



Regional Water Management Group

LOCATION: Online (ZOOM)

MINUTES

Monday, April 26, 2021 1:30 pm

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:37 pm, by Tom Wheeler, chairman.

Those present included:

Tom Wheeler – Madera County BOS
Al Solis – SEMCU
Jeannie Habben – Madera County
Stephanie Anagnoson – Madera County
Kristi Robinson – Water Wise/Triangle T
Jacob Roberson – RWMG Coordinator
Keith Helmuth – City of Madera
Angela Islas – SHE
Jack Rice – MAWA
Mark Hutson – Madera/Chowchilla RCD
Brandon Tomlinson – Chowchilla WD
Don Roberts – Gravelly Ford WD

Carl Janzen – Madera ID
Gretchen Heisdorf – Root Creek WD / P&P
Eddie Mendez – Madera Public Works
Sam Cunningham – Madera County
Celeste Wheeler – Indian Lakes
Chris Montoya – DWR
Jenny Nunez-Rodriguez – Madera County
Jason Rogers – City of Chowchilla
Laura Satterlee – SHE
Miguel Guerrero – Wine Group
Joe Fiss – Greystone Equities/SEMCU
Kirsten Hefner – Madera County

2. Review & Approval - Agenda & Minutes

- A motion to approve the April agenda was made by Carl J; Kristi R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to approve the March minutes was made by Kristi R; Jack R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment

- Tom W shared an article titled, "Drought will Lead to Bad Sierra Nevada Wildfires". North Fork received 29/100th of an inch of rain from this previous storm, so they did break 15 inches of rain for the season which is a little less than half of what they usually receive. The foothills are so dry right now, and it adds to the danger of wildfires.
- Tom W also commented that there are EPA groups that are trying to stop the work on the Creek Fire. They just don't understand what is happening to our forest.
 - Jacob R will send the article to everyone that talks about this lawsuit.
- Tom W also mentioned that The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection had a meeting at the beginning of April and announced that over 28 counties had spoken at the meeting on new rules for fire protection of communities, counties, cities, and rural areas. One of the rules is that they won't be able to build any houses on any ridge tops. Another rule is that if there is any property that will be split in to three parcels or more (use to be four or more), any roads or driveways that go into those properties out on to a main road have to be improved to 18 or 20 feet wide and will need to have a roundabout where a firetruck can be able to turn completely around. They're going to go ahead and move forward with these new rules, but they mentioned in may take a while to get them all implemented. They hardly changed anything after all the testimony from every person. Not one person was in favor of the new rules.
 - Tom W will send the notice to Jacob R to send out to everyone.
- Items of Interest were mentioned by Jacob R (for more information, reach out to Jacob):

- The DWR and Roundtable of Regions are co-sponsoring an upcoming webinar to discuss the Prop 1 IRWM Implementation Grant Program – Round 1 survey results and proposed concepts for the Round 2 grant solicitation process, which will begin this summer, making over \$190 million available for the implementation of IRWM projects. Please [click here](#) to register for this webinar. The webinar will be held on May 6th, 9:30am - 11:30am.
- On Tuesday **April 27, 2021**, from 1 to 4 pm, Central Valley Water Board staff will hold a virtual public workshop to discuss Priority 1 Nitrate Control Program *Preliminary Management Zone Proposals* (PMZPs) and *Early Action Plans* (EAPs), which were submitted to the Board on March 8, 2021.
- The California Environmental Protection Agency is now accepting applications for its Environmental Justice Small Grants Program. The program is open to nonprofit organizations and tribal governments and is focused on supporting environmental justice projects across California. The maximum grant amount is \$50,000 and the grant term is 18 months. Applications must be received by 6-30-2021.
- Governor Newsom signed a \$536 million wildfire package enabling the state to take urgent action on projects that support wildfire suppression, improve forest health and build resilience in communities to help protect residents and property from catastrophic wildfires. The Forest Health Grant Program was allocated \$155 million dollars in this wildfire package. This money will become immediately available to fund Forest Health Grant projects and will be used to fund direct awards as well as selected projects through the grant solicitation process. The current grant solicitation is now open, and applications are due by May 19th, 2021 at 3PM PST.
- The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) announced the availability of \$20 million dollars for the implementation of shovel-ready forest health projects in the region. The Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience directed grant program was made possible by an early action wildfire and forest resilience budget approved by the legislature and the Governor. The early action budget includes \$20 million for the SNC and is part of a \$1 billion forest and wildfire resilience funding proposal under consideration by state leaders.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Discussion & Action - Financial Report/Warrant Approvals

- Carl J commented that everyone has paid their dues or parts of it, bringing the total balance to \$74,806.48 before any deductions. We spent \$24,532.98 for the month, with most of it going to Self-Help Enterprises for the Prop 1 DAC grant we hold. This leaves us with a final balance of \$39,118.47.
- A motion to approve the financial report was made by Carl J; Kristi R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

5. Discussion – Proposition 1 Disadvantaged Community Involvement Funding

- San Joaquin Valley Counties
 - Self Help Enterprises – Projects 12 and 13
 - Angela I gave two updates on these projects. The first update is that the program is underway and outreach efforts have started as well with Angela reaching out to a lot of the school districts in the Chowchilla Subbasin area. Angela has reached out to Chowchilla Elementary School District, Alview-Dairyland Union School District, and Dixieland Elementary School District. Angela has not been able to get in touch with Chowchilla High School, and her efforts have been more focused on the school districts on a wide level to get a newsletter put together for promoting the

well sampling and testing in the Chowchilla Subbasin area. They have received at least one participant that wanted to get their well tested. The project as a whole is underway, and over the next couple months it will just be mostly a lot of outreach and waiting for anybody to contact Laura S with SHE to receive an update if they want to have their well tested or not.

- The other update is that there will be a more extensive effort in outreach. Angela is putting together an outreach plan to now do door-to-door outreach. A lot of the counties right now are going towards the COVID orange tier, and that has been allowing them to do more outreach door-to-door. Angela and her supervisor will be going into more detail about how they want to start executing more of this plan in order to have more exposure of the program be out there with a lot of those who are on their own private wells.

6. Discussion – Proposition 1 IRWM Implementation Funding

- Mountain Counties and San Joaquin Valley Counties
 - Eddie M commented that for Indian Lakes and Parkwood, Public Works had a meeting internally to confirm how they will be moving forward with these projects. They are working to accomplish getting the water meter projects like an installed product, working through the distributor and manufacturer as a service they provide. Some information was sent over to them regarding final meter counts and the mapping information for the two communities. Public Works is waiting on some costs and information to get back from them, making sure it will be within the budget amount and continue talks from there. For the Parksdale Well Rehab Project in the Valley, they have received some estimates from Madera Pumps to do the preliminary investigation which includes pulling the pump and cleaning it out to get an accurate well investigation for the videoing. Eddie is waiting to get some confirmation before moving forward with that but that is something that should be able to move forward relatively quickly.
 - Tom W asked if the Parksdale well that Eddie mentioned is the one that is not working right now, and Eddie answered that that is correct, and the well has not ran in over 10 years so there will be quite a bit of items that Madera Pumps will need to take a look at inside of the casing itself and the well is going to be out of spec, and there will be some things that will need to be repaired or replaced too.
 - Tom W also asked if they will be sending a camera down the well, and Eddie answered that they will be doing that as well as pulling the pump, brushing it, doing some airlifts so they can inspect the well accurately, and then they'll go from there. They should be getting a good report and written analysis from this being done.
 - Celeste W asked Eddie to let her know when the project for Indian Lakes is starting so Celeste can take photos for their newsletter in Indian Lakes. Eddie mentioned they are on track to begin the Indian Lakes project sometime around June or July at the moment. The minimum lead time to get the number of water meters for this project (which is 100) is a month.
 - Keith H commented that there is nothing new to report on for the City of Madera project.
 - Jason R commented that there is nothing new to report on for the City of Chowchilla project.

7. Discussion – Domestic Wells – Prop 68 Funding

- Stephanie A commented that last month there was an update from Pete L with Luhdorff & Scalmanini on this where they showed they were reconciling 3 to 4 data sets to come up with a more definitive list of domestic wells and their condition status. They are still working on it and are hoping to be done with the list sometime around June. Once they have a map of where all the domestic wells are, they are going to be using funds from this grant to put in additional monitoring wells in the Madera and Chowchilla Subbasins.

8. Discussion – Creek Fire / Forest Management / Watershed

- Tom W mentioned that a lawsuit is being pushed forward by 3 environmental groups that are reliant on theories that Chad Hansen uses when he writes his books about how forest management should be, and it's all upside as far as Tom is concerned. A lot of projects to help with forest management were set to begin here shortly in June and had to do with reforestation, marking which trees were good and which trees were bad, and a whole bunch of other good things. Tom is working on getting a lot of people together to write a letter to the judge in the Fresno Federal Court to throw this out and don't wait a year. What happens if they wait a year or two is that most of those trees are already dead and have been since September when they all got burnt. The trees start to deteriorate pretty fast once they are burnt and dead, so by the time they get all the studies out that they have to do to get a project going, it takes it takes a year or so. All this lawsuit will do is delay the projects starting and put them up for sale where no one will buy them, so we will be right back to where we are with all that fire fuel laying there for the next fire to come through.
 - Jacob R will send the article about this lawsuit to everyone.
- Tom W also commented that the mountains got some more snow from this previous storm, but Tom is not sure exactly how much. One good thing from not receiving much rain and snow this year is that there will not be that much sediment runoff into the rivers, creeks and lakes. The Sherriff and emergency crew made sure that the creeks and rivers were running clean when any storm came through, even a sprinkle.
- Stephanie A mentioned that the County's Office of Emergency Services installed SoxFence on some of the streams. Tom W mentioned that they hired two companies to do the study and one company to do the fencing. About 12,000 feet of the fencing was installed, anywhere from 12 inches to 3 feet tall and all the steel posts needed for the fencing was installed too. This will keep a lot of the erosion out of the streams from the places where a lot of trees and vegetation burned up, especially around roads, coverts, homes, and buildings.
 - Here is the link for the article on the SoxFence that was installed:
<https://sierranewsonline.com/north-fork-slope-stabilization-project/>

9. Discussion – Projects for potential state funding through \$2B water package

- Jacob R mentioned that he had sent out an email about 2 weeks ago with a link to an article that talked about the \$2B water package currently being pushed by the State Senate. Bobby Macaulay was asked if the Madera RWMG had any projects that are shovel-ready and would like to be included on the letter to the State to be mentioned as a project to be funded with this potential source of money. Jacob has only received one project so far and that is project #92 on the IRWM project list (Root Creek Water District's Root Creek Parkway Water Conservation Project for \$2.2M). This project will be included on the letter which will be brought to the Board of Supervisors for their approval during the next meeting scheduled for May 4th. Tom W mentioned that if anyone else has a shovel-ready project to include on this letter to reach out to Jacob R so it can be included on the letter and possibly funded.
 - Stephanie A did submit a project for land-repurposing or land-retiring separately when she was asked if the County GSA had any projects that are shovel-ready.

The land-repurposing or land-retiring is something they can do right away; they just need funds.

10. Mariposa RCD Letters of Support – Review & Approval

- “Regional Home Hardening Public Education Program” and “Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Project”
 - Jacob R mentioned that Mariposa RCD reached out for letters of support on two CAL FIRE grants that they are applying for. These are applications for the CAL FIRE grant funding for Fire Prevention and Forest Health Projects, part of the \$536 million wildfire package that Jacob mentioned under items of interest at the beginning of the meeting. These applications are due by May 19th, 2021.
 - Tom W agreed with submitting letters of support for Mariposa RCD’s applications. Madera RWMG has been working with Mariposa RCD and would like to continue that relationship of support for each other. Mariposa RCD’s projects will benefit the Madera region too.
 - A motion to approve the letters of support after Stephanie A and Jeannie H review them was made by Gretchen H; Carl J second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

11. Madera RWMG Coordinator Contract – Review & Approval

- Jacob R commented that there are no changes to the contract besides the dates to extend the contract by one year. The contract will be effective on May 4th, 2021 and expire on May 3rd, 2022.
 - Tom W asked what the current pay rate is on the contract, and Jacob answered it is \$1,800 per month, at 40 hours per month. Tom asked if a special board meeting could be held after this meeting to discuss increasing the pay rate and if that was on the agenda allowing us to do that. Jacob mentioned that it was not, only to review and approve the contract is on the agenda. Carl J commented that there cannot be a special board meeting held today since it is not on the agenda, but Carl can amend his original motion to raise the monthly pay rate to \$2,000 per month, which would add \$2,400 per year. Carl amended his original motion to change the monthly pay rate from \$1,800 to \$2,000.
- A motion to approve the contract after increasing the monthly amount to \$2,000 was made by Carl J; Jason R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

12. Call for Projects – Review & Approval

- Jacob R mentioned that only one project was received, and that project was for Root Creek WD. In addition to having the project added to the IRWM project list, Root Creek WD has asked to have the project added to the SWRP project list too.
 - Gretchen H commented that the project has to do with NPDES discharge requirements of stormwater or general-purpose water going into Root Creek to ensure the urban pollutants are removed out of it for compliance with Madera County permits and good stewardship for the environment. Tom W asked if it includes putting in ponding basins, and Gretchen answered that they are filtration units where the discharge water from the pond going into Root Creek is passed through the filters and the pollutants are then removed out of the discharge water which allows clean water to be discharged into the creek for beneficial uses. Gretchen also mentioned that the cost of the project depends on the flow rate, and also testing that will need to be done to determine what is exactly in the discharge water. The results from this testing will help determine what treatments will need to be done to the discharge water.

- A motion to add the Root Creek WD project to both the IRWM project list and the SWRP project list was made by Kristi R; Jason R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

13. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act – SGMA – Report

- Stephanie A commented that both the Chowchilla and Madera Subbasins had annual reports that were turned in by April 1st. The final awards list for Prop. 68 funding included recharge projects in both the Chowchilla and Madera Subbasins. There was a draft list released a few months ago, but now the final list is out. The Madera Subbasin award is approximately \$4.2 million for recharge related projects and \$4.2 million for the Chowchilla Subbasin. Stephanie also mentioned that working with DWR on the grant agreement will begin shortly. People get eager to start their projects once the awards are out, but please do not begin a project until the grant agreement is executed.

14. Chowchilla Nitrate Control Program - Report

- Kristi R commented that the Chowchilla Management Group turned in their Preliminary Management Zone Proposals and Early Action Plans which are currently in review with the Water Board, and they will have a public meeting on April 27th from 1pm – 4pm which Jacob R referenced under items of interest at the beginning of the meeting. This meeting is in response to answering some questions and getting some feedback from the Management Zones and interested parties. They will discuss the Chowchilla Management Zone during this meeting. Kristi also thanked Madera County for sharing their Domestic Well Inventory which was part of the Prop. 68 funding. This helped narrow down areas that need to be targeted for wells that may be in higher nitrate areas. Merced County has also been asked to help with gathering that information.
- Kristi R also mentioned that they are working with SHE through the Madera RWMG's Prop. 1 DAC grant. SHE is doing outreach which Angela I indicated earlier as well as testing. So far there has been one test done, and the results came back showing high nitrate levels. That household now has bottled water delivery because of the nitrate issue, and they should be receiving it shortly. They are not required to provide testing or replacement water until they begin the implementation of the Early Action Plan (which is due to start May 7th), but they felt that it was important they get going on it. They are doing well testing and providing replacement water for those that need it.
- Kristi R announced that they are sending out Request for Proposals (RFPs). They have a total of three RFPs. One being the manager or coordinator position which will be sent to Jason R at the City of Chowchilla who has agreed to handle that portion of the RFP for them. The second RFP is for well sampling, and that would be for well sampling outside of the grant as they continue on as well as the Merced County area of the Chowchilla Subbasin. The third RFP is for water replacement, so if anyone knows of an entity that would be interested in receiving any of those RFPs or responding with a proposal, they are more than welcome to email the Management Zone at chowchilladrinkingwater@gmail.com. Madera County will also help with distributing the RFPs to a larger audience.

15. Implementation Grant Project Updates – Report

- Round 1 – Arundo/Sediment Removal Project
 - Gretchen H announced that the project is done. Everything has been submitted and they are now waiting on the state to send the retention check and some final close out documentation. Tom W mentioned we need to find funding to keep this work going, or else there will be just as much sediment and Arundo as when we started years ago.

- Mark H commented that Colusa GSA is adding Arundo removal to their GSP as an annual budgeted item for reduction in non-beneficial consumption of groundwater. For those that are involved in the GSAs throughout the county, it might be something for your GSPs to put some funding in there. Hopefully we can get some grant funding but the consistent pressure on the Arundo is what's needed. Arundo can use up to 20-acre feet of water per acre per year. If there's 500-acres of Arundo in the county, there's 10,000-acre feet of water that we can save. This would help save a lot of water, helps with flooding and helps with damage to infrastructure. The Madera/Chowchilla RCD is waiting for the 1602 permit to work with the county and try to get some grant funding to get kick started with that long-term funding which is needed.
 - Tom W would like everyone on this committee to be thinking about that on any kind of programs that we are going to do because it is just as invasive as anything we have.
- Mark H announced that a job posting for the Madera/Chowchilla RCD has been made available for project manager/executive director and they are looking for applicants. The posting is available on the RCD's website, the California's RCD website, the Farm Bureau's website, and it's probably on the county's website too. The application deadline is May 10th.
 - Tom W asked Jacob R to send the job posting out to the email list, that way they can all share it through their different organizations.

16. New/ Suggested Members for the Madera RWMG

- Jacob R mentioned that he received all of the required paperwork from the Indian Lakes Estates Property Owners Association to join the Madera RWMG as a DAC. Jacob also re-sent the invitation email to Aliso GSA but did not receive a reply.

17. Future Agenda Items

- Tom W asked to keep the Arundo/Sediment Removal Project on the agenda until we receive the close out documentation.
- Tom W asked the group members if they would like to present a letter from the Madera RWMG to the federal judge that is going to be doing the lawsuit from the three EPA groups. Tom W will send the notice to Jacob so he can send it out to the group members. Tom and his Chief of Staff, Bobby M, will be meeting with their lawyer later on this week to talk about the letter and if they do get a letter drafted up, Tom will send the letter to Jacob so he can get it out to everyone to see how they feel about what we should do. Tom wants everyone to think of people that can reach out to the federal judge to get this lawsuit thrown out quickly.

18. Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 24th, 2021, at 1:30 pm on ZOOM for now, unless we can meet in person. If we can meet in person, meeting will be held at the Madera location.
 - Tom W mentioned that we get better numbers at meetings on Zoom compared to when we held meetings in-person prior to COVID. Last month in March, we had the most participants at a Madera RWMG than in the past. Tom would like to discuss keeping Madera RWMG meetings on Zoom after these COVID restrictions are lifted during next month's meeting.

19. The meeting was adjourned at 2:37 pm.