

Upper Feather River IRWM Program

To: Upper Feather River Regional Water Management Group
From: Uma Hinman, Hinman & Associates Consulting, Inc.
cc: Tracey Ferguson, AICP, Plumas County Planning Director
Date: August 12, 2024
Re: Upper Feather River IRWM Quarterly Report (2024 Quarter 2)

This Quarterly Report covers the second quarter of 2024 and provides an update to the Upper Feather River (UFR) Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Group (RWMG) on activities associated with implementation of the UFR IRWM Plan and coordination with stakeholders and surrounding IRWM regions. The following summarizes coordination and implementation activities during the last quarter.

Regional Water Management Group – Next RWMG Meeting

The UFR RWMG meets twice yearly. Our last meeting was on March 21, 2024, and our next meeting will be held in the fall of 2024; please look for scheduling emails to come!

Prop 1 Round 1 (P1R1) & Prop 1 Round 2 (P1R2) Implementation Projects

On April 6, 2021, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) executed a Grant Agreement with Plumas County under the Proposition 1 IRWM Round 1 Implementation Grant. Subsequently, the County has executed three amendments with DWR, including Amendment 1 on October 13, 2022, Amendment 2 on November 10, 2022, and Amendment 3 on July 20, 2023. The amendments included changes in the schedule and budget.

Project	P1R1 (\$)	P1R2 (\$)	UMBDRP (\$)	Total Grant Funding (\$)	% Billed to Date
Grant Admin (Plumas)	70,876	7,185	20,000	98,061	78%
Project 1 (SPUD)	627,660	0	505,000	1,132,660	100%
Project 2 (IVCSD)	304,000	136,512	0	440,512	78%
Grant Award Totals	1,002,536	143,697	525,000	1,671,233	

Project 1 – Sierraville Public Utilities District (revised budget of \$1,132,660)

The Sierraville Public Utilities District Project 1 *Alternative Water Source Development Project* is a replacement of the booster station and related infrastructure for their water supply system.

Construction was completed in December 2023 per the schedule. The Project Completion Report, all deliverables, and final invoicing for the project was completed in the spring of 2024.

The RWMG received a presentation on the completed project at its March 2024 meeting, and the Sierra County Board of Supervisors and Plumas County Board of Supervisors also received project completion briefings.

Project 2 – Indian Valley Community Services District (revised budget of \$440,512)

The Indian Valley Community Services District Project 2 *North Main Water Use Efficiency, Reliability, and Extension Project* is an overall effort to upgrade aging and damaged infrastructure that will support the rebuilding of Greenville.

Approximately 770 feet of water main pipeline will be replaced, 60 feet of laterals, and 4 new hydrants will be installed. Construction is in progress and nearing completion; approximately 30% has been invoiced to date. The project is somewhat behind schedule due to weather delays, mobilization and supply chain issues, encountering high groundwater, contractor coordination of multiple grant funded projects, and District staff capacity limitations.

Plumas County is in the process of submitting an extension of time request to DWR, which is Amendment 4 to the Grant Agreement to allow additional time for IVCS D to complete the Project 2.

Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District (SVGMD)

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Restoration Grant Programs: Nature Based Solutions – [Wildlife corridors/ Wetlands and Mountain Meadows]

In June 2023, the SVGMD was awarded a grant from CDFW in the amount of \$809,076 for a groundwater recharge multi-benefit project pilot study to enhance aquifer recharge and stabilize groundwater levels in areas of decline in the Sierra Valley Subbasin. The overall project objective is to evaluate benefits of groundwater recharge implemented in the headwaters of the Smithneck Creek watershed. This area has been called out by the Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys as one of the most promising recharge locations in the Sierra Valley. Stabilization of declining groundwater levels in this area is expected to provide security for wetland and meadow habitats, surface water systems, water availability for domestic wells serving Disadvantaged Communities (DAC), improve climate resiliency, and support stabilization of groundwater levels in the entire aquifer system.

The contract agreement with CDFW was executed in September 2023. Larry Walker Associates, Inc. (LWA) was selected as the preferred contractor by the SVGMD in December 2023. Work has advanced in 2024 with the execution of landowner agreements in groundwater recharge areas.

DWR Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Implementation Round 2 Grant

The SVGMD's Sierra Valley Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Implementation and Planning project was awarded full funding (\$5,445,000) by DWR through the Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program's SGMA Implementation Round 2 grant program. The project will assist with all aspects of GSP implementation including data collection and data management, annual reports, outline for five-year update to the GSP, projects and management actions, and grant administration.

The execution of the DWR contract occurred in April 2024, and the SVGMD has since contracted with the LWA Team, including LWA, DBS&A, Stillwater, Judie Talbot, McGinley & Associates, and J-U-B Engineering, and to Stetson Engineers Inc. (Stetson) and the Desert Research Institute (DRI) to perform the work.

Plumas Watershed Forum Funding

The SVGMD's Synergistic Sierra Valley Groundwater Recharge and Irrigation Efficiency Project full proposal for Plumas Watershed Forum funding was officially approved on November 13, 2023, with a total budget of \$1,220,000. The primary goal of the proposed project is to conduct a managed aquifer recharge (MAR) demonstration to evaluate the potential for groundwater recharge to improve groundwater levels in agriculturally dependent regions and evaluate and improve irrigation efficiency practices of ranches that are near the Little Last Chance Creek Recharge area.

The contract agreement was executed by the Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Board (governed by the Plumas County Board of Supervisors) on January 9, 2024. In February 2024, the SVGMD issued notice of offer of work letters to the LWA Team, including LWA, DBS&A, Stillwater, Judie Talbot, McGinley & Associates, and J-U-B Engineering, and to Stetson Engineers Inc. (Stetson) and the Desert Research Institute (DRI). In April 2024, the SVGMD executed contracts with these firms and work began.

IRWM Roundtable of Regions

UFR continues to participate in the [IRWM Roundtable of Regions](#) general meetings as well as the Disadvantaged Community Involvement (DACI) Working Group meetings, both of which are held quarterly.

A DACI Working Group meeting was held on May 8, 2024. The meeting focused on funding sources and the new federal Environmental Justice Initiative ([Justice40 Initiative](#)). The Phase One Scorecard of the Justice40 Initiative reports on the progress of 24 federal agencies in three areas:

- Advancing President Biden's Justice40 Initiative
- Implementing and enforcing environment and civil rights laws
- Embedding environmental justice throughout the federal government

A quarterly meeting was held on June 26, 2024. Topics focused on an update on the State budget and various bonds, and an overview of the Roundtable of Region's Transition Plan Update.

More Roundtable of Regions activities and information can be found on their website at: <https://www.roundtableofregions.org/>.

FY 2023-24 Financial Summary

Hinman & Associates Consulting, Inc.’s contract with Plumas County to provide support services to the UFR IRWM Plan Program follows the fiscal year (FY).

The FY 2023-24 contract budget was \$20,000, which included support labor as well as website hosting costs. The following is a summary of expenses for the FY. Roughly 87% of the total FY 2023-24 Hinman & Associates Consulting, Inc.’s contract budget was spent.

Tasks/Expenses	Amount (\$)
Strangecode Web Hosting Service	276.00
Domain Renewal (GoDaddy)	
<i>UFR IRWM Plan Program Support Services</i>	
Coordinator Activities	17,058.75
FY 2023-24 Total Expenses	17,334.75

UFR staff distributed funding opportunities to the Region’s stakeholders and maintained the UFR IRWM Plan implementation project list, identifying potential funding connections and connecting local project sponsors. Staff also continues to participate in local and regional watershed and IRWM coordination efforts, including the Plumas Watershed Forum meetings and the Roundtable of Regions general and technical advisory meetings. Further, staff continue to research funding opportunities for possible matches with the UFR IRWM Plan implementation project list. For possible matches, staff is coordinating with project sponsors to determine potential eligibility and readiness to proceed for funding. Additional routine tasks included stakeholder email list maintenance, website updates, and regular coordination meetings with Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County Planning Director.

Outstanding Action Items from March 29, 2024, UFR IRWM RWMG Meeting

The following summarizes the remaining action item from the last meeting of the RWMG and status as of June 30, 2024:

- **IN PROCESS:** Staff was directed to develop recommendations for the vacant public member seat for discussion at the next RWMG meeting.

The public member seat was established to include representation from the Almanor Basin of the UFR Region and has been vacant since 2020. Staff continues to coordinate with District 3 Plumas County Supervisor, Tom McGowan, to find a new public member to represent the Almanor Basin. Please contact Supervisor McGowan at tommcgowan@countyofplumas.com with questions and potential candidates for an Almanor Basin UFR IRWM RWMG public member seat representative.
- **IN PROCESS:** Staff was directed to include updates and outcomes on the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District’s grant-funded demonstration and pilot projects to the RWMG quarterly updates.

The Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District received grant awards of nearly \$7.5 million to implement the Sierra Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The funding includes three grants: DWR SGMA Implementation Round 2 (\$5,445,000), Plumas Watershed Forum (\$1,220,000), and CDFW Restoration Grant Programs: Nature Based Solutions (\$809,076).

- **IN PROCESS:** Staff was directed to participate in Water Solutions Network (WSN) Watershed Framework meetings and keep the RWMG informed.

Plumas and Sierra counties have both adopted resolutions agreeing to be co-convenors for the Upper Feather River/Los Angeles Watershed Framework Test Drive, designating County Supervisors Dwight Ceresola (Plumas County District 1) and Paul Roen (Sierra County District 3) to represent the counties and inviting regional stakeholders to a Fall 2024 Test Drive convening.

See Plumas County resolution [here](#).

See Sierra County item [here](#) (Item 8.C).

- **IN PROCESS:** UFR Staff was authorized to convene an ad-hoc committee to explore ways to reshape the UFR IRWM Program to remain relevant and active in its implementation efforts, as well as other efforts addressing the Plan's goals within the Upper Feather River region.

UFR Staff are developing an outline and list of individuals to invite to participate in the ad-hoc committee. The intent is to establish a group of stakeholders knowledgeable of the Program, who have been invested in the process, and represent a cross-section of the primary resource management areas (i.e., agriculture, floodplains/meadows/wetlands, uplands/forest, municipal services, and Tribal). The first meeting is anticipated to be scheduled for early fall 2024.

- **COMPLETED:** Plumas County Flood Control District was directed to assign a representative to fill the vacancy on the RWMG.

The District assigned Rob Thorman as representative on the RWMG.

- **COMPLETED:** Staff was directed to respond to Mr. Tom Peltier regarding his request for a letter of support from the RWMG urging the Plumas County Zoning Administrator to deny the Superior-Engels Mines Vested Rights Project.

UFR Staff notified Mr. Peltier that the RWMG discussed the request at the March 29, 2024 meeting and determined that the vested rights hearing was a legal matter and premature for any action by the RWMG. *Note: By letter dated April 25, 2024, US Copper Corp., formally withdrew their application for vested rights and Plumas County discontinued processing the application. See Press Release [here](#).*

Contacts

The current RWMG officers are Paul Roen, Chair, and Trina Cunningham, Vice Chair, should any pressing UFR IRWM RWMG issues and/or opportunities arise. Please contact Uma Hinman, UFR staff, at uhinman@comcast.net or (916) 813-0818 with any questions.