



NORTH COAST INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

North Coast Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (NCIRWMP) Policy Review Panel Interview Summary – January 2012

At the July 2011 Policy Review Panel (PRP) meeting, the NCIRWM leadership requested a second formal evaluation of the IRWM process to date; the first evaluation was conducted in the fall of 2006. In addition to providing an online survey to gather input from the region's interested stakeholders, the project team conducted interviews with the PRP, Technical Peer Review Committee (TPRC) and project proponents. Interview questions for Policy Review Panel members requested input on processes specific to the North Coast and focused on the following areas: a) the future direction, opportunities and constraints of the NCIRWMP, b) policy-level criteria for NCIRWMP project selection, c) water management issues/conflicts facing the North Coast region and its individual communities, and d) the needs, successful projects, local knowledge, constraints and opportunities for integrating energy independence into the NCIRWMP. Input received from the NCIRWMP PRP members is summarized below.

Across the board, PRP members feel that NCIRWM planning process has been immensely positive for the North Coast region, stating that this effort encourages an inclusive, "participation by all" approach, a commitment to openness and transparency, and a well organized framework committed to ongoing communication and outreach. In addition, the PRP felt that the NCIRWM provided support for local autonomy and the region's small, rural and economically disadvantaged communities, while promoting a flexible and adaptive framework that allows for review and updates to the NCIRWM Plan and its processes. The PRP also stated that the strong regional partnership has been key to the NCIRWMP's success in regional water management planning and fund development for the North Coast region. Members proposed the following improvements and/or concerns regarding the program:

- Establish regular meetings and develop a quarterly report, newsletter or presentation documenting activities between meetings
- Develop a mechanism to track/measure the NCIRWMP's success; report on the NCIRWMP's performance and documenting its achievements
- Utilize the NCIRWMP framework to identify and influence topics of mutual concern, support or potential funding opportunities at state and federal levels
- Consider economic development and renewable energy funding opportunities as a key sustainable revenue source for the North Coast region
- Work with State agencies to express concerns and improve the timing and funding allocations of IRWM grants
- Ensure that PRP members are making decisions in an open setting - refraining from discussing potential motions or actions prior to a meeting

- Explore alternative meeting options and funding opportunities to limit costs associated with travel
- Provide more information and outreach to new PRP members and their respective Boards and Tribal Councils

Vision/Future Direction/Opportunities and Constraints of the NCIRWMP

The PRP expressed widespread support in maintaining the NCIRWMP's unique regional collaboration, geographic boundaries, and support for capacity building in the region's small, rural, and economically disadvantaged communities. Many PRP members discussed the need to secure on-going funding for the NCIRWMP effort and importance of retaining the NCIRWMP's standing as a model in the State for IRWM planning. In addition, PRP members offered the following new areas of interest for consideration:

- Forge new opportunities and develop strategies for energy independence and economic development in NCIRWMP communities including, but not limited to, biomass, small hydropower, carbon sequestration, broadband, conservation, solar, geothermal and wave energy
- Focus on failing water and wastewater infrastructure needs region-wide
- Retain the integrity of the NCIRWMP's regional boundaries and, when appropriate, identify opportunities to expand the NCIRWMP partnership
- Serve as a model for the state for IRWM Tribal inclusion
- Identify opportunities to partner with State/Federal agencies
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with the NCIRWMP leadership and Tribes on the restoration and enhancement of salmon populations and their habitats
- Secure reliable funding for the NCIRWMP and its projects outside of CA bonds
- Identify opportunities to have a positive influence on the CA Water Plan and the relationship between North Coast Tribes and DWR
- Strive to establish a reasonable balance of need between water-rich and water-scarce areas in the region
- Support the regional collaboration of North Coast Tribes in their efforts to conduct assessments, create solutions to improve impaired streams and waterbodies and address TMDLs
- Develop a strong connection in the NCIRWMP between energy and water as it relates to forest health, jobs, economic development, and watershed health

Additionally, PRP members offered the following insights regarding the greatest challenges and constraints currently affecting the North Coast region:

- Region size and the related costs associated with travel and limited resources to facilitate collaboration at this scale
- Lack of universal broadband and transmission access in rural communities
- Competition for resources which result in opposition
- Large number of economically disadvantaged communities
- Lack of transmission capacity for power generation
- Environmental opposition to active forest management
- Sustainable feedstock yields on public lands to support biomass projects
- Energy regulation requirements/restrictions and costs associated with mitigation
- Alignment of goals across multiple counties and jurisdictions

PRP and TPRC Roles and Staff Support

The majority of PRP members support the current roles of the PRP and TPRC, the clear division of policy and technical decision-making, and commitment made to ensure regional inclusion and equity. Many members felt that more clearly defined roles and responsibilities of each committee would benefit the NCIRWMP program and be helpful to potential project proponents and the general public. Several members acknowledged the work the Project Selection and Review Process Ad Hoc Committee is doing to support the clarification and definition of NCIRWMP roles. A number of interviewees commented on the tremendous work the NCIRWMP's TPRC members do on a volunteer basis and proposed working to identify resources to continue to attract highly qualified experts to this committee and support their work. Two members expressed concern about the perception of counties with resources receiving additional benefits from the NCIRWMP program.

The PRP is pleased with and feels that the support staff provides to the PRP, TPRC, project proponents, agencies, and interested stakeholders on behalf of the NCIRWMP program is exemplary. PRP members would like additional staff support in the following areas:

- Providing technical assistance to project proponents
- Working with local entities to provide NCIRWMP outreach and support to interested stakeholders
- Upgrading the NCIRWMP website
- Conducting annual presentations on the NCIRWMP to Boards of Supervisors and Tribal Councils
- Conducting outreach throughout the region to include and engage all NCIRWMP stakeholders
- Allowing additional time for proposal/project review
- Tracking projects that didn't receive IRWM funding and working to identify and support applications for alternate funding opportunities
- Preparing staff recommendations for NCIRWMP meetings and ensuring understanding among PRP members that they are staff proposals only
- Supporting the Project Selection and Review Process Ad Hoc Committee's activities and work product development

Policy-Level Criteria for NCIRWMP Project Selection

Although interested in seeing a few improvements to the current process, the majority of PRP members noted that the current policy-level criteria has been fair, equitable, considers and aims to serve the needs of the region's economically disadvantaged communities, considers criteria set forth from the funding source, supports the NCIRWMP's goals and objectives and takes into account the comity and reciprocity articulated in the tenants of the NCIRWMP collaboration. The following additions were proposed:

- Refine criteria for economically disadvantaged communities and severely economically disadvantaged communities
- Set criteria to allow for better cost-share scrutiny
- Focus on infrastructure projects instead of demonstration projects
- Develop criteria that allows the TPRC to focus on projects that include innovative approaches to the NCIRWMP goals including fisheries enhancement
- Set targets/criteria for municipal vs. private landowner project preferences

- Prioritize projects that have deadlines with needs to maintain compliance (not considering only those projects that are out of compliance)
- Prioritize water quantity, not just water quality
- Revise criteria to prioritize projects that contribute to in-stream flow restoration
- Focus on water quality and wastewater projects that threaten public health
- Prioritize projects by need
- Determine priorities based on project type, including energy & economic development potential
- Set guidelines for an overall percentage of infrastructure and fisheries habitat projects that the composite suite of projects would attempt to achieve
- Target compliance projects required and regulated by SWRCB
- Allow Counties and Tribes the ability to weigh in on project priorities in their respective jurisdictions

Water Management Issues/Conflicts (Local and Regional)

The Klamath Dam issue and its potential impacts to agriculture, fisheries, water quantity, quality and cultural values was the top local and regional water management issue raised by PRP members and cited as the most pressing water conflict, polarizing North Coast communities and Tribes, in the region. PRP members also expressed concern with the increasing number rivers and streams being tapped for illegal diversions of marijuana grow operations region-wide. Several members mentioned proposed regulations for frost protection, groundwater management, stormwater and recycled water as growing concerns. As in the past, PRP members listed inadequate water and wastewater infrastructure, including failing septic systems, and fisheries issues as primary local and regional issues. Water rights and in-stream flow, County of Origin issues, lack of consensus on water conservation efforts, water shortages, large-scale vineyard conversion, and the need for alternative energy development were all mentioned as important water management issues facing local communities and the North Coast region.

Energy Independence – Needs, Projects, Models, Constraints and Opportunities

PRP members throughout the region noted the potential for biomass energy in the North Coast region and listed the following biomass-related assessment and planning needs:

- Biomass inventory on public and private lands
- Education and outreach regarding thinning, fuel reduction and biomass energy
- Formal assessments to determine what is necessary to maintain forests in their best condition
- Post fire analysis to determine how much and if fires are doing good and if so, where and how
- Assessment to gauge the potential of the conversion of boilers to pellet biomass heat, including the identification of boilers county-wide along with information regarding the age, efficacy and ability to make the conversion
- Inventory of resources and feedstock potential for biomass production including evaluating the potential for putting Forest Service Stewardship Contracts in place
- Mapping potential feedstock supply and biomass plant locations
- Inventory on sizing of potential biomass plants

Additionally, a number of PRP members felt that local and regional transmission line capacity is inadequate and the region would benefit from an assessment of the current power grid capacity and

potential for upgraded transmission lines. PRP members expressed disappointment in the lawsuit that de-railed the North Coast Energy Independence Program, modeled after Sonoma County's successful SCEIP program, and expressed a continued need for energy assessments for the retrofits of residential and commercial buildings. The majority of interviewees felt that the region and local communities would benefit from a needs assessment and planning for energy independence and alternative energy potential, as well as a regional inventory of existing projects and programs. Specifically, members noted that planning and assessments would be useful in evaluating opportunities for solar, municipal electric vehicles, small hydropower, co-generation, wind, methane capture, broadband, geothermal and community choice aggregation.

The following potential local and regional energy independence projects were offered as good candidates for funding through the NCIRWMP:

- The Forestry Model Project underway by The Watershed Center
- Energy reduction project at a local Siskiyou County mill facility
- Biomass projects to create small/local energy producers and energy independence locally
- Solar and wind projects would provide significant tax credits and incentives
- Fuels to Schools Program - large-scale projects that convert school boilers to biomass heat
- Geothermal projects
- Over-the-Horizon Backscatter plant south of Newell, in Modoc County, was developed by the Defense Department and never used and would be an ideal site for conversion to an alternative energy plant (biomass, solar, etc) with high-power lines and transportation nearby
- Regional Direct Install Program
- Regional Community Choice Aggregation Program
- Broadband projects
- Fleet improvement projects – hybrid/electric, ride-sharing, tele-commuting
- Ferndale ShellWind and Bear River Wind Energy Projects
- Regional PACE program to develop financing mechanisms and programs to help homeowners and commercial properties pay for retrofits/upgrades
- Alternative energy projects in rural communities to provide energy to urban areas
- Water use efficiency projects that enhance all beneficial uses, such as off-stream and pump storage system projects

Tax incentives, a stable stream of biomass feedstock, an economical transportation radius from biomass plant sites, local competition among businesses, environmental organization concerns, the lack of a designated entity to address energy at the local level, limited funding and a lack of planning were listed as significant barriers and roadblocks for these projects. PRP members noted that with less funding available in State and Federal budgets, regional and integrated approaches such as the NCIRWMP would be very competitive. Toward this end, members noted that the regionalization of these issues, especially given tightening economics, is going to make the North Coast far more competitive and attract funding and legislative support, while maintaining the North Coast's quality of life for its communities. Members feel that the NCIRWMP would benefit from developing a regional agenda regarding biomass development in the North Coast and have member lobbyists work cooperatively to carry that message on behalf of the NCIRWMP in Sacramento and Washington DC.

PRP members felt confident that there is unlimited potential for local and regional opportunities for the North Coast that would effectively integrate water supply/treatment, watershed health, energy independence, GHG emissions reduction and local economic development. Members noted that the

capital needs in the region are paramount and that science, education, outreach and policy will help with the integration of these ideas. The following were provided as models and examples of entities that have implemented successful energy projects for the NCIRWMP to explore:

- College of the Siskiyous power generation and job creation program
- Siskiyou Biomass Utilization Group
- Sustainable Forest Action Coalition
- Southern Oregon California Renewable Energy Group
- Del Norte Economic Development Corporation
- The Regional Climate Protection Authority
- Lake County Economic Development Strategy i
- The Lakeview, Oregon South Central Oregon Economic Development District
- Mendocino College
- Real Goods in Hopland
- Sonoma County Energy Independence Program
- Sonoma County Water Agency
- Sonoma County Transportation Authority
- Sonoma County General Services Energy and Sustainability Division
- Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department
- Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Climate Protection Campaign
- Solar Sonoma County Water Agency
- North Bay Climate Change Adaptation Initiative
- Resource Conservation Districts and Resource Conservation and Development Districts
- Shasta Forest Products, Yreka
- US Forest Service
- North Coast Tribal Environmental Departments
- Watershed Research and Training Center
- Regional Prescribed Fire Group
- North Coast Air Quality Management District
- Public Utilities Districts
- Redwood Coast Energy Authority
- Redwood Region Economic Development Commission
- Redwood Community Action Agency
- Schatz Energy Lab
- Humboldt State University
- Workforce Investment Boards
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation District
- Redwood Futures
- Renewable Energy Development Institute
- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
- Modoc County working group (informal)
- Independent timber, farmer and cattle industries
- Phoenix Energy
- Enterprise Oregon
- Rethink Forests