Strategic Plan for the Future of Integrated Regional Water Management in California

Development Approach

Foreword

Over the past 10 years, Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) has profoundly improved water management in California. Looking ahead, there are opportunities for even greater advancement.

The Strategic Plan for the Future of IRWM in California will define the desired future for IRWM and how it will be achieved. The following pages describe the plan development approach. The approach is based on early stakeholder input and may be refined in the future.

We encourage you to take advantage of this important opportunity to help shape California's water future. Together, we can improve public safety, environmental stewardship, and the state's long-term economic stability.

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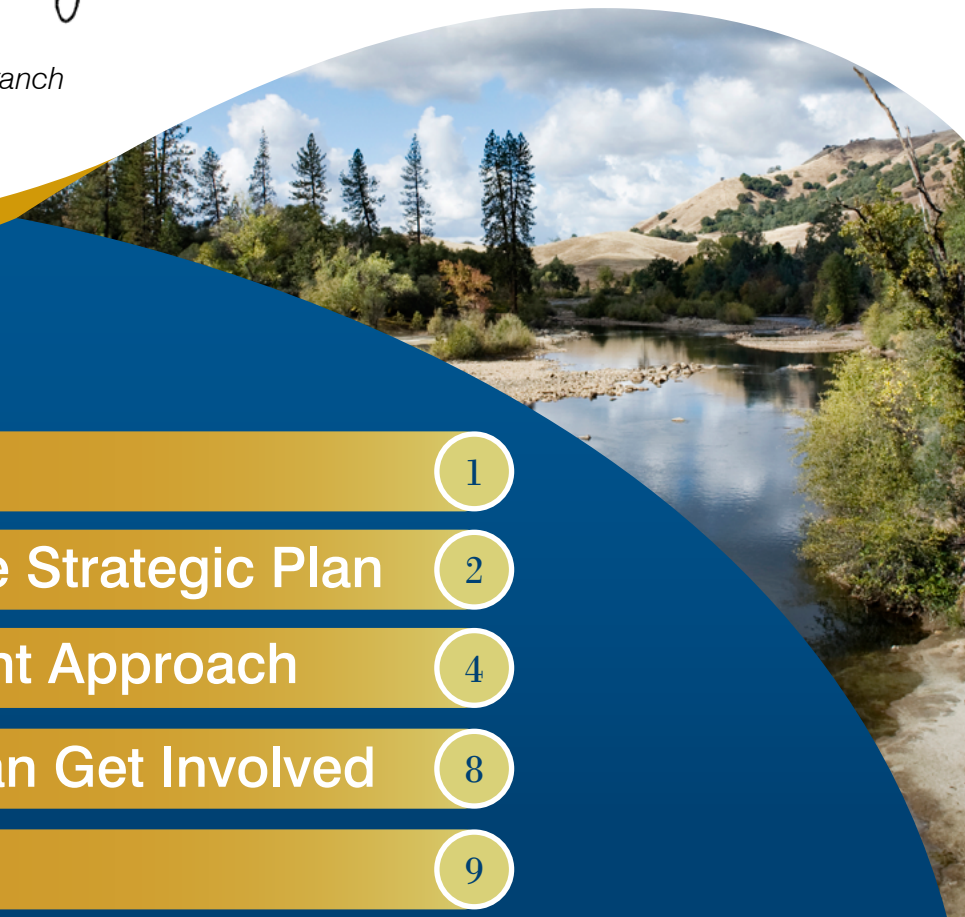

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Introduction

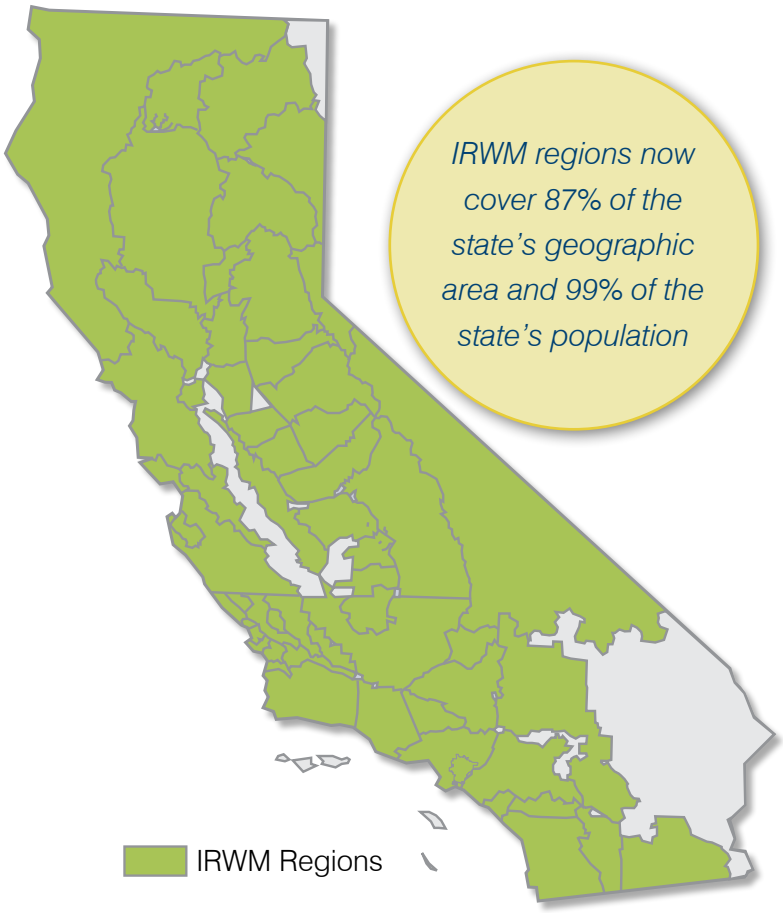
Integrated regional water management (IRWM) was officially embraced by the State of California in 2002 with the passage of the Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Act (SB 1672). Thanks to voter-approved bond funds, California has since made profound improvements in water resource management.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has supported IRWM with grants and technical services to regional water management groups (RWMGs) statewide. Forty-eight RWMGs now cover 87% of the state's geographic area and 99% of the population. The names and locations of individual IRWM regions and RWMGs, along with other information, can be found at **www.water.ca.gov/irwm/integregio_fundingarea.cfm**.

DWR is developing the *Strategic Plan for the Future of IRWM in California*. The need for the strategic plan and the specific tasks that will be completed for the plan's development are described herein. Information on how groups and individuals can be involved in the plan's development are also included.

The strategic plan will:

- *Define the desired future for IRWM*
- *Identify measures needed to achieve the desired future*



Regional water management group (RWMG) means a group in which three or more local agencies, at least two of which have statutory authority over water supply or water management, as well as those other persons who may be necessary for the development and implementation of a plan that meets the requirements of 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.

- California Water Code (CWC) §10539

Need for the Strategic Plan

California stands at a critical juncture with water issues. The state faces uncertainty and vulnerability due to growth and changing ecosystems, economic conditions, and climate. Societal priorities and needs are also changing. To meet these challenges, California Water Plan Update (CWP) 2009 identified two key initiatives:

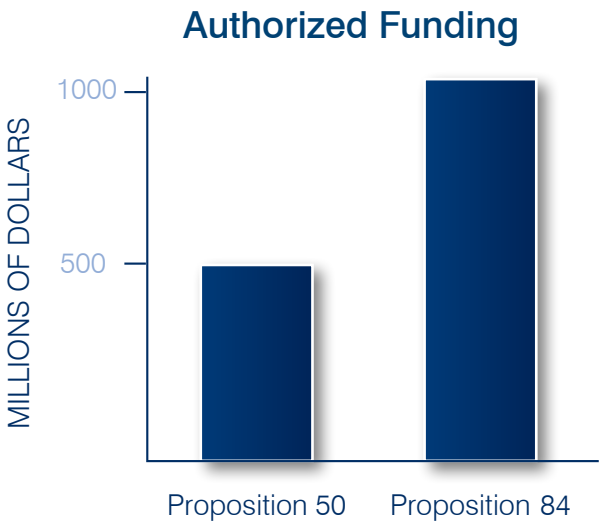
- **Integrated regional water management** - IRWM enables self-identified regions to integrate and implement water management measures appropriate for their needs.
- **Improved statewide water and flood management systems** - Upgrades to statewide and large-scale water management facilities, such as the State Water Project, are essential for meeting future needs.

Integrated Regional Water Management

IRWM incorporates the physical, environmental, societal, economic, legal, and jurisdictional aspects of water management into regional solutions through open and collaborative stakeholder processes to promote sustainable water use.

Participation in IRWM is voluntary. The fundamental principle of IRWM is that regional water managers are best suited and best positioned to manage water resources to meet regional needs.

Integrated regional water management is the application of **integrated water management** (IWM) principles on a regional basis. Water management actions under IWM include the resource management strategies identified in CWP Update 2009. While large, statewide and inter-regional water management systems, such as the State Water Project, Central Valley Project, and large flood management systems are important, the majority of California's water resource management investments and decisions are made at the local and regional level.



California has made major investments in IRWM

Integrated Water Management

IWM, in its broadest sense, is a philosophy and practice of coordinating the management of water and related resources for the purpose of maximizing economic and societal benefits while maintaining the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

Over the past 10 years, voter-approved bond funds have allowed DWR to work in partnership with regional water managers to advance IRWM. State bond funds have encouraged local agencies and organizations to form RWMGs and to develop, adopt, and implement IRWM plans.

State bond funds have assisted RWMGs in meeting statewide priorities for IRWM in their regional planning and implementation efforts. These priorities include drought preparedness, water use efficiency improvements, flood management, responses to climate change impacts, environmental stewardship improvement, and increased participation of Native American Tribes and disadvantaged communities.

Although much has been accomplished over the past 10 years, more work remains.

Knowledge gained over a decade of effort by RWMGs has highlighted several needs. The strategic plan is necessary to:

- ✓ Build on the current and past successes of IRWM
- ✓ Further enable, empower, and support RWMGs
- ✓ Better align state and federal programs to support IRWM
- ✓ Prepare for possible changes in state funding, and develop a shared vision for funding priorities and financing mechanisms
- ✓ Inform and influence future water management policies and investments for California

The development and implementation of the strategic plan will be a collaborative effort between DWR and IRWM practitioners, partners, and other stakeholders.

Development Approach

The approach for development of the strategic plan reflects early stakeholder input from the 2011 IRWM Conference and CWP Plenary, CWP Tribal Caucus, regional forums, and various water leaders. Principal activities for development of the strategic plan are described herein.

Outreach and Communication Plan

Active involvement and engagement of IRWM stakeholders is essential for the development of the strategic plan. An outreach and communication plan will guide all stakeholder involvement and engagement efforts to ensure an accessible, transparent, collaborative, and inclusive planning process.

The outreach and communication plan will be released at the beginning of plan development efforts. The plan will be coordinated with IRWM stakeholders to ensure that outreach and communication protocols are in place, appropriate, and known to stakeholders and other participants. The plan may be modified later if outreach and communication needs change.

IRWM Stakeholders

- **IRWM practitioners –** members of RWMGs, and prospective members of formative RWMGs, who are planning or implementing IRWM.
- **IRWM partners –** federal and state agencies that currently support, or could potentially support, IRWM or otherwise have an interest in IRWM.
- **Other IRWM stakeholders –** parties other than practitioners and partners, who have an interest in IRWM (including those who may be affected by IRWM), and the general public.

Strategic Plan

The *Strategic Plan for the Future of IRWM in California* will be a long-term, future-oriented action plan. It will address the three fundamental questions answered in strategic planning.

What is the present condition? (Where we are)

What is the vision for the future? (Where we want to be)

How is that future vision achieved? (How we get there)

Where we are

Institutional Setting for Water Management in California

Multiple federal, state, and local agencies and Native American Tribes have a role in California water resource management. The strategic plan will consider state, federal, tribal, and local institutional settings for water management. Varying institutional roles, responsibilities, and interdependencies, and how they affect the practice of IRWM, will be assessed. The vision, goals, and objectives of key organizations and how they relate to IRWM will also be evaluated.

Statutory, Regulatory, and Policy Assessment

Water resource management in California is affected by numerous statutes, regulations, and institutional policies. The goal of this assessment is to identify those that presently support or hinder IRWM. Their relationships with the vision, goals, and objectives for the future of IRWM will also be evaluated.

Integrated Water Management Trends and Experiences

Trends and experiences in integrated water management and its regional application, inside and outside of California, will be assessed and documented. Information developed as the result of this effort will be used to help identify opportunities for improving IRWM in California.

Data and Decision Support Tools

Adequate data and tools are essential for making sound water resource management decisions. The availability and adequacy of existing data and decision support tools for IRWM will be evaluated. Needed improvements and enhancements in data collection, data management, and analytical tools to support decision making for IRWM will be identified.

IRWM Program Documentation and Assessment

California's IRWM Program has been in place over the past 10 years and has helped significantly improve water resource management in the state. It is essential for strategic planning purposes to document and assess what the IRWM Program has helped accomplish, what costs and benefits have been accrued, and what challenges have been encountered to date. Documentation and assessment efforts will include consideration of the involvement of disadvantaged communities, Native American Tribes, and program efforts related to the state's Climate Change Initiative.

Analysis of Existing IRWM Plans

California currently has 48 approved IRWM regions. Most of these regions have an IRWM plan following principles established by the Legislature and guidelines developed by DWR. Some regions are developing their IRWM plans for the first time, while others are updating theirs. Individual IRWM plans deal with widely-varying water resource conditions and establish regional goals and objectives.

The general scope, content, and application of IRWM plans throughout the state will be evaluated. Evaluation efforts will include an analysis of the inter-relationships of IRWM plans with other federal, state, and regional plans; including regional and local land use plans. The findings will be used to identify opportunities for the systematic improvement of IRWM planning and implementation. The findings will also be used to identify opportunities for improved alignment of, and coordination among, IRWM and other resource management efforts at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. The results of this activity will help inform the development of the vision, goals, and objectives for the future of IRWM in California.

Where we want to be

Strategic Vision and Goal Setting

The long-term *strategic vision for the future of IRWM* will be the cornerstone of the strategic plan. Both the vision, and the goals for achieving the vision, will be developed under this effort.

The vision and goals will be developed through a deliberative process that includes stakeholder engagement, input, and feedback through workshops. The draft vision and goals will be formulated and reviewed with stakeholders early during plan development efforts and then revisited later as efforts progress.

A draft vision has been developed by DWR considering early stakeholder input. It will serve as an initial point of discussion for the development of the final vision.

Gap Analysis

The gap between current conditions and the vision for the future of IRWM will be assessed as the culmination of the tasks discussed previously. The gap analysis will help identify future improvements necessary for attaining the future vision. The results of the gap analysis will later support the identification and prioritization of future actions (strategies).

Draft Vision for the Future of IRWM

California embraces and practices IRWM as the best way to manage water and aligns related programs, policies, and regulations to advance IRWM.

How we get there

Strategies Development

Strategies will be developed to tangibly define the path forward and the specific means for accomplishing goals and objectives for the future of IRWM.

Targets and Performance Metrics Development

Targets and performance metrics will be developed for the implementation of the strategic plan. Targets are specific, time-referenced benchmarks or thresholds for strategic plan implementation and are used to mark incremental progress in achieving the strategic vision, goals, and objectives. Performance metrics are used for measuring progress toward reaching targets. Targets and metrics will be developed through workshops to help ensure broad stakeholder input and acceptance.

A strategic plan implementation "report card" will also be developed. The report card will serve as a means to readily and clearly communicate progress during strategic plan implementation. The report card will, in part, be based on the targets and performance metrics developed under this activity.

Financing Options Identification and Evaluation

Financing the strategic plan's implementation could be the most critical factor in determining whether the plan is successful. A wide variety of financing issues and options for IRWM will be identified and evaluated, including:

- Existing state funding for IRWM
- Potential future changes in state funding
- Federal support
- The ability of RWMGs to self-finance their planning and implementation efforts
- Beneficiary-based funding
- Potential new IRWM funding sources, such as through the nexus between water and energy

The intent of this effort is to help guide federal, state, and regional decisions regarding financing strategic plan implementation. Efforts will be closely coordinated with the CWP Update 2013 Finance Caucus.

Strategic Plan Implementation Approach Development

Cooperation among various federal and state agencies, RWMGs, and other stakeholders will be necessary for successful implementation of the strategic plan. An approach will be developed for implementation through partnerships and other possible cooperative arrangements. Efforts will include the identification of partnership opportunities and the development of a framework to support and sustain them. Implementation partners and other stakeholders will be engaged in the development of the plan implementation approach through workshops and other means.

Implementation Monitoring Approach

An approach for monitoring strategic plan implementation will be developed to provide a means of determining progress and success. Monitoring efforts will be based on targets and performance metrics and will help identify when and where strategic plan changes or adaptations may be necessary. Such changes may be needed to address unforeseen outcomes, conditions, and circumstances, and ensure resiliency of the plan. Monitoring approach development efforts will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Identification of performance metric data sources, and the method, frequency, and schedule of data collection
- Identification of organizations and individual staff to be responsible for data collection
- Preparation of the draft and final monitoring plan with stakeholder input through workshops and other means

How You Can Get Involved

The development of the *Strategic Plan for the Future of IRWM in California* is a multi-faceted process that includes numerous opportunities for public and stakeholder participation and input. You can receive announcements about upcoming workshops, draft documents available for review, and other information for being involved by subscribing to the project mailing list at: **www.water.ca.gov/irwm/stratplan/**. Project announcements will also be posted on this website.

Strategic Plan Publication

The results and findings of the above activities will be summarized in the strategic plan and its supporting documents. The strategic plan will be circulated in draft form for public review. Several focused public workshops for discussing the draft plan and receiving input are anticipated. An on-line comment submittal tool will be used to help facilitate input.

Plan Distribution

The principal means of distributing the public draft and final strategic plan will be via the internet in order to conserve resources.

Schedule

Development efforts for the *Strategic Plan for the Future of IRWM in California* began in August 2012. The goal is to complete development efforts and publish the draft strategic plan for public review by Summer 2013.

Development Approach

Summer 2012

Goal Development Outreach

Fall 2012

Strategy Development Outreach

Spring 2013

Draft Strategic Plan

Summer 2013

DWR's Mission

The California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) mission is to manage the water resources of California in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the State's people, and to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environments.

DWR's programs improve public safety, environmental stewardship, and long-term economic stability.

Be involved!

- ✓ Help shape the future of IRWM in California
- ✓ Identify needed alignment of policies, regulations, and legislation to advance IRWM
- ✓ Explore creative financing solutions for IRWM projects

Visit www.water.ca.gov/irwm/stratplan/

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