



Regional Water Management Group

LOCATION: Online (ZOOM)

MINUTES

Monday, June 27, 2022 1:30 pm

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:32 pm, by Tom Wheeler, chairman.

Those present included:

Tom Wheeler – Madera County
Kristi Robinson – CMZ/Triangle T WD
Jacob Roberson – RWMG Coordinator
Jeannie Habben – Madera County
Keith Helmuth – City of Madera
Carl Janzen – Madera ID
Gretchen Heisdorf – Root Creek WD
Don Roberts – Gravelly Ford WD
Sam Cunningham – Madera County
Al Solis – SEMCU

Dina Nolan – Madera ID
Melanie Aldridge – Madera WD
Manuel Leon – SHE
Jack Rice – MAWA
Jason Rogers – City of Chowchilla
Angela Islas – Civic Well
Emily Garcia – Madera County
Hannah Tikalsky – CA Association of RCDs
Priscilla Baker – USDA NRCS Madera
Mira Dick – USDA NRCS Madera

2. Review & Approval - Agenda & Minutes

- A motion to approve the June agenda with the addition of the Sierra Highlands project for Madera County was made by Gretchen H; Kristi R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.
 - The Sierra Highlands project for Madera County was added to the agenda as item 12b by Jacob R.
- A motion to approve the May minutes was made by Kristi R; Carl J second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval – Resolution No. 2022-06

- A motion to approve meeting resolution no. 2022-06 was made by Carl J; Kristi R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment

- Items of interest were mentioned by Jacob R (for more information, reach out to Jacob):
 - DWR has contracted with the California Rural Water Association to provide **NO-COST LEAK DETECTION SURVEYS TO COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEMS THAT SERVE 3,000 OR LESS CONNECTIONS.** Tribal water systems also qualify for this free service.

If you are interested in getting leak detection technical assistance, please contact Ruby Viramontes at viramontes@calruralwater.org

- The California Strategic Growth Council is accepting pre-proposals for Round 1 of the Regional Climate Collaboratives Program through July 15th. This new capacity building grant program funds community-rooted

and cross-sectoral partners to develop the processes, plans, and projects that will drive and sustain climate action. The goal of the program is to strengthen local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills, and expertise with a particular focus on increasing access to funding resources for project planning and implementation within under-resourced communities.

Full proposals are due at 5 pm on October 7th, and awards will be announced at the Strategic Growth Council's December 15th meeting. More information (guidelines, resources, how to apply, etc.) can be found on the [announcement page for this funding opportunity](#).

- DWR has released the final [Guidelines and Proposal Solicitation Package](#) for the [Riverine Stewardship Program](#). This program provides funding to plan and implement projects that will reduce flooding, improve water quality, and restore streams, creeks, and rivers to enhance the environment for fish, wildlife, and people.

The program will award up to \$15 million in competitive grants to implement projects that help reduce flood risk, increase water supply, and enhance and restore fish populations and habitat. The funding will be delivered through the Riverine Stewardship Program and its two subprograms: the [Urban Streams Restoration Program \(USRP\)](#) and the San Joaquin Fish Population Enhancement Program.

All three programs will help support watersheds, local wildlife, and aquatic habitat. Eligible projects include habitat restoration, bank stabilization, water temperature improvements and habitat enhancements to increase water supply reliability to help fish adapt to climate change.

- The Employment Development Department in collaboration with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, the Office of Planning and Research, and the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development announced the availability of up to \$65 million in the Community Economic Resilience Fund Program Planning Phase 1 Program Year 2022-24.

Planning projects will develop meaningfully inclusive regional planning processes that produce regional roadmaps, which will outline plans to bolster economic resiliency and increase access to quality jobs for those who traditionally have been left behind.

Proposals must be received by 3 pm on July 25th. Please refer to the [solicitation proposal](#) for more information.

- The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is currently accepting concept proposals for its new [Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program](#). Up to \$23.75 million in awards may be made under the program to support the planning and implementation of forest health projects that promote wildfire recovery and forest resilience.

Concept proposals must be submitted by 5 pm on July 29, 2022. For more information, please see the [program guidelines](#).

- The next Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) stakeholder meeting is scheduled to be held on July 20th from 10 am – 12 pm. This meeting will be held solely on Zoom. They will revisit the topic of Nitrate Groundwater Protection Targets. More information will be provided prior to the meeting, which is open to the public and all interested stakeholders.
- The next [Farm Bill listening session](#) will be held at Fresno State on July 7th at 11 am. The exact location on Fresno State's campus is still being confirmed. If you are interested in attending, please let me know and I can update you on the exact location once the press contact lets me know. No RSVP to attend is necessary.

The listening session will be chaired by the House Agriculture Subcommittee Chair Jim Costa of California. The listening session will be titled, "A 2022 Review of the Farm Bill: Perspectives from the Field". This listening session is being held to gather input from producers and consumers on the ground across the country for the 2023 Farm Bill. Other listening sessions will be held, and those dates and locations will be announced in the coming weeks.

The July 7th listening session will also be broadcasted live on YouTube.

- The EPA is hosting a webinar on July 13th at 10 am on the water infrastructure funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Attend the webinar to learn how the BIL funding can help communities improve their water and wastewater infrastructure. For example, the BIL invests \$43 billion through the State Revolving Funds, with a significant portion of funding provided as grants for principal forgiveness loans to disadvantaged communities. The webinar will include an opportunity to submit questions. The webinar presentation will be recorded, and EPA will post the recording and slides online after the webinar. Registration is required to attend the webinar.
- During the webinar, they will cover:
 - How the State Revolving Funds program funds work
 - How the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding can help communities address water infrastructure challenges
 - What resources are available (current and upcoming) for information and technical assistance
 - Where to go for more information and to stay in the loop

5. Discussion & Action - Financial Report/Warrant Approvals

- June 2022 Financial Report

- Carl J reported that we started out with \$37,834.01 this month and no money came in. \$2,250 was spent for the group's coordinator, which left us with \$35,584.01 at the end of the month. We are in good shape for the rest of the year.
- A motion to approve the financial report was made by Carl J; Gretchen H second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

6. Discussion – USDA NRCS Recharge Pilot Program Funding Update

- Priscilla B provided an overview on the status of their Recharge Pilot Program. They offered 2 practices – on-farm recharge and basins/trenches. The 2nd practice is open under their EQIP program. For the 2nd program, the same incentive rules apply as with the EQIP program under the Farm Bill. The [groundwater recharge tool](#) used for scoring is available to the public. They funded a total of 20 projects, which includes 18 in Madera County and 2 in Tulare County. There was a lot of interest in Madera County for this program due to Madera ID, Chowchilla WD, and the Conservation Districts promoting it to growers in the area. For the 18 Madera County projects, there are 15 on-farm recharge projects and 3 basin/trenching projects. When water is available, the projects are to put excess surface water on cropland for the on-farm recharge projects or to have a dedicated basin to take those excess flows. They are currently notifying applicants whose applications were approved for funding. The Sustainable Conservation is NRCS' partner for this pilot program and together they are working on notifying successful applicants. They are also contacting successful applicants to help them move forward with the funding contracts.
- The 15 on-farm recharge projects include over 2,500-acres in Madera County, with 1,300-acres in Chowchilla WD boundaries and 1,200 in Madera ID boundaries. For the 3 basin/trenching projects, 1 will be brand new (starting from scratch) on cropland. The other 2 projects are utilizing some existing landscape features. 1 applicant has an existing trench/leveled area that they are going to utilize for recharge and another applicant has an existing low sandy spot that recently has been used to store equipment. For the applications approved, they looked at their soil and subsurface infiltration capability using the recharge sustainability tool and SAGBI maps, which looks at the soil suitability up to 6 feet in depth. The Land Suitability Index tool looks at soil suitability at a deeper depth than the SAGBI maps. If available, they also looked at well logs to see if there is a well nearby that is in the right aquifer (meaning above the Corcoran clay) to see if the well can be monitored to measure the response to these recharge projects. They are curious to see if nearby wells are positively impacted by local recharge that is happening (groundwater levels rise). They have identified nearby wells to these recharge projects that can be sounded to check the positive impact in groundwater levels rising.
- For the on-farm recharge (just putting excess surface water on existing cropland), they asked the growers to let them review pesticide use reports and nutrient management reports/plans (ILRP) to show that the growers are logging usage information and are not creating a leaching problem

while they are trying to fix a groundwater overdraft problem. They are also meeting with the growers to see if any infrastructure (pipes, turnouts, flowmeters, etc.) is needed to get the excess surface water onto the cropland and discussing possible issues that may come up. The payment for the on-farm recharge projects is to put the excess surface water on the land at \$100/acre over a 1, 2, or 3-year period when water is available. Growers may need to wait to accept excess surface water depending on management practices (pruning, pesticide spraying, fertilizing events, etc.). They are also reviewing site use history to make sure the land was not previously used in a way that can contaminant the groundwater. The growers also need to have a recharge water right. They are currently only doing recharge on croplands or associated lands (not using pasture or rangeland) for this pilot program.

- For the basin projects, they look at storage capacity for payment amounts. For some of the basin projects, they are looking at putting in some check dams to put excess water into the basins. They may also need to put in some turnouts or riprap to prevent erosion. Trenches will be paid for dirt removed in cubic yard increments.
 - Jack R asked if the [GRAT \(Groundwater Recharge Assessment Tool\)](#) was used on the funded projects, and Priscilla answered that the GRAT is what they used to analyze the projects for recharge potential. Priscilla also mentioned that the GRAT did not disqualify projects if the land was not the greatest for recharge potential, but some sites were better than others which earned them a higher ranking. If the projects met the basic requirements, they got funded.
 - Jack also asked if there was a more particularized process done for projects within Madera ID's boundaries. Carl J mentioned that no restrictions were added. Dina N also added that Madera ID helped develop the original GRAT for land within Madera ID's boundaries. Sustainable Conservation also helped develop the GRAT, who also helped with the recharge pilot program. One of the main criteria for the pilot program was access to surface water (water rights). Priscilla also added that having appropriated water through Madera ID or Chowchilla WD checked the box for having access to surface water.
 - Jack also asked if these funded NRCS projects are interacting with Madera ID GSA. Dina answered that they cooperated with NRCS and Sustainable Conservation on this program. As part of their GSP, the funded projects were incentivizing the landowners to participate in this pilot program. The funded projects play into Madera ID GSA's GSP within Madera ID's boundaries.

7. Discussion – Proposition 1 Disadvantaged Community Involvement Funding

- San Joaquin Valley
 - Self-Help Enterprises – Projects 12 and 13
 - Manuel L reported that SHE continues to focus their efforts on the statewide drought at this time. SHE is currently not involved with any of the outreach or well testing for projects 12 and 13. Outreach and well testing will continue to be conducted by CMZ for these

projects. This does not mean that in the future SHE will not be involved with these projects, but for the time being SHE is focused on the drought which leaves CMZ to do the outreach and well testing for projects 12 and 13.

- Chowchilla Nitrate Control Program / Chowchilla Management Zone – Projects 12 and 13
 - Kristi R reported that to-date they have had 64 inquiries to have domestic wells tested in Madera County. They have received 33 completed applications for the well testing and have tested 23 wells so far. Of the 23 wells tested, 6 have been over the safe threshold for nitrates and they are currently providing replacement water to 12 homes. They have connected with 53,496 individuals regarding having their domestic wells tested free of charge and being provided with drinking water if the tests come back high on nitrates. They have been using social media, US Postal Service mailers (“every door direct”), sending flyers to homes through the local school districts, attending and having a booth at the Chowchilla Fair where they connected with about 1,500 individuals, sending out flyers in food bank distributions, door to door canvassing, and holding public meetings to connect with people to advertise this free service that they are able to provide to domestic well owners/users. They are continuing to try to reach everyone within the CMZ and Madera County that use a domestic well for drinking water purposes.
 - Carl J asked if they are starting to get a sampling of the whole area where CMZ feels they can project which wells may be contaminated or if the area is grouped or concentrated in one area with the 23 wells that have been tested. Kristi said they have an idea based on public data that is available suggesting where contaminated wells should be located based on data from the ILRP or other programs. They have had some tests come back differently than what they thought they would be. It is a little early to make assumptions with only 23 well tests being done to give a firm idea on that. Not all the well tests done to-date have been in one area. They have a general idea of areas where they think the contaminants may be high based on available data plus their data from the well tests done.
 - If you or anyone you know that lives in Madera County and has a domestic well which they would like to have tested, please reach out to Kristi or CMZ.
 - Dina N asked if CMZ has a Madera County specific flyer that Madera ID can share on their Facebook page to advertise. Kristi mentioned that the flyer they have is specific for the CMZ area, but if anyone from Madera County reaches out to have their domestic well tested, they will not be turned away. Kristi will talk with the CMZ committee and see if they can

develop a flyer to advertise the services in Madera County, and not just specific for the CMZ area.

8. Discussion – Proposition 1 IRWM Implementation Funding

- Mountain Counties and San Joaquin Valley Counties
 - Indian Lakes
 - Eddie M was not at the meeting this month to provide an update, but last month Eddie reported that they are waiting on confirmation from the vendor for the arrival of the materials so they can begin the meter installation. Tom W spoke with the Public Works Department last week and it sounded like they had enough parts in to go ahead and get the installations for Indian Lakes started. Jeannie H mentioned that the person at Public Works who oversaw this project is retiring at the end of the week, but Jeannie is sure that they will be finding someone to take over the project.
 - Parkwood
 - Eddie M was not at the meeting this month to provide an update.
 - City of Madera
 - Keith H reported that they are still going through the report that their consultant did and looking at alternative scenarios regarding metering. Construction is looking to start in March or April of next year.
 - Parksdale
 - Eddie M was not at the meeting this month to provide an update, but last month Eddie reported that the project is pretty much completed for the well rehabilitation.
 - City of Chowchilla
 - Jason R reported that the State is still working on getting the draft agreement sent over to Chowchilla soon. Once they receive the draft agreement, hopefully they can begin moving forward with this project for metering.

9. Discussion – Prop 68 Funding

- Domestic Well Project – Madera County GSA
 - Stephanie A is on vacation this week, but she did provide an update to Jacob R via email. Madera County GSA's consultant team, Luhdorff and Scalmanini, is finding locations for the new monitoring wells in both the Madera Subbasin and the Chowchilla Subbasin.
- Prop 68 Round 2
 - Gretchen H reported that Root Creek WD is the grantee and will be serving as the liaison for DWR. They have a draft agreement with DWR right now which they are going back and forth on. The 3 construction projects and 1 GSP update project have updated work plans and budgets to DWR which Root Creek WD is awaiting comments on. They are hoping to have comments back on the draft agreement within the next week or 2. There are 2 items that DWR is wanting to deal with on their end first, then Root Creek WD will see where they go from there.
 - Melanie A asked if this is the same Root Creek WD agreement for the Madera Basin for the Madera WD and Root Creek WD projects.

Gretchen said it is. Melanie also added that she has not seen any agreement between Madera WD and Root Creek WD, and Melanie assumes that there will need to be one for the funding. Melanie sent an email a while ago about this and Root Creek WD mentioned that they are not far along enough yet for the agreement, but it sounds like they may be getting to that point now. Gretchen mentioned that they are getting close to needing that agreement, and they have been discussing it. Once Root Creek WD gets an executed grant agreement from DWR, then they can move forward with subgrantee agreements. The subgrantee agreement will be an attachment on an exhibit for the agreement with DWR.

- Al S mentioned that he sent an email to Jacob R back in April about the Prop 68 Round 2 funding that will be open for applications in September of this year to implement SGMA GSA projects with a total of roughly \$202.5 million available. Igal T had some questions about the funding which he wanted Al to ask during today's meeting. 1st question is about the type of grants that are becoming available in September 2022, and if there are any special titles or names for these grants. Jacob mentioned that they would be projects for the GSAs. To apply, you need to be a GSA or an entity that is authorized to represent a GSA. Tom W asked Jacob to send the link and other information about the Prop 68 Round 2 grant program to Al and Igal. 2nd question from Igal is if there is a closing date yet for this funding opportunity, and Jacob mentioned that one has not been announced yet, but it is usually a 60-day turnaround once the application period opens. 3rd question is Igal does have a project regarding dry wells, and he was wondering if this project could be funded under the Prop 68 funding. Jacob mentioned that recharge is an eligible project type for the Round 2 funding for Prop 68.

10. Discussion – Creek Fire / Forest Management / Watershed

- Tom W mentioned that there was [an article in the Fresno Bee](#) about Chad Hanson and environmentalist groups that Chad works with. They are suing the Yosemite National Park for cutting trees and brush in the forest to help stop extreme wildfires. The National Park was beginning to thin the forest, but they are now going through a lawsuit about it. The Fresno Bee came out the next day with an editorial against the lawsuit stating that the forest needs to be managed.

11. Discussion – Drought Working Group

- Madera County's Drought Working Group is having their next meeting on July 15th at 10 am on Zoom. They are going to have a professor from UC Merced talk about drought and the economic impacts from the 2021 drought on California agriculture. They will also have some links available for the public policy debrief from the public policy institute of California on drought and agriculture along with some other articles. They are going to start the drought plan which is required by SB552. They have contracts to get the plan started soon.

12. Discussion – 2022 IRWM Implementation Grant Prop 1

- Round 2 Funding

- Jacob R mentioned that DWR released the final [Guidelines](#) and [Proposal Solicitation Package](#) for IRWM Round 2 Implementation funding back in mid-May. There will be 2 deadlines to apply (August 19, 2022, and February 1, 2023). Please keep in mind that the Madera RWMG only has funds to apply for in the Mountain County Funding Area (we have no funds to apply for in the San Joaquin River Funding Area). For the MCFA, we have \$594,782.67 to apply for which is just for the Madera region. Eligible projects include:
 - Water reuse and recycling for non-potable reuse and direct and indirect potable reuse
 - Water-use efficiency and water conservation
 - Local and regional surface and underground water storage, including groundwater aquifer cleanup or recharge projects
 - Regional water conveyance facilities that improve integration of separate water systems
 - Watershed protection, restoration, and management projects, including projects that reduce the risk of wildfire or improve water supply reliability
 - Stormwater resource management
- The group would like to have a project application turned in by the August 19th deadline, and DWR reached out to Jacob asking which deadline the Madera RWMG is trying to meet. Jacob let DWR know that we are trying to meet the 1st deadline of August 19th. Next month during the July 25th, the group will need to vote on a project to turn in an application for. Currently on the IRWM Project List for the Madera RWMG, most of the projects are for the SJRFA which we are not able to apply for during Round 2. There are 2 projects on the list that stood out to Jacob and those are project #63 (Hidden Lakes water treatment and collection systems repair) and project #142 (Oakhurst pipeline extension). Another possible project is the new project proposal for the Sierra Highlands water system improvements which the group will be voting on next.
- Jacob R will send a list of potential projects and the project proposals to the voting group members to review prior to the July 25th meeting.
- IRWM Project List – Sierra Highlands
 - Madera County submitted a project proposal for Sierra Highlands water system improvements. The current well for Sierra Highlands is producing water to 27 connections. It is currently producing water high in Iron and Manganese. The project proposal is for a new well to be drilled for this community up in the foothills.
 - Carl J mentioned that there is a \$20,000 cost on the project proposal just for the equipment hook up per connection. If this cost is spread out over a period of 10-years, the cost is \$100+ per month which doesn't even start to drill a well. If the community does not get any public funds, how would the County keep this water district going. Tom W mentioned that a lot of Madera County districts are in the same boat as Sierra Highlands which they are applying for grants for almost daily from DWR and other sources for water projects. This is a non-ending deal for the smaller districts, even in the Valley, that cannot afford water system upgrades on

their own without funding support. Some Counties in the State do not have any special districts, and Madera County has 142+ districts with 120 of those in the mountains and 40+ water districts. Carl added that the project for Sierra Highlands is unsustainable because each connection would be \$300 - \$400 extra per month for 10-years outside of the funding support which is double or even triple what the community residents are paying now. Keith H asked if Sierra Highland's water connections are metered, and Tom said he is not sure which ones are or which ones aren't. Keith added that by law, the connections need to be metered by 2025. The connections for this proposed project would need to be metered and the community members would need to start paying towards the new well. Tom asked Jacob to let Madera County Public Works know that system metering needs to be added to this project proposal. Keith also mentioned that the system metering can be rejected at any Prop 218 hearing, but they are going to need to have system metering in the proposal.

- This project was denied by the Madera RWMG due to system metering not being included in the proposal and due to the project not being sustainable. The group would like a better explanation on how this project would move forward if Madera County Public Works wishes to have the group reconsider adding this project to the IRWM Project List.

13. Report – Sustainable Groundwater Management – SGMA

- Stephanie A is on vacation this week, but she did provide an update to Jacob R via email. The Madera County GSA had a public hearing recently on the rate study. Jeannie H added that the public hearing on the rate study was for Prop 218, and it was for each of the 3 subbasins. Madera Subbasin passed, Delta-Mendota Subbasin passed, but Chowchilla Subbasin did not pass. Madera and Delta-Mendota Subbasins will continue forward with the rates they agreed to/didn't disagree to, and Chowchilla Subbasin will not continue forward with the rates. Tom W added that Stephanie informed him that she will write something up to put on the Board for everything that needs to be done by July 31st.
 - Al S asked if the failure to pass the Chowchilla Subbasin rates will cause an increase in cost for the Madera and Delta-Mendota Subbasins, and Tom said no since it has nothing to do with them. When the Board re-evaluates the rates for the Chowchilla Subbasin, there will be some costs associated with that.
- Dina N with Madera ID GSA reported that they are continuing with implementation. They are working on their recharge projects, recharge basins, and they are working with the landowners on various projects throughout their district.
- Melanie A with Madera WD GSA reported that they are working on implementing the Madera Lake project that they have had on the books for a long time. They have also been purchasing surface water from Madera ID and they are continuing to look for available surface water from others. They are also continuing to investigate other potential projects.

- Keith H with the City of Madera GSA reported that they are continuing with the project for system metering which was reported on earlier in the meeting and is part of their GSP.

14. New/ Suggested Members for the Madera RWMG

- No new members suggested.

15. Future Agenda Items

- Jacob R mentioned adding the IRWM Round 2 Project vote to select which project to turn in an application for by the 1st deadline of August 19th.

16. Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 25th, 2022, at 1:30 pm on Zoom for now until COVID restrictions are lifted and allow us to meet in person.

17. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.