

**Poso Creek IRWM Plan
Public Involvement Plan (PIP)**

**Supplement to the 2007 Poso Creek Integrated
Regional Water Management Plan**

- September 2013 -

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PREFACE AND PURPOSE

This document outlines the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) approach used for Stakeholder Involvement and interregional Coordination for the Poso Creek Integrated Regional Management Plan (IRWM Plan). The IRWM Plan for the Poso Creek Region was first adopted in 2007. It was prepared by local interests who received grant funding through a California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Proposition 50 Planning Grant. The initial IRWM Plan was completed pursuant to a grant contract and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) allowing time to establish mutual understandings among the Poso Creek Region IRWM participants and established the Regional Water Management Group (RWMG). Following the initial IRWM Plan development, the RWMG initiated implementation which included development of a Governance MOU designating roles for implementing the IRWM Plan over time and established the decision making process. The Governance MOU contains the signatures of eligible agencies and organizations who serve as the Poso IRWM Plan “Regional Water Management Group” members. The RWMG is responsible for periodically updating the IRWM Plan.

The purpose of this PIP is to identify and document how participation and information sharing occurs throughout this IRWM Plan process. Implementation of the PIP documents the IRWM Plan’s efforts to meet DWR outreach requirements and promote agency, stakeholder, and disadvantaged community (DAC) involvement in this IRWM Plan. This PIP continues the successful IRWM process initiated by the RWMG that involved Stakeholder and DAC interests in the IRWM Plan development and includes these entities in the implementation activity. The PIP describes the timing and nature of communications that occur among the parties involved in the IRWM Plan process. The PIP is not intended to prescribe new protocol for the entities, i.e. the PIP does not establish communication guidelines for the RWMG. Rather the PIP describes the kinds and timing of communication used to facilitate both public involvement and coordination among the Poso IRWM Plan participants, among neighboring IRWMPs within the Tulare Basin Funding Regions, and among the IRWM state program. The PIP discusses:

- Scheduled meetings and public forums and the nature of materials used;
- RWMG response procedure to requests for information;
- Schedule of communications;
- Responsible entities for providing and circulating information; and
- Documentation of meetings and other communications.

In order to provide consistent and effective communication over time in the face of changing conditions, implantation of the PIP’s Communication and Outreach Plan identifies the procedures used to manage communication for the IRWM Plan. This Stakeholder Outreach Plan is an integral part of the overall IRWM Plan and is used as guidance for stakeholder engagement by the Poso Creek RWMG. The PIP identifies formal communication elements. Other communication channels exist on informal levels and enhance those discussed within this PIP. Informal communications will enhance communication and are not intended to be limited by this PIP.

DWR has expanded the IRWM Plan standards since adoption of the 2007 Poso Creek IRWM Plan. A revision of the IRWM plan is needed to address these expanded standards and to meet the contractual obligations of several of the Poso Creek RWMG members. DWR has listed 16 “Plan Standards” that must be addressed in developing or updating an IRWM Plan. Two of these standards Stakeholder Involvement and Coordination, are directly addressed by this document. The specific Standards are contained in the November 2012 IRWM Grant Program Guidelines available at: <http://www.water.ca.gov/irwm/grants/>.

The IRWM Plan guidelines state “the intent of the Stakeholder Involvement Standard is to ensure the RWMGs give the opportunity to all stakeholders to actively participate in the IRWM decision making process on an on-going basis.” To assure that the intent is met, the guidelines list a number to topics that must be addressed:

- Process used to Identify Stakeholders
- Involvement of Disadvantaged Communities
- Use of Technology and Information Access
- Decision Making Process
 - The groups or committees involved
 - The constitution of those groups
 - The opportunities to contribute to those groups or the decision making process
- Stakeholder Involvement

The intent of the Coordination Standard is to ensure the following items:

- Coordination of activities with local agencies and stakeholders to avoid conflict within the region and to best utilize resources,
- Planning efforts and coordinating with RWMGs in adjacent Regions, and
- State, federal, and local agency resources and roles are taken into account in the implementation of their plans and projects.

The DWR Standards provide direction for three topics:

- Coordination of activities within an IRWM Region,
- Identification and coordination with neighboring IRWM Regions, and
- Coordination with agencies.

While the guidelines do not require a Public Involvement Plan, development of a PIP is a method to assure that elements of the Stakeholder Involvement and Coordination requirements are met. In addition, it is useful for documenting this activity to meet the DWR’s plan requirements.

PARTICIPANT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section describes the organization, roles and responsibilities, communication, and established relationships among of the participating entities involved in the Poso Creek IRWM Plan. The participating entities include the Poso RWMG, Semitropic Water Storage District (WSD) as the Lead Agency, the DAC Representative, the DAC Working Group, and Interested Stakeholders.

1. The **Regional Water Management Group (RWMG)** is responsible for the IRWM Plan development and implementation. According to DWR, a RWMG must meet the definition per CWC §10539 which states,

RWMG means a group in which three or more local agencies, at least two of which have statutory authority over water resources or water management, as well as those persons who may be necessary for the development and implementation of a plan that meets the requirements of the CWC §10540 and §10541, participate by means of a joint powers agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or other written agreement, as appropriate, that is approved by the governing bodies of those local agencies.

In the Poso Creek IRWM Region, the RWMG members must be either local agency as required by the CWC or an IRS defined 501 (c) 3 non-profit organizations. The RWMG members are signatories to the Governance MOU and will consider adopting the 2014 IRWM Plan. The RWMG comprises:

- Semitropic Water Storage District
- Cawelo Water District
- Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District
- Kern-Tulare Water District
- North Kern Water Storage District
- North West Kern Resource Conservation District
- Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District
- DAC Representative

The RWMG member agencies and/or organizations' roles and responsibilities include:

- Execute and maintain Governance MOU
- Maintain, update, and adopt the IRWM Plan
- Designate a Chairman as representative with clear authority to represent agency/organization
- Attend public meetings/workshops
- Submit planning/implementation projects/programs for IRWM Plan and grant funding
- Compile and as necessary, submit data on planning/implementation projects/programs

The RWMG holds a public meeting on the first Tuesday of the month, as necessary. A list of RWMG representatives is shown in Appendix A.

Semitropic Water Storage District (Semitropic) acts as the **Lead Agency** that manages the IRWM Plan, submittal of the grant applications on behalf of the Region, and acts as a liaison with DWR. Specifically, the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency are:

- Review and approval of IRWM Plan
- Coordinate re-adoption of IRWM Plan as needed
- Execute MOU
- Act as Lead Agency for Region
- Communicate decision on IRWM activities with RWMG
- Authorize grant applications
- Enter into agreements with DWR on behalf of RWMG
- Approve implementation agreements
- Approve funding for IRWM planning
- Approve contracts with consultant(s)

Semitropic hosts a public meeting of the RWMG on the first Tuesday of the month, as necessary; occasionally, the public meeting may be held at one of the other RWMG member locations to accommodate members of the RWMG, IRWM Plan participants, and the public.

2. **Interregional Coordination** occurs through engaged interaction of the RWMG with other representatives of adjacent IRWM Regions who meet on the first Monday of the Month in order to understand the specific water resources needs and priorities of the overall Funding Area Region, explore common Resource Management Strategies, and consider regional programs. A list of IRWM and other regional planning activities in the Tulare Basin Funding Area is shown in Appendix B.

3. **DAC Representation** is provided by an elected DAC Representative. The DAC Representative has a vote on the RWMG and coordinates with key DAC stakeholders who guide identification and development of DAC water related projects for inclusion on the IRWM Plan and grant proposals.

4. **Interested Stakeholders** provide valuable input into the planning process and inform the RWMG of potential project opportunities. In specific, the roles and responsibilities of the Interested Stakeholders are:

- Provide input into development of IRWM Plan
- Attend public meetings/ workshops
- Comment on Draft Sections of the Plan
- Provide letters of support for the Plan and Projects

Stakeholders are informed of the monthly RWMG meetings. A list of current Stakeholders is provided in Appendix C.

APPROACH TO THE PUBIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

This PIP includes communication and involvement with two groups of interests:

- Stakeholder interests within the Poso Creek IRWM Region, and
- Agency and other interests both within and outside the IRWM from adjacent Regions.

Differentiating between communication and involvement approaches for these two groups in the standards is in many ways an artificial construct; they are not mutually exclusive. However the DWR guidelines do contain two distinct sets of standards. Therefore this PIP discusses a series of approaches, some focusing on stakeholders within the Poso Creek Region and some focusing on coordination with interests and will generally use DWR terminology.

The discussion below will first focus on involvement of Stakeholder interests, specifically:

- Process used to identify and involve stakeholders
- The role of disadvantaged communities
- Use of technology and information access in communication
- Stakeholder role in the RWMG decision making process
- Stakeholder involvement in development of the IRWM Plan update

These topics comprise the first element of the coordination Standard:

- Coordination of activities within an IRWM Region.

The last two sections of the Approach discussion will address the second and third elements of the Coordination standard:

- Identification and coordination with neighboring IRWM Regions, and
- Coordination with agencies.

Process used to identify and involve stakeholders

The RWMG developed an initial list and maintains an existing list of all relevant agencies and interest groups, including those statutorily required stakeholders (Appendices A, B and C). The list is augmented through formal and informal communications with stakeholders already on the list and through outreach communications. Communications include word of mouth, e-mail communication, requests for involvement through organizations such as Self Help Enterprises, and Pubic Announcements.

The stakeholder outreach list informs the public and maintains a link for a consistent outreach process. It also serves as a tool moving forward into other media.

Stakeholders receive updates on the project and plan milestones, funding information, and other appropriate and relevant information. The stakeholder list was built from a considered list:

- Wholesale and retail water purveyors
- Wastewater agencies
- Flood control agencies
- Municipal and county governments and special districts
- Electrical corporations
- Native American tribes (None are within this IRWM Area)
- Self-supplied water users
- Environmental stewardship organizations
- Community organizations
- Industry organizations
- State, federal, and regional agencies or universities
- Disadvantaged community members
- Any other interested group appropriate to the region.

The stakeholder list is updated throughout the process and is open to new participants.

Role of disadvantaged communities

The IRWM Plan relies on the DAC Representative of the RWMG to coordinate community needs; the DAC Representative coordinates the smaller disadvantaged community needs through Self Help Enterprises. This process incorporates the wealth of local knowledge, input, and priorities of the DACs in the region to identify the needs, priorities, actionable water management strategies, and potentially fundable projects. Other DAC representatives are encouraged to participate in the monthly RWMG meetings. However, the participation by the DAC Representative and by the key stakeholder, Self Help Enterprises, has led to a reliable and effective process to identify and address DAC water related needs.

The RWMG encourages identification of relevant Resource Management Strategies determined by the DAC representatives and development of projects specifically to benefit DACs. The Poso Creek RWMG continues to support the advancement of DAC projects within and in some cases, just outside the Region's boundaries. The RWMG is open to address any technical barriers to communication so as to assure the DAC issues are identified and defined in the IRWM update. A list of Disadvantaged Communities that have participated and in many cases benefitted from the Poso Creek IRWM process is provided as Appendix D.

Use of technology and information access in communication

Methods of communication – The RWMG relies on communication systems that are commonly utilized in the Region:

E-Mail - Each stakeholder is encouraged to provide an e-mail address. An E-mail list is used to circulate all notices and other relevant information including alerting entities to meetings, meeting changes, alerting entities to key documents that have been posted on the Poso IRWM website (<http://semitropic.com/PubsArchive.htm>). General questions and answers from the public are directed to the appropriate RWMG representative for information on the IRWM Plan.

Conference calls - Conference calls or other means are used for communication with entities such as DWR or to provide remote access to public meetings.

Website - The existing website is to be restructured to accommodate the IRWM Plan update and implementation process; once restructured, it will be enhance existing communication.

Published notices - In addition to e-mail and web postings, the RWMG publishes notices to advise the public of certain formal actions such as the Notice of Intent to update the IRWM Plan.

Formal Communication - RWMG will use formal communications for certain items:

Notice of Intent – An example of a formal “Notice of Intent” (NOI) is an NOI to update the Poso Creek IRWM Plan. The NOI is publically noticed in media publications in the County. The NOI is posted on the Poso Creek IRWM website and websites of RWMG members to provide widespread notice. In addition, the NOI is circulated to the Stakeholder list by e-mail.

Public Meeting Notices – Hearings, such as, for adoption of the revised Plan and certain meetings are publically noticed to allow for public and stakeholder input. Routine meeting Notices are posted on the Poso Creek IRWM website ([Address here](#)) for public access.

RWMG Meeting Notices – RWMG meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month. Reminder notices are generated and sent out by email to the RWMG in advance of the actual meeting. The stakeholder list is copied on RWMG meeting notices to ensure the all interested parties are kept abreast of the progression on the Plan. Meeting Notices, Agendas and Meeting Minutes are posted on the Poso Creek IRWM website ([Address here](#)) for public access.

Informal communications - Informal communications occur during the IRWM Plan activities, update, and implementation. This informal process may consist of e-mail, conversations or phone calls and serve to supplement and expand communications. Informal communication is not intended to replace formal communications.

Stakeholder role in the RWMG decision making process

Individual stakeholders and stakeholder organizations are critical to informing the IRWM process and supporting the RWMG in their development, update, and implementation of the Poso Creek IRWM Plan. Stakeholders provide input on matters pertaining to development, updating, and implementation of the IRWM Plan. In RWMG meetings, stakeholders may participate on discussion of agenda items and may provide comment on other matters on the agenda.

In particular, Stakeholders are expected to participate in development of regional Objectives and Resource Management Strategies. Stakeholders nominate projects for inclusion in the IRWM Plan through a district sponsor, the DAC Representative, and/or through a DAC Working Group that includes Self-Help Enterprises. DWR guidelines allow those stakeholder organizations, such as public agencies, to sponsor projects that address Plan objectives and with the concurrence of the RWMG.

Stakeholder involvement in the IRWM Plan

Stakeholder involvement in development, updating, and implementing the IRWM Plan is encouraged and supported in a number of ways, including:

RWMG Meeting Protocol

- Meeting agendas are prepared and distributed prior to the meeting.
- Meetings are coordinated by and facilitated by the RWMG Chairman and/or its designee.
- Meetings operate according to a set of ground rules.
- Progress toward completing work plan tasks is assured by adherence to time frames identified on meeting agendas.
- Meeting materials are coordinated and distributed ahead of the meeting time.
- Public comments are scheduled at the beginning of meetings.

Stakeholder Involvement and Input with the RWMG to the IRWM Plan Process

- Clear and complete schedule
- Materials easily accessible and available on time
- Encourage Stakeholder input through review of interim work products and recommending actions and decisions to the RWMG.

Encourage broader dissemination of IRWM related materials - The RWMG encourages participants to utilize existing groups and communication systems to disseminate information about the IRWM plan, in part relying on groups that have dedicated involvement and similar concerns and/or issues as those addressed in the IRWM Plan.

External Communications - Public Inquiries - The public is encouraged to participate in the IRWM Plan development, update, and implementation. The NOI, as described above, is publically distributed and both RWMG meetings and each district's Board hearings on the Plan are publically noticed. In addition, all meeting information is posted on the website and available for public viewing and comments. Public comments are received via an e-mail address posted on the website and are answered by designated RWMG member or their authorized agents.

Identification and coordination with neighboring IRWM Regions

Regular meetings of regional water planning entities within the Tulare Lake Funding Area are held the first Monday of the month. The entities involved are listed in Appendix B. The meetings are hosted by the JPA for Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region Water-Related Entities. Each participating Region provides participation by District staff involved directly in the IRWM process.

Participating parties in the monthly meetings include representatives of the Kings River Conservation District, the Upper Kings IRWM, the Southern Sierra IRWM, the Kern County Water Agency, and the Kern IRWM. Meeting agendas are prepared by a consultant for the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region Water-Related Entities.

Coordination with agencies

The RWMG continues to foster and build relationships with other planning groups within the Central Valley; coordinating efforts include:

1. Meeting regularly as a RWMG focused on the Poso Creek IRWM Plan Implementation provides other IRWM groups with a functional implementation group to communicate with for implementing water management strategies that are larger than one planning group, such as, managing flood water from rivers adjacent to the Friant-Kern Canal in the Tulare Basin. These regular implementation meeting notices are distributed to a large group of districts and stakeholders, and provide a designated time for the RWMG to listen to any interested parties.
2. Meeting regularly with neighboring established and developing IRWM groups within the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region Water-Related Entities. Participating parties in the monthly meetings include representatives of the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, the Deer Creek and Tule River Authority Kings River Conservation District, the Upper Kings IRWM, the Southern Sierra IRWM, the Kern County Water Agency, and the Kern IRWM.
3. Supporting the efforts of the *Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley* to develop an Action Plan that is a framework for planning for an eight-county area of the Central Valley. (<http://www.sjvpartnership.org/>).
4. Encouraging the DACs and Cities within the Poso Creek Region who are within the “North Group” of the Kern IRWM to join the Kern IRWM process and help build working relationships between the Kern IRWM and the Poso Creek IRWM Plan implementation groups.
5. Offering in-kind services and participating as a Stakeholder in the Kern IRWM process. Participating in the “Round Table of Regions” conference calls and IRWM coordination meetings.
6. Participating in semi-annual Tulare Lake Basin Working Group meeting that are led by Carole Combs, Executive Director, Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners and working with the TBWP to develop and implement wildlife projects in the Poso Creek Region.
7. Attending Reclamation’s Mid-Pacific Conference and presenting Plan materials at meetings with Reclamation planning staff.
8. Attending CA Irrigation Institute Annual Meeting and presenting projects.

9. Presenting Plan information at technical conferences, such as, the United States Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

The RWMG will continue to engage all water planning agencies within the region through these efforts. In addition the RWMG will expand its coordination efforts through discussions with agencies responsible for Land Use Planning within the Region as the part of the Poso IRWM Plan.

Communication Protocols

All IRWM Plan communications related to project-wide status is directed to Semitropic staff and in particular, the Poso RWMG Chairman, Paul Oshel, unless otherwise specified. Because of the broad scope of this project, only those individuals at the project management level are able to provide a comprehensive and accurate status update on the project as a whole. Project status updates will be disseminated periodically through e-mail, as needed, to all entities or sub-groups. All meeting agendas, materials, and action items will be posted on the IRWM website for public review.

Metrics

Appropriate metrics will be used to measure the Stakeholder involvement and communications to measure the success of this Public Involvement Plan. The metrics may include:

- Numbers of organizations or individuals involved (e.g. attending meetings)
- Range of interests shown by stakeholders
- Number of comments
- Scope of projects suggested to the RWMG
- Compliance with information/data requests
- Review of TMs, draft, and final drafts of plan according to schedule
- Agency participants provide current and accurate information about the Plan

The RWMG will consider a range of metrics for measuring the success of the overall IRWM planning process. A subset of those will be used by the RWMG to document success of the PIP.

Public Involvement Plan documentation

Written communications received or generated by the project will be retained and stored in the IRWM Plan records and key communications posted on the IRWM website. Documents that document decisions will be posted on the IRWM website, archived, and retained for historical purposes. The Public Involvement Plan will be included in the updated IRWM Plan.

Appendix A

Members of the RWMG

Paul M. Oshel
District Engineer
Semitropic Water Storage District

David R. Ansolabehere
General Manager
Cawelo Water District

Dale R. Brogan
General Manager
Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District

Steven C. Dalke
General Manager
Kern-Tulare Water District

Dana S. Munn
Engineer-Manager
North Kern Water Storage District

Brian Hockett
District Manager
North West Kern Resource Conservation District (NWKRCDD)

Jerry L. Ezell
General Manager
Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District

Mike James – DAC Representative
Public Works Director
City of Shafter

Appendix B

IRWM Planning Activities within the Tulare Basin Funding Area

Westside Drainage – Functional equivalent IRWMP developed over 24 years with assistance from Reclamation, received \$25M Implementation Grant

Upper Kings Basin – Prop-50/84 Compliant IRWMP developed over 14 years with assistance from DWR.

Kaweah Delta – Prop-50 Compliant IRWMP, Prop 84 update in progress, developed during the past 9 years.

Poso Creek – Prop-50 Compliant IRWMP, Prop 84 update in progress, developed during the past 9 years.

Tule River – Prop 84 Compliant IRWMP in development

South Sierra – Prop 84 Compliant IRWMP in development

Kern – Prop 84 Compliant IRWMP

A draft document was created for the JPA for Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region Water-Related Entities – IRWM Coordination Group

Appendix C

Initial List: Stakeholders, Plan Participants and Agencies

Stakeholders and Plan Participants

- Allensworth Community Services District
- Buena Vista Water Storage District
- California Water Institute, CSU Fresno
- City of Buttonwillow
- City of Delano
- City of McFarland
- City of Shafter
- City of Wasco
- Community Water Center
- Friant Water Users Authority
- Lost Hills Water District
- Kern County Water Agency
- Kern County Board of Supervisors
- Kern National Wildlife Refuge
- Lost Hills Utility District
- Paramount Farms
- R.L. Schafer and Associates
- Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District
- Semitropic Wildlife Improvement District
- Sequoia River Lands
- Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District
- Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners

State and Federal Agencies

- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Water Resources
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Appendix D

DAC organizations/Communities that have participated and/or benefitted from the Poso Creek IRWM Process

- Allensworth
- City of Buttonwillow
- City of Delano
- City of McFarland
- City of Shafter
- City of Wasco
- Community Water Center
- Lost Hills Utility District
- Self-Help Enterprises