County discharge their wastewater into the Colorado River. Matt stated that row crops can be irrigated with tertiary water, although it may affect marketability.

Follow up:

- Anisa suggested the bullet say “treating and recycling municipal wastewater to a legally appropriate level of quality and treatment so it is legally appropriate for beneficial use, e.g., fiber crop...”
- Matt suggested the term be “beneficial usage” so as not to limit the use to ag.
- Rodney Williams said other sources of water should be considered.
- Tom felt the 5th bullet was too limiting; instead of providing economic incentives, it could say “and other potential uses”.

- **Other Water Quality Strategies Considered**
 - **Salt and Salinity Management RMS**
 - **Pollution Prevention RMS**
 - **Groundwater Remediation/Aquifer Remediation RMS (Practice Resources Stewardship not Improve WQ)**

No comment.

- **Salt and Salinity Management RMS**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ Salt and salinity management is **essential** a way of life for growers at the farm scale and within the Imperial Region due to the relatively high salt content in the Colorado River water (**1 ton of salt/AF of water**).

Decision: Delete “high” from 1.1.3.1.1, 1st bullet. *Salt and salinity management are essential in the Imperial Region due the salt content of the Colorado River water (1 ton of salt/AF of water).*

- **Salt and Salinity Management RMS**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ Salt and salinity management is already integrated with the other management strategies or as part of existing programs and no new activities or actions have been identified.
 - Agricultural Water Use Efficiency measures through the IID’s Definite Plan and System Conservation Plan.
 - The QSA includes **s** mitigation for the Salton Sea.
 - ~~Water Supply~~ Desalination **RMS** includes removal of salts from drain water or brackish groundwater and anticipates requirements for brine disposal. ~~is a water supply strategy that is included as part of the increase.~~

No comment.

- **Salt and Salinity Management RMS**
 - **Findings**
 - ~~Water Supply~~ – Recycled **Municipal Water RMS includes** projects ~~or~~ **and** programs that could result in decreased drain flows or potentially increase salinity ~~will~~ **would need to** mitigate for identified impacts.
 - ✘ **Regional stakeholders, through the Imperial Water Forum, should stay actively engaged in the efforts to restore the Salton Sea to realize benefits and avoid impacts to the Region.**

Decision: 1.1.3.1.1, 2nd bullet, 4th sub-bullet - change to: *Recycled Municipal Water RMS includes projects and programs that could change drain flows and potentially affect salinity; decreased drain flows or increased salinity may require mitigation for identified impacts.* **AD:**
Note added language re needing to mitigate for identified impacts?

Follow up: 1.1.3.1.1, 3rd bullet (added) - Steve Benson suggested the word “restore” be changed to “mitigated impacts”. Tom said both mitigated impacts and a form of restoration are being discussed. Anisa noted the language includes both ideas. There was discussion to change the wording to “...**engage in impacts and the efforts to restore the Salton Sea...**”

- **Pollution Prevention**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ ~~The Existing local, state and federal programs in place are generally able to control the nature and sources of most contaminants. Beneficial uses are protected under the existing program, and an additional pollution prevention approach may not be cost effective at this time.~~
 - ✘ No additional pollution prevention actions were identified during initial Imperial IRWMP scoping or project definition and no further measures are anticipated for inclusion as part of the plan.

1.1.3.2.1, 1st bullet - Steve asked if it pertained to drinking water, noting that salinity in drains can affect levels in the sea. Anisa replied that the TMDL does not account for salinity.

- **Pollution Prevention**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ The Water Forum and ongoing planning efforts should be used to identify, integrate and coordinate the existing non-regulatory programs where feasible.
 - ✘ ~~IID DWQIP to~~ **See Slide 17, IID DWQIP bullet**

No comment.

- **Pollution Prevention**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ **Imperial County Farm Bureau's** ~~to control~~ Total Maximum Daily **Load Program to control silt discharged with tailwater** from agricultural lands is being implemented by IID and growers, and no program expansion or changes are anticipated as part of the Imperial IRWMP. ~~BMPs to further control contaminants of concern are to be implemented where problems are detected by the current water quality monitoring programs.~~

1.1.3.2.1, 3rd bullet - Linsey commented that it should include sediment and pesticides.

Follow up: Anisa suggested added language “and other elements, consistent with the Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan” to account for ongoing negotiations.

- **Pollution Prevention**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ **IID's Drain Water Quality Improvement Program provides monthly water quality monitoring within 14 drains throughout the IID service area for several constituents of concern and reports these results to the Regional Board.**
 - ✘ **IID's Vegetation Management supports the enhancement of water quality within the Imperial Irrigation District (District) drain shed by reducing sediment loads in conveyance channels.**

Follow up: 1.1.3.2.1, 5th bullet (added) should replace “14” with “several”, and consider words like “periodical” or “for drains outside of the IID Service Area”.

- **Pollution Prevention**
 - **Findings**
 - ✘ ~~Coordinate with the New River~~ **Improvement Project** ~~Committee and efforts to~~ remediate contaminated water **in the New River near Calexico, CA. The source is** flowing across the Mexican ~~Board~~ **border** and ~~do so (through the see Imperial IRWMP Ecosystem Enhancement Restoration RMS) of the.~~
 - ✘ **Coordinate with Citizen's Congressional Task force on the New River to continue to build and maintain wetlands where funds allow (see Imperial IRWMP Ecosystem Enhancement Restoration RMS)**

1.1.3.2.1, 4th bullet - inconsistent language; Andy clarified that it is the “New River Committee” and that the proposed new language says “Improvement Project “.

Follow up: David noted the 1st bullet should clarify the “US/Mexican International Border”.

Improve Water Quality - Changes will be presented at the March 2012 WF meeting.

Steps to Developing Implementation Grant Applications: This topic will be rescheduled for the March WF meeting.

Schedule Future Meetings: PWG is scheduled the day before WF meeting. March WF meeting date will be decided at a later time.

Meeting adjourned at 11:29am.