

## SECTION 1.0 - INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Integrated Regional Water Management Overview

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a paradigm for managing water and related resources on a regional scale that was established with the passage of Proposition 50 in 2002 and continued through Proposition 84 in 2006 and Proposition 1 in 2014. This approach integrates on a regional level many facets of water resource management, such as water supply, water quality, flood management, ecosystem health, and recreation through enhanced collaboration across geographic and political boundaries and diverse stakeholder groups. IRWM “regions” have been formed across California to develop plans that identify water management challenges, resolve conflicts over the best use of resources, bridge gaps in data, find common ground, and seek innovative solutions among stakeholders. Ultimately the goal is implementation

of projects and programs that efficiently address water management priorities.

*Integrated water management is a comprehensive and collaborative approach for managing water to concurrently achieve social, environmental, and economic objectives.*

*This integrated approach delivers higher value for investments by considering all interests, providing multiple benefits, and working across jurisdictional boundaries at the appropriate geographic scale.*

*Examples of multiple benefits include improved water quality, better flood management, restored and enhanced ecosystems, and more reliable water supplies.*

— California Water Plan Update 2013

A significant motivation for formation of these regions, which are as diverse as the state itself, was the availability of substantial grant funding, which has leveraged, and continues to leverage, local funds for project implementation. The grant funds have helped communities throughout the state to enhance the availability of clean water supplies for the benefit of people and the environment, to protect communities from flood damage, and provide access to water-related recreation opportunities. In addition to grant funding, participants in IRWM regions benefit from the cost-sharing, collaboration, adaptive management, and effective problem-solving made possible by working together.

IRWM is, first and foremost, a process built on collaboration and coordination among the people and interests in each region. This process brings together stakeholders that in the past may have worked in parallel “silos”, rather than closely together, to identify and solve water-related problems. IRWM offers a framework for the consideration of diverse water resource management issues that incorporates science, engineering, history, natural processes, planning, culture, and economics. The integration of these disciplines and a collaborative approach to

identifying and implementing water resource development and protection projects has resulted in new synergies and solutions that expand the possibilities for managing scarce water resources.



California's water challenges will always require innovative management strategies, particularly as the state's population grows and climate change impacts availability and use of water resources. IRWM offers a flexible, inclusive approach to assuring that water supplies are protected, resources preserved, and communities continue to thrive.

According to a recent publication by the Department of Water Resources: *Stakeholder Perspectives – Recommendations for Sustaining and Strengthening Integrated Regional Water Management*:

“Integrated regional water management (IRWM) is the application of integrated water management principles at the regional level. IRWM brings local agencies and other stakeholders, with a range of water-related roles and interests, together to address water management needs collaboratively within self-identified regions accepted by the State. The practice of IRWM is rooted in the principle of regional control, recognizing that local and regional water managers and other stakeholders, working together in a collaborative, open, and transparent manner, are best suited and best positioned to manage water resources in their regions. Issues including limited groundwater and surface water supplies, drought, flooding, climate change, water quality, environmental degradation, aging infrastructure, economic constraints, recreation, and cultural considerations are addressed through coordinated and integrated actions.

IRWM is helping California move away from a legacy of fragmented, divisive, conflict-prone, and sometimes ineffective water management practices by supporting cooperation among agencies and other stakeholders.

IRWM benefits accrue at the local and regional level but also “roll up” to the state level, helping California meet its collective water management needs. When IRWM succeeds, California succeeds.”

## 1.2 IRWM Bond Funding - Proposition 1 – Overview

Proposition 1, Chapter 7 Regional Water Security, Climate and Drought Preparedness (Water Code § 79740 – 79748) funding is intended to improve regional water self-reliance security and adapt to the effects on water supply arising out of climate change. Specifically, the purpose is to assist water infrastructure systems adapt to climate change; provide incentives for water agencies to collaborate in managing the region's water resources and setting regional priorities for water infrastructure; and improve regional water self-reliance, while reducing dependence on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The IRWM Grant Program is designed to encourage integrated regional strategies for management of water resources by providing funding for projects and programs that support integrated water management. These Guidelines are intended to remain unchanged for the life of the funding source (Proposition 1). However, changes may be necessary due to legislation or changes in State's water management policy. If changes are necessary, the 2016 IRWM Guidelines will be amended and subject to a public review process per California Water Code (Water Code) §79706 (b).



---

## 1.3 Implementation of Integrated Regional Water Management in Ventura County

The Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) IRWM Region, which encompasses the majority of Ventura County, serves as the “region” responsible for IRWM planning and implementation. The Region has been very successful in bringing diverse interests together to manage water resources on a regional level. The region has a thriving agricultural industry, miles of coastline and rivers offering recreational opportunities, a strong economy, a mix of urban and rural communities, research institutions, naval base operations, valuable and abundant pristine ecosystems and forest land, local groundwater and surface water reserves, as well as access to imported state water. The County is blessed with rich natural, economic, social, and cultural resources. Due to a long history of collaborative management of water resources in the County, the existing IRWM program was built on a strong, established foundation.

Agencies and organizations in Ventura County have a long history working together to address water resources issues. In the past four decades, numerous water supply, water use efficiency, water quality, restoration, and wastewater recycling projects have been planned and implemented. Many individuals and agencies have collaborated to ensure effective management of local water resources, including retail and wholesale water districts, cities, sanitary districts, the County agencies, environmental and non-profit organizations, the Association of Water Agencies of Ventura County, State and Federal agencies, and many others.

### **Background on Regional Planning and Collaboration**

#### **1974 Ventura County Designated as 208 Planning Area**

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, commonly known as the Clean Water Act, was originally enacted in 1948. The Act was amended by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 (Public Law 92-500) by Congress with the primary purpose of "restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's water" and "to achieve a level of water quality by July 1983, which provides for recreation in and on the water; and for the propagation of fish and wildlife." Section 208 of the amendments and the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR's) specified general designation procedures, time constraints, grant funding criteria, and minimum plan content requirements. Ventura County was designated as a 208 Planning Area in 1974.

Funded by a Federal 208 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, Ventura County undertook a comprehensive assessment of its water quality problems between 1975 and 1978. The initial 208 Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) was adopted in 1978 by 23 local agencies. The Plan recommended short-term programs to remedy those water quality problems that required immediate attention as well as governmental action aimed at enhancing water quality over the long term. The Ventura Regional Sanitation District was the lead agency for the initial 1975 to 1978 effort. In October of 1978, the Board of Supervisors of Ventura County was designated by the State to implement the Plan as well as the continuing planning program.

#### **1980 208 Plan**

From 1979 to 1980, the Ventura County Water Quality Planning Program identified additional water quality issues, updated the Population/Land Use Forecasts, and re-evaluated the 1978 Water Quality Management Plan's Regional Goals and Policies. As a result of these efforts, the 1978 plan was updated, revised, and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors as the 208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan (1979-1980). Following review of the Areawide Water Quality Management Plan, the County Board of



Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 431 establishing a countywide plan for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of countywide water resources. The resolution summarized the direction given by the Board to address seawater intrusion, water conservation, two specific water reclamation projects, local State Water entitlements, creation of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, and Sespe Creek water rights issues.

### **1994 - Water Management Plan Update**

In 1994, the County continued the Water Quality Management Planning Program effort by updating the 1980 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan to include the developments in water management planning during the previous 14 years. This update was referred to as the Water Management Plan Update and was overseen by a committee which included representatives of the Countywide Planning Program (CPP) and Association of Water Agencies of Ventura County (AWA). The Water Management Plan Update fulfilled the requirements of Section 208 of the Clean Water Act. This Update: 1) provided compliance with required legislation; 2) included an update of technical data to provide an adequate information base for decision-making; 3) was a comprehensive planning document consistent with other regional plans; and 4) was formatted to facilitate easy referencing and updating. The 1994 Update contained specific goals, policies, and program recommendations of the Water Management Plan and summarized the implementation status of 1980 Plan recommendations, including construction of the Vern Freeman Diversion, Pumping Trough Pipeline, and creation of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, as required as a condition of funding of these two construction projects to address seawater intrusion and groundwater overdraft. The Plan also addressed the legislative history of water-management planning and water supply, demand management, and quality issues.

### **Summary of Water Management Collaboration Efforts in Ventura County**

Local water districts, sanitation districts, cities, the County of Ventura, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Department of Water Resources, environmental and public interest groups, and many other interested local, State, and Federal organizations and individuals have historically worked together and continue to pursue comprehensive water-management goals in the Region. From the inception of a comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan in 1975, through the 1994 Countywide Water Management Plan approved and submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board, to implementation of local water quality TMDLs and urban water-management plans, to the collaborative efforts of WCVC stakeholders to prepare and update an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan and develop projects for implementation, numerous efforts have been successfully implemented to better manage and improve the County's water resources. More recently, as a result of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), groundwater sustainability agencies have been formed to develop groundwater sustainability plans for medium and high priority basins – including those experiencing severe overdraft, across the county.

Given the complexity of the issues being addressed and the diverse nature of the stakeholders in the region, it is beneficial for coordinated and integrated regional water management to continue. The planning process has been an opportunity for local parties to take a greater role in governing local resources, balancing the needs of all stakeholders, and assuring healthy and sustainable watersheds for future generations.

## 1.4 Purpose of the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County, IRWM Plan

The purpose of the IRWM Plan is to integrate planning and implementation efforts and facilitate regional cooperation with the goal of improving water supply reliability, water recycling, water conservation, recreation and access, flood control, and environmental and habitat protection. Specifically, the Plan provides ongoing guidance for implementation of projects and programs to meet the goals and objectives.

An objective of the IRWM Plan is to build on a long-standing foundation of cooperation and the ongoing efforts of local entities and others such as the County, cities, water agencies, wetlands/habitat protection groups, and ongoing watershed management committees. The objective of the IRWM Plan is not to duplicate existing and ongoing plans, but to better integrate these efforts and utilize the results and findings of existing plans to put forward the projects needed to address local goals.

In general, the benefits of the IRWM Plan include the following:

1. A process for ongoing decision-making.
2. Identification of water-related issues, goals, and potential solutions.
3. Integration and coordination among local, state, and federal agencies, and individuals.
4. An inclusive and participatory public involvement process to ensure meaningful input.
5. Appropriate level of scientific watershed assessment information.
6. A long-term perspective.
7. Phased implementation and staging of resources.
8. Ongoing monitoring of project and plan implementation.
9. A means for adaptive planning and management.

## 1.5 Ahwahnee Watershed Principles



The Local Government Commission (LGC), in partnership with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and the League of California Cities, developed a comprehensive and integrated set of principles and policies (based on whole system planning) called the [Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource Efficient Land Use](#). The Ahwahnee Water Principles offer communities common sense and straightforward ways to address multiple water resource issues with smart planning and land use decisions.

Maintaining adequate water supplies and water quality, and protecting the beneficial uses of water, depends largely on land-use decisions made by local governments. These decisions can either cause or avoid physical impacts to wetland, riparian habitat, urban pollution, and alteration of flow regimes and groundwater recharge. The disconnect between water supplies and quality, and land-use regulation has resulted in permitting conflicts, costly regulatory delays, and inadequate resource protection. The relationship between land use and water is becoming increasingly critical given California's projected population growth and urbanization.

The Ahwahnee Water Principles provide the communities of California a broader, more coordinated, and more flexible water-management system that addresses water quality, supply, and flood risks together.



Implementation of the Ahwahnee Water Principles helps communities develop solutions for long-term regional and watershed-wide benefits.

The Board of Supervisors of Ventura County adopted the Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource Efficient Land Use in March 2006 and implements the principles in its land use decision making process in the unincorporated area.

## **The Ahwahnee Water Principles**

### **Community Principles**

1. Community design should be compact, mixed use, walkable and transit-oriented so that automobile-generated urban runoff pollutants are minimized and the open lands that absorb water are preserved to the maximum extent possible. (See the [Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities](#).)
2. Natural resources such as wetlands, flood plains, recharge zones, riparian areas, open space, and native habitats should be identified, preserved, and restored as valued assets for flood protection, water-quality improvement, groundwater recharge, habitat, and overall long-term water resource sustainability.
3. Water holding areas such as creek beds, recessed athletic fields, ponds, cisterns, and other features that serve to recharge groundwater, reduce runoff, improve water quality, and decrease flooding should be incorporated into the urban landscape.
4. All aspects of landscaping from the selection of plants to soil preparation and the installation of irrigation systems should be designed to reduce water demand, retain runoff, decrease flooding, and recharge groundwater.
5. Permeable surfaces should be used for hardscape. Impervious surfaces such as driveways, streets, and parking lots should be minimized so that land is available to absorb storm water, reduce polluted urban runoff, recharge groundwater, and reduce flooding.
6. Dual plumbing that allows graywater from showers, sinks, and washers to be reused for landscape irrigation should be included in the infrastructure of new development.
7. Community design should maximize the use of recycled water for appropriate applications including outdoor irrigation, toilet flushing, and commercial and industrial processes. Purple pipe should be installed in all new construction and remodeled buildings in anticipation of the future availability of recycled water.
8. Urban water conservation technologies such as low-flow toilets, efficient clothes washers, and more efficient water-using industrial equipment should be incorporated in all new construction and retrofitted in remodeled buildings.
9. Groundwater treatment and brackish water desalination should be pursued when necessary to maximize locally available, drought-proof water supplies.



## Implementation Principles

1. Water supply agencies should be consulted early in the land-use decision-making process regarding technology, demographics, and growth projections.
2. City and county officials, water agencies and special districts, LAFCO, and other stakeholders sharing watersheds should collaborate to take advantage of the benefits and synergies of water-resource planning at a watershed level.
3. The best, multi-benefit and integrated strategies and projects should be identified and implemented before less integrated proposals, unless urgency demands otherwise.
4. From start to finish, projects and programs should involve the public, build relationships, and increase the sharing of and access to information.
5. Plans, programs, projects and policies should be monitored and evaluated to determine if the expected results are achieved and to improve future practices.