

Upper Feather River IRWM Regional Water Management Group

FINAL SUMMARY MINUTES

March 29, 2024

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Paul Roen called the meeting to order on March 29, 2024 at 1:15 pm at the Plumas County Planning Conference Room, 555 Main Street, Quincy, California.

Members Present:

Paul Roen, Chair, Sierra County Board of Supervisors
Trina Cunningham, Vice Chair, Maidu Summit Consortium
Doug Teeter, Butte County Board of Supervisors
Rob Thorman, Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
Rick Roberti, Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District
Russell Reid, Feather River Resource Conservation District
Russel Nickerson, Lassen National Forest (Advisory)

Members Absent:

Dwight Ceresola, Plumas County Board of Supervisors
Einen Grandi, Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District
Roger Diefendorf, Plumas County Community Development Commission
Kurt Sable, Plumas National Forest (Advisory)
Rachel Hutchinson, Tahoe National Forest (Advisory)

Staff Present:

Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County Planning Director
Uma Hinman, Hinman and Associates Consulting, Inc.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA

None

PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS / REPORTS

1. Tracey Ferguson provided a brief update on the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District's 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).
 - Add updates and outcomes on the demonstration and pilot projects to the RWMG quarterly reports.

2. Water Solutions Network Watershed Framework

Trina Cunningham provided an update on the Water Solutions Network (WSN) Watershed Framework. The group first contacted Trina and Uma a couple of years ago with the idea to connect funding from end users with projects in the headwaters. On March 25, 2024, a small group of regional representatives met in the Indian Valley area for the purpose of gaging interest and discussing ideas. The WSN will be having a similar discussion with end user agencies and groups, and hope to schedule another meeting with UFR representatives in late summer/early fall.

The RWMG discussed the idea of end-user investment in the headwaters regions, and directed Uma to attend future WSN meetings and inform the RWMG on activities so as to determine how best to engage.

- Staff attend future WSN meetings and agendize discussion of the item for the next RWMG meeting.

3. Plumas Watershed Forum Grant Funded Projects

Two projects have been awarded funding of Monterey Settlement funds through the Plumas Watershed Forum Grant Program. Both projects are implementation projects identified in the UFR IRWM Plan: SVGMD Synergistic Sierra Valley Groundwater Recharge and Irrigation Efficiency Project (\$1,220,000), and the Taylorsville Mill Race Farmers’ Dam (Spillway) Resurfacing and Renovation Project (\$520,000).

4. Roundtable of Regions Updates

Staff provided an update on the quarterly Roundtable of Regions meetings and activities, reporting that the State’s budget cuts drastically affected the Watershed Resiliency program budge (reduced from \$161million to \$34.5 million). The Roundtable of Regions is continuing to search for other funding opportunities as a resource to the regions, most of which are federal funding sources focused on climate resilience and disadvantaged communities. The Roundtable is also planning a Disadvantaged Community and Tribal Involvement Summit with the end goal to develop strong recommendation for how to move forward at the end of the DACTI grant so momentum is not lost.

CONSENT AGENDA

a. Regional Water Management Group Business

1. RWMG Meeting Summary for the regular meeting held on March 11, 2022.
2. Ratification of the following:
 - a. Letter of Support for Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District’s grant application to DWR for Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Grant Program’s SGMA Implementation Round 2, June 9, 2023.
 - b. Letter of Support to include IRWM funding increased to \$660 million in AB 1567, April 10, 2023.
3. Support Services financial report.

Upon motion by Trina Cunningham and second by Russell Reid, the Consent Calendar was unanimously approved as presented.

ACTION AGENDA

1. REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT GROUP ADMINISTRATION

a. Membership and Representation

A brief history of the current membership of the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) was provided in the staff report and summarized by staff. Staff noted that the current membership was

established to ensure a cross section of representation focused on water managers in the region as well as geographic representation. There are currently two vacancies:

Almanor Basin Representative

A public member was originally included on the RWMG to ensure representation from the Almanor Basin area, which was underrepresented at the time. The MOU states that the public member will be an individual from the Almanor Basin appointed by the County Supervisor representing District 3, and ratified by the RWMG. The seat has been vacant since 2019.

- Staff will coordinate with Plumas County Supervisor Tom McGowan to identify a public member before the next RWMG meeting.

Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Representative

The Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District representative seat has been vacant since 2022.

- Rob Thorman will coordinate with the District Board to assign a representative to the RWMG prior to the next RWMG meeting.

b. Support Services for Fiscal Year 2024-25

The Support Services contract is managed by Plumas County and is funded by contributions from the four main counties in the Upper Feather River Region (Plumas, Sierra, Butte, and Lassen). County contributions are calculated based on percentage of each county's geographic area included in the Region. The work scope for the contract includes administrative tasks for the RWMG, grant research, information sharing with region stakeholders, Plan implementation activities, and tasks related to representing the RWMG to the IRWM Roundtable of Regions and the State. The Support Services contract has been with Hinman & Associates Consulting since completion of the Upper Feather River IRWM Plan.

Upon motion by Doug Teeter and second by Rick Roberti, the RWMG unanimously supported Plumas County's contract with Hinman & Associates Consulting to continue to provide Support Services for Fiscal Year 2024-25 in the amount of \$20,000.

2. SUPERIOR-ENGELS MINES VESTED RIGHTS PROJECT

The RWMG considered Tom Peltier's request to submit a comment letter supporting denial of the Superior-Engels Mines Vested Rights Project being considered by the Plumas County Zoning Administrator. The RWMG deferred providing any comment pending a CEQA document on the project, determining that the vested rights hearing was a legal matter and premature for any action by the RWMG.

- Staff respond to Mr. Peltier with the RWMG's direction.

3. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF UPPER FEATHER RIVER IRWM PROGRAM AND THE RWMG

Staff introduced the discussion by reporting on the State's declining interest in specifically supporting DWR's IRWM Program as well as the current budget cuts that will be impacting State grant programs in general. The question being discussed in each IRWM region across the State is how to evolve to meet the changing political climate and lack of funding.

The RWMG held a robust discussion regarding the relevance of the Upper Feather River IRWM Program and its beneficial impact in the region. Russell Reid reminded the Group that the UFR IRWM Program MOU granted the RWMG the authority to identify and weigh in on watershed issues and projects, thereby establishing and supporting projects' eligibility for funding sources.

The RWMG expressed strong support for continuing the Program and continuing to engage with other planning efforts such as SGMA. Recommendations to staff included contacting the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development for the water and environmental programs and the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) water, wastewater, and solid waste systems programs to present at the next RWMG meeting and to coordinate for funding to implement projects identified in the Plan.

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

4. PROPOSITION 1 ROUND 1 & ROUND 2 IRWM IMPLEMENTATION GRANT AND 2021 URBAN AND MULTIBENEFIT DROUGHT RELIEF GRANT PROGRAM (UMBDRP) PROJECTS

Staff presented a report on the Proposition 1 IRWM Implementation Rounds 1 and 2 and UMBDRP grant funding awards to Plumas County for two implementation projects awarded to Indian Valley Community Services District and the Sierraville Public Utilities District.

a. Project 1 Sierraville PUD Alternative Water Source Development Project

Bill Quesnel, Acumen Engineering/Project Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation on Project 1. Construction of the project was finished in December 2023 and final invoicing and the project completion report were submitted to DWR in March 2024. The project received a total of \$1,132,660 in Prop 1 IRWM Round 1 and UMBDRP funding.

b. Project 2 Indian Valley Community Services District North Main Water Use Efficiency, Reliability, and Extension Project.

The IVCS D project is behind schedule due to delays caused by the Dixie Fire recovery planning and supply issues. However, the project is slowly progressing and construction is expected to begin in April. The project received a total of \$440,512 in Prop 1 IRWM Rounds 1 and 2 funding.

5. UPPER FEATHER RIVER IRWM PLAN IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

The IRWM Plan's implementation and reporting component (Plan Chapter 11) specifies annual implementation reports be provided to the RWMG. The *Upper Feather Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Performance Annual Report 2022-2023* is the second Plan performance report. Upon acceptance the report will be uploaded to the website.

Upon motion by Doug Teeter and second by Trina Cunningham, the RWMG unanimously accepted the *Upper Feather Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Performance Annual Report 2022-2023* for filing and posting on the website.

6. FUTURE ITEMS

RWMG members identified the following future agenda items:

- RWMG possible engagement with the Water Solutions Network
- Report from the ad hoc committee regarding future of the UFR IRWM Program
- RWMG engagement with the counties; develop a protocol for RWMG review of projects seeking grant funding
- Review the UFR RWMG Memorandum of Understanding
- Presentation on the Prop 1 Round 1/Round 2 Implementation Project 2 Indian Valley CSD
- Presentations by USDA and the RCAC on funding opportunities for the remaining implementation projects

- Update on post-wildfire recovery/water quality testing
- Identify regional projects and funding opportunities to implement

The RWVG will hold biannual meetings; the next will be scheduled in early October 2024.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Other Attendees:

Kristy Hoffman, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Christina Buck, Butte County Water & Resource Conservation
Bill Quesnel, Acumen Engineering (Sierraville PUD)
Paul Rose, Rose Water Systems (Sierraville PUD)