

Chapter 2 *Plan Development Process*

2.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the process by which the 2015 Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (Plan) was updated, beginning in April 2013 and extending through June 2015.

The IRWMP update process involved a wide variety of participants, workshops, meetings, group structures, and project development forums, discussed below. Important aspects of the update development included: formation of the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG); development of a governance structure and process; extensive “circuit-riding” activities to increase stakeholder participation; Tribal, Latino, and Hmong outreach; public meetings; project development activities; a climate change core group; and coordination with adjacent IRWM regions.

While many aspects of the Plan update process were sequential – and dependent on previous steps – most were coincidental, occurring in a parallel timeframe with one another. For instance, circuit-riding strategies to increase stakeholder involvement in the IRWMP process were conducted while the governance structure was being developed. And once project development processes were formulated and approved, project development proceeded alongside other aspects of Plan formulation. So, while each aspect of the process is discussed below, each was integrated appropriately with other Plan aspects.

2.1 Regional Water Management Group

The RWMG was formed early in the update sequence. Its structure and membership was based upon and expanded from the original management group (MG) that oversaw the development of the 2008 IRWMP. The RWMG served as the lead entity during Plan update and approved all Plan content. The RWMG is the entity that will adopt the Plan, and whose future membership will depend on each individual agency and organization adopting the Plan. Throughout Plan preparation, the RWMG played a critical role by providing direction on chapter content and review, public and stakeholder outreach and involvement, project development and integration, and ensuring consistency of the Plan with Department of Water Resources (DWR) guidelines. This Plan was subsequently reviewed by DWR for guideline compliance. The ongoing governance of the group, described below, will remain the responsibility of the RWMG.

The RWMG mailing list includes 46 entities (see Chapter 3 *Stakeholder Involvement*). A near majority of these entities are active members, participating in meetings, content review, coordination between stakeholders, and communications. The next largest segment of participants responds to requests for information and generally attends only meetings of interest. The remaining groups have requested to be kept informed of RWMG activities. Involved entities represent a full cross-section of water and land management agencies and groups (federal, state, local, and land trusts), non-governmental organizations (primarily environmentally oriented), and Disadvantaged Communities.

The RWMG met 10 times during the course of the Plan update process. The RWMG recruitment process and membership are more fully described in Chapter 3 *Stakeholder Involvement* and Chapter 16 *Governance*.

2.2 Development of a Governance Structure

At the first RWMG meeting in June 2013, the RWMG made an initial determination that: the group would reach decisions by consensus, a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be developed that would require Plan adoption by individual entities, no additional governance structures would be required to either manage Plan updates or Plan implementation, and that the group would meet as required during the IRWMP update process and then at least twice annually after IRWMP adoption. The governance discussion extended over several meetings and included a presentation of a variety of governance options developed by other IRWM regions, to ensure that the group had access to the full range of thinking within the current IRWM community.

Please see Chapter 16 *Governance* for a full description of both the process and decisions made as a result of RWMG deliberations on the short- and long-term governance structure for the group. Also refer to **Appendix 17-1** Memorandum of Understanding, for the full text of the MOU document.

2.3 Circuit-Riding Activities

In the months prior to the first RWMG meeting, the project team conducted extensive outreach across the region to determine how best to invigorate participation in the process. The outreach included email contacts, phone calls, and meetings, and took place between May and October 2013.

Key outcomes of the circuit-riding process were: a determination to limit the number of RWMG meetings, use of ongoing circuit riding to keep less active members informed of the process and outcomes, implementation of targeted technical assistance activities to support project development, and identification of the participation status of each entity.

A total of 76 entities were contacted: 40 agencies, districts, and municipalities; 13 non-governmental organizations; 16 Tribal entities; 4 Latino groups; and 3 Hmong organizations. The reasons most frequently given for non-participation were: lack of available staff, limited funding to support staff participation, and the belief that the active participants would adequately represent the perspective of their entity.

Chapter 3 *Stakeholder Involvement* provides a more extensive dissertation of the entities contacted, the process used, and the outcomes of the circuit-riding strategy.

2.4 Tribal Outreach

Tribal outreach was coordinated using the contact list developed for the Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process. Two formal letters were distributed to the contact list entities: one announcing the preparation of the Plan and convening a

meeting with Tribal members in October 2013, and the second announcing the publication of the review draft of the IRWMP document and soliciting comments from Tribal members and entities.

Chapter 5 *Disadvantaged Communities, Environmental Justice and Native American Tribal Considerations* contains greater detail on these outreach efforts. **Appendix 5-1** Letters Soliciting Tribal Participation contains the text of the two letters as well as the distribution list.

2.5 Latino Outreach

This outreach was focused on creating durable connections with the Latino Community within the Yuba region. The effort included in-depth, one-on-one interviews with local leaders and members of community groups, as well as numerous “man on the street” style interviews in Olivehurst, Linda, and Marysville (the communities with the largest Latino population in the region). This outreach resulted in the identification of several overarching issues of concern to the Latino community (i.e., water quality, recreational use, and environmental/climate change concerns), as well as the creation of opportunities for direct connections between RWMG members and members of the Latino organizations. As a result of these interactions, a set of recommendations was developed to guide future interactions. These recommendations were integrated into the IRWMP by the RWMG.

Chapter 5 *Disadvantaged Communities, Environmental Justice, and Native American Tribal Considerations* contains greater detail on these outreach efforts. **Appendix 2-1** Latino Outreach Materials includes the full description of the initial findings and the resulting recommendations.

2.6 Project Development Activities

This aspect of the Plan update process was considered to be of particular importance because water-related projects are a key aspect of IRWMP implementation. Project development for the Plan update took three forms: 1) extensive circuit riding across the region to provide direct, onsite assistance in both identifying specific projects and developing the information to complete Project Solicitation Forms (used to propose projects for inclusion in the Plan); 2) RWMG meetings oriented specifically toward project review, comment, revision, and integration; and 3) a technical assistance workshop for any stakeholders in the region who wanted additional support for project development.

Additionally, the project team gave individual guidance and technical assistance to project sponsors for project finance, greenhouse gas calculations, and climate change considerations to be included on the Solicitation Forms. Project development efforts resulted in the identification of over 60 projects.

2.7 Climate Change Analyses

An advisory Core Group was formed by Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI) in June 2013, made up of individuals from the main interest groups involved in the RWMG. The Core Group subsequently agreed to act as a technical advisory committee for the IRWMP climate analyses, and included a cross-section of regional interests (see Chapter 11 *Climate Change*).

The initial stages of the climate analyses involved data gathering that led to: 1) a draft synthesis of potential climate trends and impacts, vulnerabilities, adaptation strategies; and 2) a refinement of the framework of inquiry for future Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) hydrologic modeling from the Core Group's informed participation.

Draft narratives and background materials of climate vulnerabilities were prepared for review, and a vulnerability checklist based on the DWR's Climate Handbook (see **Appendix 11-1**) was populated with information from the data collection effort and then presented to and refined by stakeholders. Meanwhile, the SEI team continued to engage the Core Group in meetings to consider and refine influences on its hydrologic modeling, including climate.

In March 2014, the Core Group met to consider and amend the posted climate materials and to prioritize regional climate vulnerabilities under a directed exercise by the project team that evaluated both the severity of the risk and likelihood of occurrence of vulnerabilities. The recommended prioritization was forwarded to the RWMG and was incorporated into the climate chapter.

Because the timeframe for SEI's modeling was to extend beyond the preparation period for this Plan, and because that modeling had the potential to define new, as well as refine draft adaptation strategies, the Core Group made the decision not to prioritize specific adaptation strategies at this time.

Where projects were sufficiently developed, the project team conducted greenhouse gas (GHG) emission calculations. These calculations are included in **Appendix 14-4**. A summarized list of climate vulnerabilities also was briefly discussed with potential project sponsors when the project team conducted project recruitment. This served as a means of incorporating climate mitigations into implementation projects.

2.8 Coordination with Adjacent IRWM Regions

The coordination between the Yuba County IRWM region and its adjacent neighboring regions was conducted using interviews between RWMG members and the staff or representatives of the adjacent areas. Adjacent IRWM regions are: Upper Feather River Watershed, Cosumnes American Bear Yuba (CABY), American River Basin, and North Sacramento Valley Group. Each region was contacted by phone and interviewed with a focus on opportunities for joint project development, overlapping issues between and among the regions, and potential conflicts in goals/objectives and/or projects between regions.

The results of these interviews are discussed in Chapter 4 *Coordination* and **Appendix 4-1** Inter-IRWM Coordination Reports.