



Regional Water Management Group

LOCATION: Online (ZOOM)

MINUTES

Monday, May 24, 2021 1:30 pm

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:31 pm, by Carl Janzen, vice-chair.

Those present included:

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

Carl Janzen – Madera ID

Gretchen Heisdorf – Root Creek WD / P&P

Sam Cunningham – Madera County

Chris Montoya – DWR

Jenny Nunez-Rodriguez – Madera County

Laura Satterlee – SHE

Joe Fiss – Greystone Equities/SEMCU

Christina McDonald – North Fork Rancheria

Matt Maringer – Greystone Equities

Dina Nolan – Madera ID

Scott Silva – Greystone Equities

Igal Treibatch – SEMCU

2. Review & Approval - Agenda & Minutes

- A motion to approve the May agenda after adding item #10 was made by Gretchen H; Igal T second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to approve the April minutes was made by Kristi R; Gretchen H second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment

- The FEMA/Cal OES Hazard Mitigation Program is currently accepting subapplications through June 18th.
- A workshop on Tribal Drinking Water for the SAFER program is scheduled for Central California on June 8th from 9 am – 11 am.
- The People Lab at UC Berkeley and the California 100 Initiative are accepting applications from government agencies and nonprofits to co-design and test innovative policy ideas that have the potential to meaningfully improve the lives of Californians. Each project duration will need to be 2 years and can receive \$100,000-\$150,000 in flexible funding. Applications are due by 5 pm on June 15th.
- CalEPA is now accepting applications for the Environmental Just Small Grants 2021 Cycle. 11:59 pm June 30th. Total funding for each application is up to \$50,000 and the project duration will be 18 months.
 - Pre-application assistance webinars are on June 1st from 4 pm – 5 pm & June 3rd from 7 pm – 8 pm
- The State Water Board Division of Financial Assistance is soliciting Letters of Interest from parties interested in receiving funding to administer a program to fund eligible Operations and Maintenance costs for multiple DAC water systems over a period of 3 to 5 years. Letters of Interest will be accepted until July 12th.
- Yosemite Sequoia RCDC is launching a project prioritization processes with American Forests as part of a block grant they have with Sierra Nevada Conservancy. This block grant is part of the Watershed Improvement Program and is tiered to the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. Yosemite Sequoia RCDC is looking for shovel-ready

projects to add to the prioritization list, and the list will be leveraged for the early action funding as part of Governor Newsom's budget. Yosemite Sequoia RCDC has asked for projects to be submitted to them no later than the end of the day July 7th.

- The U.S. EPA made a news release where they announced that they are making \$6.5 billion in funding available for water infrastructure projects. This funding will go to projects in 5 priority categories including economically stressed communities and aging infrastructure.
- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently accepting applications for its California Forests and Woodlands Management Program. The program looks to fund activities that promote forest and woodland health, sustainable forest management, fire resiliency, biomass utilization for bioenergy, habitat conservation needs, and insect, disease, and fire recovery. Applications are due June 8th.
- The California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) has \$1.3 million available in funding through their State Fire Assistance Program. This is a federal funding opportunity that does require 50% matching funds/cost share with non-federal funds. The State Fire Assistance Program supports fire risk reduction activities such as fuel reduction, hazard mitigation planning, and education programs. Applications for this program are due on June 15th.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a funding opportunity for Federally recognized Tribal governments to benefit wildlife and their habitat, including species of Native American cultural or traditional importance. Applications are due June 18th.
- The Chowchilla Management Zone Nitrate Control Program will be holding a public meeting on June 2nd at 5:30pm. The meeting will focus on the implementation of the Early Action Plan as well as an overview of the plan, information on how to receive free well testing, and where to access clean drinking water in the Chowchilla Subbasin.
- CAL FIRE has recently announced the release of the 2021/2022 Urban and Community Forestry Grants Guidelines and concept proposal form. Concept proposals will be due on July 14th, and grant types offered include Urban Forest Expansion and Improvement, Urban Forest Management Activities, and Urban Forest Education and Workforce Development. Eligible entities include cities, counties, districts, and 501(c)3 non-profit organizations.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Discussion & Action - Financial Report/Warrant Approvals

- Carl J mentioned that for this month there was no income, but all 11 members have paid their annual member dues or have made a payment towards their annual member dues. We had an expense of \$2,331.89 for administrative work. This leaves us with a balance of \$36,786.58, which leaves us in good shape for the rest of the year.
- A motion to approve the financial report was made by Kristi R; Igal T 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 commented that she has been working on outreach arrangements with staff. Staff will not be able to assist with outreach until next week at the earliest. Staff will be out dropping off flyers for 2 days next week.
 - Laura S mentioned that there are no updates from her. Laura is hopeful that there will be more sampling and testing requests from the public soon.

6. Discussion – Proposition 1 IRWM Implementation Funding

- Mountain Counties and San Joaquin Valley Counties
 - Jeannie H commented that Eddie M is the one who usually reports out on this agenda item but is not able to make it to the meeting today. Eddie did send an email to Jeannie stating that there was no update for this agenda item this month.

7. Discussion – Domestic Wells – Prop 68 Funding

- Stephanie A mentioned that these are grants that the County holds on behalf of the Madera and Chowchilla Subbasins. Luhdorff & Scalmanini are the consultants for this project, and they are inventorying domestic wells in each subbasin. Stephanie would like to invite Luhdorff & Scalmanini to next month's meeting to present again on where they currently are with the project and on potential locations for siting of the wells. The grants include 3 wells in the Chowchilla Subbasin and 2 wells in the Madera Subbasin. The wells are nested monitoring wells installed within concentrations of domestic wells. Luhdorff & Scalmanini have some preliminary locations that they could present to the group at next month's meeting for the Madera RWMG.
 - Carl J commented that he thinks it would be OK to have Luhdorff & Scalmanini present on the progress of this project at next month's meeting. Domestic wells are going to be a topic of discussion as the summer goes on.
- Jacob R commented that during a meeting he attended last week for the Roundtable of Regions, DWR presented on a few different funding opportunities that they have, and they announced that Round 2 for Prop 68 will be opening up in 2022 and they are looking to make \$300 million available over 2 years as grant money and technical assistance money. DWR also has \$28 million left over from Round 1 for Prop 68. For the remaining funds from round 1, DWR is accepting Letters of Interest for Operation and Maintenance projects through July 12th.
 - Igal T asked for more information on this funding. Jacob commented that DWR is looking to fund programs that relate to Operation and Maintenance costs, and it needs to be for a DAC water system.

8. Discussion – Creek Fire / Forest Management / Watershed

- Stephanie A commented that their Office of Emergency Services is trying to get reimbursed from FEMA for some costs they incurred doing geohazard mapping. They mapped the high-risk areas that were in the burn scar or just downstream from the burn scar looking at burn severity and slope to figure out better ways to evacuate people. FEMA is supposed to reimburse for this, but it has been a lot of work trying to get them to do that.
 - Carl J mentioned that he has heard it is a long process to get reimbursed by FEMA.

9. Discussion – Madera RWMG Meetings on Zoom

- Carl J commented that once we are out of these COVID restriction times, how the Madera RWMG meetings will be held needs to be discussed. Carl did acknowledge that having our meetings on Zoom during COVID has doubled or even tripled our attendance at monthly meetings which is a good thing. Carl also mentioned that with the meetings being on Zoom, there are several people he has not been able to meet in-person and there are several advantages to having meetings in-person. Carl proposed that once we are eligible to have meetings in-person with no restrictions (masks, distancing, capacity limits, etc.), we meet once a quarter in-person at the Madera County's Government Center building and have the other meetings on Zoom. On the 3rd floor, they can have meetings with up to 31 people while following the current COVID guidelines. With the meetings being kept on Zoom, it will help keep the meeting attendance numbers up. Pre-COVID we would have meetings at 3 different locations on a rotating basis so people

from all parts of the County could have at least 1 meeting relatively close to them to attend every 3 months but Zoom seems to have been taking care of that.

- Jacob R mentioned that a few people that weren't able to attend today's meeting reached out and would like the meetings to stay on Zoom going forward. Jacob has also been asked by members of the public to keep meetings on Zoom after the COVID restrictions are lifted.
 - Kristi R asked if we could have the meeting both in-person and on Zoom simultaneously.
 - Gretchen H asked if the meeting is in the Madera County's Government Center, the technology should be available to have the meeting both in-person and on Zoom. Gretchen also added that for a lot of the people, the travel is very difficult or does not work out to attend these meetings each month.
 - Carl J mentioned that the meeting on Zoom could at least be a call-in option for people on phones that can't attend the meetings in-person. Carl isn't too sure how practical it would be for Jacob R to be at the meeting in-person and taking care of the meeting on Zoom at the same time.
 - Jeannie H added that they have done this before at the Government Center (meeting in-person and on Zoom too) so it is possible. The Government Center in Oakhurst is another option too to have an in-person meeting and have it on Zoom if that's what the group decides to do every 3 months, 6 months, etc. That would allow us to switch up the in-person meeting location.
 - Jacob R does not have an issue with being at the meeting in-person and running the meeting on Zoom at the same time. Jacob may not be as responsive on Zoom when it comes to answering questions on the chat feature while doing the in-person meeting too.
 - Carl J would like to keep this topic as a discussion item on the agenda for now and see how things are once the COVID restrictions are lifted June 15th. Governor Newsom said the State will be opening up on June 15th so we will see where we are a month or two after opening up, whether it was a good idea or a bad idea.

10. Discussion – Drought Working Group

- Jeannie H asked for this item to be added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting and kept on the agenda as a running item since California has officially announced we are in a drought again, even though we really never got out of the drought. The Department of Water and Natural Resources is looking at putting together a drought working group which would mostly be for education and outreach regarding drought, and it will include a lot of departments that are within the County (Emergency Services, Public Works, Water and Natural Resources, etc.) that may have some sort of connection with drought, water systems, etc. They will also look at possibly bringing in the irrigation districts, water districts, other municipality resource conservation districts, and whoever wants to be involved as well as groups such as Self-Help Enterprises, Leadership Counsel, and organizations that can give out information, and give outreach and education for the drought. They're looking at the purpose of this group to make sure there is consistent messaging through the outreach and education in regard to the drought. They will look at coordinating activities in response to the drought conditions, possibly having a clearing house of information. The clearing house could be a page on their website having updated information on a continuous basis where information or tools can be downloaded. Information could include where to buy low-flow showerheads, low-flow toilets, upcoming water conservation workshops, etc. They will also try to follow and advocate that Madera County regarding any state-wide drought policies and regulations as they come up, now that the State is the one that has declared us officially

in a drought, that Madera County never did stop thinking that they were in a drought the past few years and kept their proclamation current. They are currently putting together a contact list for this group to send out information about meetings and current activities going on. The group could also hold classes to help educate the public about the drought and share tips on how to conserve water.

11. Letters to the California Legislature and Budget Committees – Review & Approval

- AB 1500, SB 45 & Drought Relief and Resiliency Package
 - Jacob R mentioned that the Madera RWMG and all the other RWMGs in the State were asked by the Roundtable of Regions to write 3 separate letters. The first 2 letters they asked for were for AB 1500 and SB 45 which are 2 competing water bonds. Each letter is asking for \$510 million to be included for IRWM. The third letter is for the Drought Relief and Resiliency Package budget, and this will be priority for IRWM over AB 1500 and SB 45. The third letter is asking for the same amount of \$510 million to be included for the general fund for IRWM out of the entire package amount of \$5.1 billion. The \$5.1 billion will be used for water infrastructure, drought response and climate resilience. Right now, in the language for these 3 possible funding sources for IRWM, there is \$0 allocated to IRWM.
 - Jacob sent these 3 letters to the voting group members to review prior to today's meeting to approve for Tom W to sign on behalf of the Madera RWMG.
 - A motion to approve the letters was made by Jeannie H; Kristi R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

12. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act – SGMA – Report

- Stephanie A commented that GSAs were to turn in their annual reports by April 1st. In the Madera Subbasin, the ad hoc technical experts met about domestic well mitigation. There is an upcoming meeting with Delta-Mendota, Merced, Madera, and Chowchilla Subbasins. It is a professionally facilitated meeting to talk about subsidence. In the Madera County GSA, they just completed their second of 3 meetings about allocations. Allocations come back to the Board on June 8th. They're also having a public workshop in cooperation with the Farm Bureau and MAWA on June 1st from 3 pm – 5 pm, and there will be a face-to-face component as well as a Zoom component.
- Keith H mentioned that last week on Tuesday, they had a photo op regarding a shared project between the City of Madera and the Madera Irrigation District. There is a water hazard out at the Madera Golf Course that has been connected to a MID canal and MID funded the connection between their facilities and the golf course. When there's extra water in the system, MID will release that water into the water hazard and there will be a recharge within the City of Madera and MID boundaries.
- Jacob R commented that last week, DWR announced that Prop 1 Round 3 funds will open up in July and they are looking to make \$50 million available for implementation projects only.
 - Carl J asked when the funding opportunity will close, and Jacob answered that it is typically a 30 to 60 day turn around once the funding is opened. Carl said this is not enough time to gather the required information to apply for funding.

13. Chowchilla Nitrate Control Program - Report

- Kristi R commented that the Chowchilla Management Zone is managing this program and they are looking for domestic wells to test and provide replacement water to those who's well water is testing above the legal limit threshold on nitrates. If you know of anyone in the Chowchilla Management Zone boundaries with a domestic well, please

reach out for free testing to be done at ChowchillaDrinkingWater@gmail.com. They have partnered with SHE on this project to provide well testing and the outreach for them. They have been putting flyers in food boxes that have been going out at the food bank and they have sent flyers to local school districts.

- Carl J asked if they have tested any wells yet, and Kristi answered that they have. Testing has been done and the nitrate levels were above the legal limit so they have been providing those homes replacement water until the nitrate issue can be resolved.
- Kristi R also mentioned that they will be having a public meeting on June 2nd at 5:30pm. The meeting will focus on the implementation of the Early Action Plan as well as an overview of the plan, information on how to receive free well testing, and where to access clean drinking water in the Chowchilla Subbasin.

14. Implementation Grant Project Updates – Report

- Round 1 – Arundo/Sediment Removal Project
 - Gretchen H mentioned that this should be one of the final two reports for this project. Everything was submitted and approved by DWR. To formally close out the project, they are only waiting on the receipt of the final retention check from the State of California. Once they have final monies in hand, they know that the grant is completely done, and we can start signing off on this agenda item.
 - Jeannie H added that they have received the check for the final quarter so there is just the final check to receive for the retention payment.
 - Carl J commented that it seems that this project has been going on forever, and Gretchen added that the grant application began in November 2009. This was one of the first grants that we did as a group.
 - Mark H would like to leave this item on the agenda because he would like to start another Arundo project after this one is all done. Mark also asked about the status of the County's 1602 permit with the CDFW to get another Arundo removal project going.
 - Stephanie A answered about the 1602 permit. They do have a draft 1602 contract from the CDFW. They are reviewing it and submitting comments which are due tomorrow. The draft is stricter and more restrictive than other permits that they have had in the past. Stephanie mentioned this may be a sort of project that is a maintenance project that needs local funding solutions because one-time grant funding isn't a great solution for Arundo removal. Arundo removal needs maintenance. There are multiple discussions with other agencies about what that might look like. They know Arundo is a problem, but there is no easy solution for it.
 - Mark H asked if there is any way for the engineers, while they're looking at their GSPs, to include the water used by Arundo as far as water savings to where there is a monetary value placed on it to where the GSAs can have that maintenance factor.
 - Stephanie A answered yes, and it is something that went in to at least the Chowchilla GSP as a potential project because they looked at a number of water use figures from Arundo. There is a way to make a SGMA Nexus. Stephanie has shared that information with County GSA rate consultants but that is the shift from a local maintenance pot that is year in year out versus a grant that is kind of a one-time and done kind of funding source. The grant funds help but it's just the local maintenance that needs a funding source.

- Jeannie H added that grant funding is nice, but Arundo is something that needs to be hit every 3 – 5 years to maintain it before it comes back. They have been talking with other partners in the County to see if they can work out some kind of a cost-share/workshare to keep up with maintenance on all of these water systems.
- Mark H also asked if hand labor is OK to use to get the Arundo out of the stream beds. Stephanie A answered that the way to remove Arundo is one thing that they are negotiating with the CDFW about as well as some roosting bats.

15. New/ Suggested Members for the Madera RWMG

- No new members suggested.

16. Future Agenda Items

- Jacob R commented that he will keep the Drought Working Group item on the agenda going forward as a discussion item.

17. Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 28th, 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 Oakhurst location.

18. The meeting was adjourned at 2:23 pm.