

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: January 31, 2025

Re: Upper Feather River IRWM Quarterly Report (2024 Quarter 3 & 4)

This Quarterly Report covers the third and fourth quarters 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 two quarters.

Regional Water Management Group – Next RWMG Meeting

The UFR RWMG committed to meeting twice yearly. Our last meeting was on March 29, 2024; we were unable to establish a quorum for a fall 2024 meeting. Please look for scheduling emails to come for a spring 2025 meeting!

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. Throughout the course of the grant, the County executed five amendments with DWR consisting of changed scope, schedule and budget. The local project sponsors have completed their projects and Plumas County submitted all deliverables, reports, and final invoices in November 2024.

Project	P1R1 (\$)	P1R2 (\$)	UMBDRP (\$)	Total Grant Funding (\$)	% Billed to Date
Grant Admin (Plumas)	70,876	7,185	20,000	98,061	100%
Project 1 (SPUD)	627,660	0	505,000	1,132,660	100%
Project 2 (IVCSD)	304,000	136,512	0	440,512	100%
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* replaced the booster station and related infrastructure for the District's 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. The first of three Project Performance Reports was submitted to DWR in December 2024 and is posted on the website (<https://featherriver.org/plan-implementation-reports/>).

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. Overall, the project consisted of the installation of 300 feet of 8-inch C900 mainline, 280 feet of 4-inch C900 mainline, a total of 37 new customer services and associated high density polyethylene (HDPE) service laterals, 4 new fire hydrants, and abandonment of old infrastructure. The project benefits include reduced risk of drinking water contamination due to leaks and depressurization of the distribution system, improved fire protection due to increased number of fire hydrants, improved efficiency and cost of operation due to reduced leakage, improved draught tolerance due to less water loss, improved operational efficiency due to relocation of pipes and services to front of lots, improved operational efficiency due to improved meter pits and easier meter reading for system operators, and improved ability to install residential fire sprinkler systems due to larger customer service laterals.

Construction is complete and the final inspection occurred on October 8, 2024. The Project Completion Report, all deliverables, and final invoicing for the project were submitted to DWR in November 2024. Three annual Project Performance Reports will be required from IVCS starting October 2025.

UFR IRWM Strategic Planning Working Group

At the direction of the RWMG at the March 29, 2024 meeting, UFR staff conducted targeted outreach (see Attachment 1) during the months of August and September 2024 and established a Working Group of stakeholders knowledgeable of the IRWM 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 purpose of the Working Group was to develop strategies and recommendations to the RWMG to refocus the UFR IRWM Program to best serve the region.

Two meetings of the strategic planning working group were held on September 23 and October 28, 2024 (see Attachments 3 and 4). The attendance was approximately six to eight stakeholders and two UFR staff. The first meeting focused on understanding the state of the DWR IRWM Program and UFR IRWM Program, other active efforts in the region, brainstorming ideas for regional collaborations, and reviewing the status of the list of IRWM implementation projects.

Participants in the second meeting centered on developing strategies and recommendations for furthering the UFR IRWM Program and approaches to supporting IRWM implementation projects.

Following is a summary of main discussion points:

IRWM Plan Implementation

Issue: insufficient capacity to get implementation projects from identified need to implementation.

Recommendations:

- a) Update IRWM Plan implementation project list, removing unresponsive project sponsors and soliciting new projects.
- b) Focus on supporting municipal service providers, disadvantaged communities, and small, low-capacity agencies and organizations.
- c) Tie projects to groundwater and climate resiliency to ready for Proposition 4 Parks, Environment, Energy, and Water Bond Measure funding opportunities passed by the State of California voters in November 2024.
- d) Conduct outreach to special districts to identify and support project needs and capacity.

UFR IRWM Transition Planning

Issue: with diminishing State support for the IRWM Program, developing new strategies to continue to build on the important work of the UFR IRWM Program.

Recommendations:

- a) Identification of stakeholders and partners for cross collaboration.
- b) Focus on supporting disadvantaged communities through pursuit of funding solutions for implementation projects.
- c) Research designating UFR headwaters region as critical infrastructure to tap into federal funding sources.

A full report and recommendations will be provided at the spring 2025 RWMG meeting.

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 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. The recharge project is expected to increase availability of shallow groundwater to the meadow system, as well as to domestic wells in the area through groundwater recharge, which would slow the delivery of water to later in the season. Smithneck Creek has been identified by the SVGMD's Sierra Valley Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) as an optimal groundwater recharge opportunity. Excess

winter streamflow from Smithneck Creek can be diverted to a recharge area that feeds shallow and deep portions of the aquifer. Some positive response was seen to recharge efforts in 2024. New project areas have been identified to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of recharge in different areas near Smithneck Creek. For example, two alternative sites have been identified in the project area—one on Staverville Creek and one to an ephemeral tributary to Smithneck Creek. The geophysical characteristics of the Smithneck Creek Tributary will be evaluated winter 2025 while recharge is evaluated for the Staverville Creek project.

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

The SVGMD's Sierra Valley Subbasin GSP Implementation and Planning project was awarded \$5,445,000 by DWR through the Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program's SGMA Implementation Round 2 grant program. The execution of the DWR contract occurred in April 2024, and the SVGMD contracted with LWA, including subcontractors DBS&A, Stillwater, Judie Talbot, McGinley & Associates, and J-U-B Engineering; and Stetson Engineers and the Desert Research Institute (DRI) to perform the work.

The Work Plan includes GSP implementation activities under five components: Component 1: Grant Agreement Administration, Component 2: GSP Updates, Component 3: Well Inventory, Component 4: Irrigation Efficiency and Conjunctive Use, and Component 5: Groundwater Recharge.

Plumas Watershed Forum Funding

The SVGMD's Synergistic Sierra Valley Groundwater Recharge and Irrigation Efficiency Project funding was approved on November 13, 2023, with a total budget of \$1,220,000.

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 April 2024, the SVGMD contracted with LWA, including subcontractors DBS&A, Stillwater, Judie Talbot, McGinley & Associates, and J-U-B Engineering; and Stetson Engineers and the Desert Research Institute (DRI) to perform the work. The goal of this project is to manage groundwater resources more sustainably by synergistically implementing groundwater recharge and improvement of irrigation efficiency practices in the area of Little Last Chance Creek. The scope of work includes the following major tasks: administration and management, stakeholder outreach, farm assessments, preliminary design and permitting of recharge project, construction of recharge facilities at Little Last Chance Creek, recharge performance and monitoring, and irrigation efficiency demonstration.

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 November 13, 2024. The meeting included an update on the DACI Subcommittee activities, updates from DWR on the DACTI Grant Program, legislative update on the Proposition 4 Parks, Environment, Energy, and Water Bond, and an update on a digital database of DACTI grant program resources.

A Roundtable of Regions quarterly meeting was held on December 4, 2024. Agenda topics included updated on the Roundtable of Regions Steering Committee, Watershed Resilience Pilot Updates, the Proposition 4 funding, and member updates. Details on the funding through Proposition 4 are not yet available; however, IRWM-dedicated funding is not allocated by funding areas. State Water Board and other water-related agencies will also be rolling out Proposition 4 funding that may be able to support IRWM region implementation projects.

Note, there are a number of openings on the Roundtable of Regions Steering Committee, which generally meets quarterly (see Attachment 1).

DWR's [Water Resilience Program](#) funded five pilot regions, each of which have \$2 million to build a network for watershed and climate resilience including risk analysis, water budgeting, development of strategies for climate resilience, develop implementation plan, and develop Watershed Resilience Plan. Program deadline is June 2026. Program recipients include the following:

- Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, Pajaro River Watershed
- Regional Water Authority, Greater American River Watershed
- Sonoma County Water Agency, Russian River Watershed
- Stockton East Water District, Calaveras River Watershed
- The Ventura County Resource Conservation, Ventura River Watershed

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

Feather River Stewardship Coalition

The Feather River Stewardship Coalition hosted a field tour on Friday, November 8, 2024 led by partners at the Feather River Land Trust, visiting the Heart K Ranch post-fire restoration activities demonstrating what can be done without heavy equipment; the Feather River Resource Conservation District, visiting an EForT (Emergency Forest Restoration Team) project in Crescent Mills discussing lessons learned; and the Plumas National Forest and Plumas County Fire Safe Council partners touring the group at a project in the vicinity of Round Valley Reservoir, representative of how different hazardous fuels reduction treatments responded to the 2021 Dixie Fire. **The Feather River Stewardship Coalition** meets **quarterly** on the first Friday from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, and the next meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2025.

Post-Wildfire Watershed Recovery Coordination – Lessons Learned from the Feather River Watershed Working Group – Northern California (October 2024)

The Post-Wildfire Watershed Recovery Coordination document was developed by the members of the Feather River Watershed Working Group to record lessons learned while coordinating post-wildfire recovery activities related to impacts to the watershed and water quality. The multi-disciplinary working group of local, state, and federal agencies, as well as tribal representatives and non-governmental organizations, in the impacted area that contributed during the process include the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, State Water Resources Control Board and

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, DWR, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Butte County Government Offices. The document can be found at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/emp/docs/post-wildfire-watershed-recovery-coordination.pdf

The document's executive summary explains that during post-wildfire watershed recovery activities, the working group developed various processes to coordinate more effectively during recovery and restoration activities. The document describes these processes, the agencies' respective roles, and provides context on lessons learned throughout multiple years of coordination. By sharing this information, the working group members hope that it will aid those in other parts of the state in their wildfire coordination if or when wildfire impacts their areas.

FY 2024-25 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 2024-25 contract budget is \$25,000, which includes support labor as well as website hosting costs. The following is a summary of expenses for the FY through December 31, 2024. Roughly 56% of the total FY 2024-25 Hinman & Associates Consulting, Inc.'s contract budget has been expended.

Tasks/Expenses	Amount (\$)
Strangecode Web Hosting Service	276.00
Domain Renewal (GoDaddy)	23.17
<i>UFR IRWM Plan Program Support Services</i>	
Coordinator Activities	13,679.50
FY 2024-25 Total Expenses to Date	13,978.67

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. Further, staff dedicates time researching various funding opportunities for possible matches with the UFR IRWM Plan implementation project list. For possible funding matches, staff is coordinating with project sponsors to determine potential eligibility and readiness to proceed. 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 December 31, 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). See sections above for updates and outcomes.

- **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).

Staff remains engaged with WSN; however, the intended 2024 Test Drive convening was postponed to 2025, date to be determined.

- **COMPLETED:** 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 performed outreach and established 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). See section above for more information.

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.

Attachments

- (1) Roundtable of Regions Steering Committee Information
- (2) Outreach Memo for Strategic Planning Working Group
- (3) Strategic Planning Working Group Meeting 1 Summary
- (4) Strategic Planning Working Group Meeting 2 Summary

Attachment 1

Roundtable of Regions

SECTION VI: Roles and Responsibilities

A. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for guiding the efforts of the Roundtable overall and coordinating with the Network Coordinator. This includes oversight of the work performed by the Network Coordinator and monitoring expenditures consistent with the approved budget. The Steering Committee is composed of eight (8) members and is led by two Co-chairs. The Steering Committee strives to maintain geographical and demographic diversity among its members. Steering Committee members should proportionately represent northern, central and southern California to the extent possible.

Because the world of water and political expediency sometimes converge, the Steering Committee is authorized by the Roundtable members to respond to immediate requests from DWR and other State agencies, and write position papers on behalf of the Roundtable, using the Roundtable of Regions branding to signal broad agreement about the position being taken. Every effort will be made, when time allows, to send draft responses, correspondence and position papers to Roundtable members for review and comment before submission. When deadlines preclude advance notice, the Steering Committee will send all correspondence to Roundtable members as soon as possible. All responses will consider all IRWM Regions and not represent just one IRWM Region, Funding Area or geographic area.

Steering Committee membership is recommended by the Steering Committee and approved by the full Roundtable. Steering Committee members must represent a specific IRWM Region and be employed by their IRWM, water agency, public agency, non-profit or other organization not affiliated with for-profit consultants contracted to work with IRWM Regions.

Steering Committee members serve two-year terms commencing July 1st and ending 24 months later on June 30th. Membership may be renewed semi-annually with the approval of the Roundtable. To maintain continuity, the terms are staggered so no more than 50% of the Steering Committee are new members each year. The Steering Committee meets monthly, or more if needed, via conference call.

Co-Chairs Specific Responsibilities

- Serve as the leads in meetings
- Work closely with the Network Coordinator
- Draft, review, and sign advocacy letters
- Help plan and attend quarterly (or as-needed) Steering Committee and General Membership meetings
- Review and edit other letters and documents
- Lead planning for the bi-annual Summit
- Participate in quarterly meetings with DWR

Attachment 2

Upper Feather River Integrated Regional Water Management Group

Program Overview

The Upper Feather River (UFR) Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program is part of a statewide effort that is geared towards finding and implementing solutions for regional water management issues. The UFR IRWM Program formally began in 2005, re-organized in 2014, and since its inception has raised more than \$10 million to assist with essential water management projects and research for Plumas, Sierra, Butte and Lassen Counties.

Regional Water Management Group

The UFR Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) is the decision-making body for the UFR IRWM Program and is described in detail in the 2016 UFR IRWM Plan's [Chapter 2 Governance Stakeholder Involvement, Coordination](#). The RWMG meets the requirements of California Water Code and is comprised of local agencies, organizations and individuals, at least some with statutory authority over water supply and management. The governing body of each of the RWMG member agencies has appointed a representative to sit and vote on the board.

2014 Memorandum of Understanding and Mission Statement

In November 2014, twelve organizations and individuals signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) establishing a board consisting of nine voting members and three advisory members. In 2017, Butte County was added to the RWMG as a voting member. The current [RWMG representatives](#) are identified on our website.

To effectively perpetuate local control and regional collaboration to provide stability and consistency in the planning, management, and coordination of resources within the Upper Feather River Watershed to implement an integrated strategy that guides the Upper Feather River region toward protecting, managing, and developing reliable and sustainable water resources.

2016 UFR IRWM Plan

In 2016, the UFR RWMG adopted an updated [Plan](#) in compliance with Proposition 1 standards as required by the Department of Water Resources. Some of the main highlights of the Plan include [goals and objectives](#), [resource management strategies](#), and [implementation projects](#).

Transition Planning

Particularly as an important headwaters' region, it is crucial that we continue to build on the significant work that has been accomplished and adapt the organization to meet local and regional needs and remain engaged in water resource planning and implementation at the regional and state levels.

State's Current Trends and Next Steps

Since 2017, the State has gradually shifted its focus to the Sustainable Groundwater Management and Climate Resilience Programs, necessitating evolution of the regional IRWM Programs to continue to meet local and regional needs. At the direction of the Upper Feather River RWMG, we are inviting individuals to participate in a working group focused on developing strategies to refocus the Upper Feather River IRWM Program to best serve the region. The purpose of the working group will be to develop options for the future of the Program for presentation and discussion with the RWMG.

UPPER FEATHER RIVER
REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT GROUP

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKING GROUP MEETING #1

SEPTEMBER 23, 2024

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Introductions

Attendees:

Tracy Schor, UC Davis Cooperative
Extension

Zach Browning, Sierra Institute

Trina Cunningham, Vice-Chair UFR RWMG

Dax Albrecht, Plumas-Sierra Agricultural
Department

Paul Rose, Rose Water Systems

Adam Cox, Indian Valley Community
Services District

Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County Planning
Director

Uma Hinman, Hinman & Associates
Consulting

2. Meeting objectives and purpose

To identify the role of the UFR RWMG looking to the future to best serve the region and develop options for strategies, with associated actions, to present to the UFR RWMG about how to refocus the UFR IRWM Program.

3. UFR IRWM Program

a. What is IRWM

- i. IRWM is the application of integrated water management (IWM) principles on a regional scale. IWM is a comprehensive and collaborative approach for managing water to concurrently achieve social, environmental, and economic objectives. State objectives are focused toward improving public safety, fostering environmental stewardship, and supporting economic stability. IWM delivers higher value for investments by considering all interests, providing multiple benefits, and working across jurisdictional boundaries at the appropriate geographic scale. IRWM relies on open, inclusive, and collaborative processes to promote sustainable water use. Some California water managers have practiced IRWM for decades to meet local and regional water management challenges.
- ii. Stakeholder engagement, relationships and trust building, collaboration, development of partnerships, regional planning, and project implementation to achieve regional goals and priorities.
- iii. Collaborative effort to identify and implement water management solutions on a regional scale
- iv. Tool to enhance water management at the regional level to help achieve regional self-reliance and climate resilience

b. History of UFR IRWM Program

- i. 2005 – first UFR IRWM Plan adopted (Feather River Water Plan) (Prop 50)
 1. Feather River Water Authority: Plumas County (lead)
 - a. Partners: Plumas National Forest, Sierra Valley GMD, Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

- b. Affiliated agencies: Butte County, City of Portola, IVCS, QCSD, Maidu Cultural & Development Group, Feather River CRM, Feather River Land Trust, Sierra Institute, UCCE
 - ii. 2014 – Update the UFR IRWM Plan to Prop 84 and Prop 1 standards
 - 1. RWMG: Counties of Plumas, Sierra, Butte; Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District; Feather River RCD; FRRCD; SVGMD; Plumas County Community Development Commission; Native American Representative; Public Member appointee from the Almanor Basin; Advisory members of Plumas, Lassen and Tahoe National Forests
 - 2. MOU Signatories: 32 entities
 - iii. 2016 – Adoption of current UFR IRWM Plan
 - 1. Goals – 5
 - a. Protect and improve water quality and water supply reliability.
 - b. Protect and improve the health of the environment.
 - c. Protect and improve the economy of the Region and provide water and wastewater treatment services to all citizens.
 - d. Establish and maintain effective communication among water and resource stakeholders in the Region.
 - e. Protect and enhance the economic viability of the working landscapes of the Region.
- c. Successes
 - i. Grant Awards – Approximately \$9.4m in IRWM funding for 12 projects in the region, most of which supported DACs
 - 1. 2007 – Prop 50 IRWM implementation grant award of \$7m supporting 9 projects in the UFR Region
 - 2. 2014 – Prop 84 IRWM planning grant award of \$680k to update the UFR IRWM Plan
 - 3. 2018 – Prop 1 DACTI technical assistance grant award of \$45,000 for a SSWS/LSWS Needs Assessment and mapping
 - 4. 2020 – Prop 1 IRWM implementation grant awards of \$1.67m supporting 2 DAC projects
 - 5. Supported other grant funding awards
 - ii. Needs Assessments
 - 1. UFR IRWM Region Water and Wastewater Needs Assessment
 - 2. DACTI Technical Assistance Project (SSWS/LSWS Assessment Pilot Project and GIS map)

4. Shifting State focus

- a. Roundtable of Regions
 - i. Statewide IRWM region coordination and advocacy group representing all IRWM regions

The Roundtable of Regions (Roundtable) is an all-volunteer forum of IRWM "regions" engaged in preparing and implementing IRWM Plans. The Roundtable is an opportunity to network, share ideas and provide feedback to the DWR on the IRWM program.
 - ii. Assessment of IRWM
 - 1. Identified how well the IRWM practice supported regional water management and resilience planning in each of the regions.

2. Concluded that IRWM provides significant water management and water resilience value
 3. One of the few state-sponsored water-focused programs providing focused support for Tribes and DACs.
 4. Prepared Principles of IRWM translate well into the new state initiative for climate resilience, which emphasizes the critical importance of regional relationships and planning, and engagement with Tribes and underserved communities – what the IRWM Program was created to fulfill.
- iii. List of Recommended Actions for individual IRWM regions
1. The RWMG should consider serving as a forum for multiple types of water management programs within the region.
 2. Each region should continue to look for creative funding solutions for implementing integrated, multi-benefit water management projects, beyond state grant programs – and continue to support Native American Tribes and DACs.
 3. RWMGs should recruit non-agency representatives to join them, thus facilitating more diverse participation in the governance of the IRWM region.

b. SGMA

Since 2016, the State has, and continues to, invest substantial funding in Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Program. The Sierra Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was an implementation project identified in the 2016 UFR IRWM Plan. SVGMD and Plumas County successfully procured \$2m in SGMA funds to develop a GSP and an additional \$7.9m to implement the GSP.

c. Climate Resilience

The 2024 Proposition 4 *Parks, Environment, Energy and Water Bond Measure (\$10b)* will be decided by voters in November. Following is the breakdown of funding allocations:

- \$3.8b Drought, flood, water supply - half to improve water quality, the remainder on protecting the state from floods and droughts, and other activities, including restoring rivers and lakes. Of that, \$100m will be IRWM-dedicated funding for climate resilience.
- \$1.5b Forest Health & Wildfire Prevention
- \$1.2b Sea level rise and coastal areas
- \$1.2b Land conservation & habitat restoration
- \$850m Energy infrastructure
- \$700m Parks
- \$450m Extreme heat
- \$300m Farms & agriculture
- 40% allocated to disadvantaged communities and those most vulnerable to climate change

d. Challenges

Waning interest at both the state and regional level; other watershed planning efforts at the forefront include SGMA and Wildfire Recovery. Additionally, there is a dearth of substantial dedicated IRWM funding available to continue the regional programs and fund projects

5. IRWM Plan Implementation Projects

The process for adopting implementation projects into the IRWM Plan and maintaining the list in active condition is identified in the 2016 IRWM Plan ([Chapter 9](#)). Approximately 82 projects were included in

the 2016 IRWM Plan. Since then, a number of projects have been added and some have been funded. Staff reviews project list and conducts outreach to project sponsors every two years to update list and contact information.

The Strategic Planning Working Group discussed the following:

- i. Conduct outreach to project sponsors – updated list and organize into the following 4 categories: 1) complete 2) funded and in process 3) shovel ready but waiting for funding and 4) not shovel ready, not funded.
- ii. Identify alternative funding solutions
- iii. Refocus project selections on climate resilience
- iv. Issues:
 1. About 44% of the LPS are not responsive to our requests for updates.
 2. 18% LPS contact emails bounced; trying to find new contact info
 3. Retirements and new staff who were not involved in 2016 Plan development; don't know about the projects
- v. Group recommendations:
 - Review the project list, update contacts, remove unresponsive LPS and completed projects.
 - Solicit new projects and update project list, focusing on funding source topics (i.e., climate resiliency, etc.)
 - With available funding, work with smaller districts and DACs to develop projects for funding opportunities.
- vi. Notes:
 1. USFS will be completing NEPA in the next couple of years and 100s of shovel-ready projects will be ready to implement. Funding for the projects is already allocated and the USFS will have 10 years to implement the projects. There will be some gaps and the UFR IRWM program could help implement those projects, which will be a steady, consistent stream of work for the implementation period.
 2. Chester PUD has a project to submit for inclusion in the Plan project list.
 3. The Plumas Fire Safe Council has a lot of fuels reduction funding that could be integrated into other projects.

6. Transition UFR IRWM Program Planning

The Strategic Planning Working Group began talking about transition planning and how the UFR IRWM Program can remain relevant in the region.

- a. Identify role
 - i. Regional hub, or support, for collaborative watershed planning on a regional scale?
 1. Participation in the [Blue Forest](#) efforts, which is focused on getting beneficiaries to help pay for on the ground projects.
 2. Involvement in DWR's post-wildfire efforts to rebuild infrastructure and systems.
 3. Connect with the Feather River Stewardship Coalition. Zach will make the connection.
 - ii. Grant generator
 1. Be proactive with assistance and lead with integration and not competition.
 2. Focus on supporting DACs and funding needed infrastructure projects for those areas.

3. Consider sending a brief questionnaire to each special district to determine needs, potential projects, etc.

iii. Advocacy and outreach

1. Continue to outreach and encourage engagement with disadvantaged communities.

7. Next Steps/Action Items

1. The next meeting will be held on October 28, 2024, from 1:30-3:00PM
2. Focus will be on:
 - a. reviewing and updating, as needed, the UFR IRWM project list and
 - b. developing recommendations for the future of the UFR IRWM Program to the RWMG.
3. Identify and create a current list of UFR IRWM agency stakeholders/partners for cross collaboration (e.g., Feather River Stewardship Coalition)
4. Discuss ideas for future IRWM funding solutions
5. Consider organizing a UFR watershed tour
6. Pertaining to 2021 Dixie Fire recovery, research if DWR has UFR water quality data/testing
7. Regarding IRWM projects list:
 - a. Review the project list, update contacts, remove unresponsive LPS and completed projects
 - b. Solicit new projects and update project list, focusing on funding source topics (i.e., climate resiliency)
 - c. With available funding, work with smaller districts and DACs to develop projects for funding opportunities
 - d. Consider holding a grant forum or workshop to educate and connect to funding sources
 - e. USFS will be completing projects but there will be gaps and the IRWM Program could help implement gap projects (need to identify), which will be a steady, consistent stream of work for the implementation period – contact to learn more
 - f. Chester PUD has a project to submit for inclusion in the Plan project list – provide project form to submission
 - g. Plumas Fire Safe Council has a lot of fuels reduction funding that could be integrated into other projects – contact to learn more
 - h. Consider sending a brief questionnaire to each special district to determine technical assistance needs, potential projects, etc.

Adjourned at 3:15PM

Attachment 4
UPPER FEATHER RIVER
REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT GROUP

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKING GROUP MEETING #2
OCTOBER 28, 2024

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Introductions

Attendees:

Tracy Schor, UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Zach Browning, Sierra Institute

Dax Albrecht, Plumas-Sierra Agricultural Department

Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County Planning Director

Uma Hinman, Hinman & Associates Consulting

2. Meeting objectives and purpose

To review the current approach to the project update list and transition Program planning to develop recommended options to present to the UFR RWMG at the (tentative) November 2024 meeting.

3. IRWM Plan Implementation Projects Approach (Attachments 2 and 3)

A primary weakness in the region is the capacity to get projects from identified need to implementation (grant funding, etc.). The need is outpacing movement. Forest and watershed health is a huge economy in the region right now. Biggest needs are in municipal (water/wastewater) infrastructure and working landscapes (ag and forestry). Projects should focus on watershed restoration and adaptive resiliency. Coordination between the various concurrent efforts will be important so as not to overlap and to focus on the gaps between projects.

- a. Review the project list, update contacts, remove unresponsive LPS and completed projects
 - i. Confirmed removal of completed and dropped projects and projects of unresponsive LPS.
 - ii. Update East Quincy CSD to American Valley CSD (MS-42, MS-43) and confirm project needs.
- b. Solicit new projects, focusing on funding source topics (i.e., climate resiliency, etc.)
 - i. Update the first paragraph of the project application form to highlight benefits of being in the IRWM Plan.
 - ii. Update the project application form resource management strategies to be consistent with the most current California Water Plan.
 - iii. Focus on helping the SSWS/LSWS, DACs, Gold Mountain CSD, Public Works, Plumas-Eureka CSD, City of Portola.
 - iv. Tie projects into GMA and climate resiliency through identification of benefits of projects to groundwater resources (forestry, restoration, efficiencies, carbon credits and GHGs).
- c. With available funding, focus on smaller districts and DACs to develop projects for funding opportunities.
 - i. Recommend Uma follow up and assist those who responded with capacity needs.
- d. Host a grant forum or workshop to educate and connect to funding sources.
 - i. Include a question to solicit interest in a grant writing workshop on the questionnaire (see below).

- e. Send a brief questionnaire to special districts to determine technical assistance needs, potential projects, etc.
- ii. Lead the solicitation for new projects with the questionnaire. Questions to include are current contact information, what type of assistance is needed, if a grant workshop would be of interest, and identification of need and potential projects.

4. Transition UFR IRWM Program Planning

- a. The group discussed and identified current agency stakeholders/partners for cross collaboration:
 - i. Butte County Conservancy Group, Plumas Corporation, Sierra Institute, South Lassen Watershed Group, Lake Almanor Watershed Group, FRRCD, SVRCD, SVGMD, Feather River Stewardship Coalition, DWR, USFS, Plumas Fire Safe Council, Butte Fire Safe Council, University California Cooperative Extension, Tribal groups, and Blue Forest.
- b. Discussed potential funding solutions:
 - i. Proposition 4 includes \$100M IRWM-dedicated funding. If passed, there may be some funding for implementation projects.
 - ii. [USDA rural development grant program](#) and the [RCAC](#) for small water systems.
 - iii. Tracey and Uma will be meeting with Watershed Solutions Network to discuss a potential connection between the Upper Feather River water resource stakeholders and the Los Angeles water agencies for projects in the headwaters regions.
 - iv. Blue Forest is a non-profit conservation finance organization that is doing some work in the region. There may be benefits in coordinating efforts with them.
 - v. Research potential for designating the headwaters watershed as 'critical infrastructure' and tap into federal funding. Possibly establish by resolution of the RWMG?
 - vi. Discussed recommendations for future of IRWM Program including roles, strategies, and associated actions for refocusing the UFR program. Focus on supporting DACs and pursuing funding sources for projects identified in the Plan and solicited through the questionnaire process.

5. Review Transition Planning Questionnaire

- a. Briefly reviewed questions not already addressed.

6. Next Steps/Action Items

- a. The recommendations will be presented to the RWMG at their next meeting for consideration and direction.

Adjourned at 3:00 p.m.