

Implementation Working Group | Meeting Notes

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute
Dec. 5, 2018

Meeting Highlights

Recognizing that many partners need to come together to manage the resource and many projects for implementation, the working group would recommend partners collaborating on coordination (potentially via a MOU) in the near term. This would require identifying a convener. The tasks and purpose of this coordination or collaborative effort would be to:

- Consider the creation of a long-term structure to maximize implementation;
- Consider potential conflicts for all the plans when they come together; and
- Coordinate funding.

The working group discussed the importance of purpose and need driving any implementation structure. The work group will discuss this with the planning group at its next meeting.

Summary

Background

The working group had an open conversation about potential structures to support implementation of the LTMP as well as other plans that are under development. In 2013, MCWRA explored the idea of a legislated body to manage the river. At that time, support did not exist for creating an entity via legislation.

Does the Salinas River need a new / revised governance or implementation model / structure?

Purpose and vision is and should be the driver.

Many private landowners exist along the river yet different laws and rights govern water.

No single entity currently exists to serve as a regional entity and as a conduit for regional funding. For example, the IRWMP and the stormwater plan have struggled to identify an entity

to serve in this role. An entity is needed that is bigger than the LTMP. It should be able to serve for the IRWMP and the stormwater plan and other potential efforts.

DWR often wants one entity to apply per region that DWR can work with as a condition of funding. Some have run grants through the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation , which probably wouldn't do it again.

Another advocated that one entity, either Valley-wide or County-wide, should be responsible for managing water as a systemic water resource because it is a system that is all connected. This entity would address surface water, groundwater, and flood control.

Funding cannot be the sole / primary driver of an organization with a purpose to implement the LTMP.

Most projects that will be underway will require private landowners. Creating the River Management Unit Association took nearly two years.

Continuing to benefit from many partners – academics, science feeding into the structure, landowners need a vehicle / role in the system, government partners – how can all these partners engage and be part of the work.

Purpose

Over the course of the discussion, the work group identified some purposes of an entity.

- Manage the resource – provide adequate supply for need (ag, urban, environment)
- Commit to comprehensive approach / outlook
- Optimize flood control / protection
- Engage all the entities
- Channel funding for projects (including as a grant administrator)

The LTMP needs a structure for communication and organization given that different entities are carrying forward work as a proactive way to communicate and avoid conflict.

The entities involved all partner well and pursue funding. One person expressed concern that having so many partners pursuing different efforts could deter realizing a larger overarching strategy and potential benefits, such as partnering with academic institutions and nonprofit entities.

Many existing rules are protective of Ag lands (e.g., those overseen by Local Agency Formation Commissions [LAFCO]) so the working group did not recommend this as a purpose. Some areas

prohibit change-of-use for land use (i.e., shifting crops) that feels like an over-reach; the group would not recommend this as a purpose.

Possibilities for the Salinas River

Council

A “council” or collaborative or some type of entity could provide overall coordination of separate entities that operate on the River. The council could help define roles and responsibilities. The council would serve as a hub and engage all the entities (via representatives) involved in implementation. The structure could evolve as needed.

State Conservancy

A state conservancy is established by California State Law and can benefit from state funding. It is non-regulatory. It recognizes public and private landowners. The benefit is the designation of this landscape as being unique. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a great example; it was created by the legislature. Similar to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, a conservancy in the Salinas Valley would formally recognize that the landscape relies on the availability of water, and that industry and wildlife rely upon that.

A conservancy could recognize and provide for the cultural heritage of agriculture in the Valley. A value is to protect agriculture while also protecting resources. The goal is resource conservation plus the economy plus agriculture heritage. Bonds sometimes have dedicated funding set aside for conservancies.

MCWRA

MCWRA has huge authorities, but is only funded for very specific set of tasks. Some would like to see MCWRA adequately funded and well staffed to take on these challenges. To change or expand any MCWRA authorities would require the California legislature to act.

Examples and Resources

Santa Clara Valley Water District has evolved into a broader approach to natural resources. It planned for two years, then successfully implemented a parcel tax. It has built-in audits and an oversight committee.

Santa Cruz set up an offshoot of its community foundation.

Arroyo Grande Creek developed an MOU to support restoration.

Potential Resource - Salinas River Institute via Cal Poly – Sam Blakely.

Straw Proposal

The group would recommend starting small and building out from there. Any entity or effort would need to be value added.

Recognizing that many partners need to come together to manage the resources, recommend identifying a convener and collaborating on coordination (potentially via a MOU) in the near term. The tasks and purpose would be to:

- Consider the creation of a long-term structure to maximize implementation;
- Consider potential conflicts for all the plans when they come together; and
- Coordinate funding.

Depending on how things take shape, partners may want to consider a Conservancy at some point.

Other Notes

Steph Wald is looking at the two counties and will analyze existing initiatives and can report back to the group.

State funding for watershed coordination came out last month, and the Bureau of Reclamation also funds watershed coordination.

Integrating San Luis Obispo County into funding requests and coordination could prove beneficial.

Attendees

Gary Petersen, SVBGSA
Curtis Weeks, Arroyo Seco GSA
Donna Meyers, Salinas River Management
Unit Association
Melissa Duflock, Salinas River Management
Unit Association
Kevin O'Connor, Central Coast Wetlands
Group

Stephanie Wald, Watershed Coordinator
Emily Zefferman, RCD
Elizabeth Krafft, MCWRA
Shaunna Murray, MCWRA

Kathryn Gaffney, ICF
Danielle Tannourji, ICF
Facilitator Gina Bartlett, CBI