

# Upper Sacramento, McCloud, and Lower Pit Integrated Regional Water Management Plan



November 25, 2013

Upper Sacramento, McCloud, and Lower Pit  
Regional Water Management Group

# Chapter 2: Planning Process



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## 2. USR Planning Framework, Stakeholder Involvement, and Integration

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the IRWM process, including the history of developing the USR IRWM, an overview of the stakeholder process and involvement, and a review of the various levels of integration achieved through this process.

### 2.1 Regional Framework for Integrated Planning in USR Watersheds

Per DWR Guidelines and the California Water Code, an IRMWP is to be a comprehensive planning document to encourage regional strategies for management of water resources. Through investigating a broad spectrum of issues, developing objectives, and identifying management strategies, participants develop relationships and methods of communication and coordination that achieve synergies of staff and financial resources, making planning more comprehensive and less duplicative throughout the planning region. This process should result in a water management plan that is meaningful for the region and developed via this grassroots effort, accommodating a diversity of regional needs.

### 2.2 Stakeholder Involvement

In-region stakeholders have been the driving force of this IRWM planning effort, from identifying the opportunity of IRWM through pushing for a representative governance structure and inclusive plan. Below is described some of the region's history with IRWM and other collaborative efforts, as well as how stakeholder input and effort has been integrated into the planning process.

#### 2.2.1 USR Planning Process – Overview

In March 2009, the River Exchange (REX) and California Trout (CalTrout) sent out a joint letter as part of the project's stakeholder solicitation process and in support of the Regional Acceptance Process (RAP). The letter announced that these two organizations were working together to promote regional water management planning for the Upper Sacramento and McCloud watersheds, and that they were inviting organizations to participate in what was proposed as a long-term effort to better understand the water resources in those watersheds, and to design a collaborative approach to managing those resources that recognizes the many competing needs for water use and stewardship in the region.

In developing the RAP documents, the organizations were in contact with representatives of the now-approved Upper Pit Region, the Northern Sacramento Valley Region, and the North Coast Region to ensure that the USR covered substantial portions of excluded areas and possessed congruent regional boundaries. REX and CalTrout submitted the RAP on behalf of the Upper Sac region in April 2009, and held the first meeting of the RWMG in February 2010 to announce acceptance as a region. In August 2010, the second meeting of the RWMG was held to determine the applicant for the planning grant. REX, with extensive organizational experience in implementing and administering state grant awards, was chosen by the RWMG to be the applicant for the region.

In developing the planning grant proposal coordination occurred with RWMG members, DWR and CVRWQCB staff, adjacent regions (North Coast, North Sac Valley, and Upper Pit) as well as with the Cosumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba and Inyo-Mono regions.

In early 2012, the River Exchange signed a 2-year grant agreement with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to manage the process of developing an Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan for the Upper Sacramento, McCloud, and Lower Pit River Region. The planning process is designed to develop a water management plan that is meaningful for the region

and developed by the stakeholders, rather than a top down, one-size-fits-all approach, to accommodate the diverse needs of different interests.

Much of the groundwork for the IRWM planning effort in the region had already been initiated through the work of other collaborative processes. Examples of such collaborative processes in the McCloud watershed are the McCloud CRMP, the Redband Trout Conservation Agreement and the FERC relicensing process, all of which serve as building blocks to facilitate integrated regional water management. In the Upper Sacramento watershed, REX, in partnership with a diverse group of stakeholders, recently completed a Watershed Assessment and Management Strategy, funded under the DWR CALFED Bay-Delta Program. In the McCloud and Lower Pit watersheds, diverse stakeholders have been involved in FERC relicensing process with PG&E facilities.

As the planning process got underway in 2012, the project team began with meetings held every-other-month. This schedule encouraged for continuity of discussion, while allowing time for the project team to respond to requests and develop meeting materials. In mid-2013, after most of the chapter work had been discussed within the stakeholder meetings, much of the details were worked out by working groups dedicated to particular subjects. For example, the project development work group developed the approach to prioritization as a recommendation to the RWMG for approval. These work groups allowed for continued and open participation, but on a more targeted topic; this helped to refine the details necessary to complete a comprehensive USR IRWMP.

### 2.2.2 Stakeholder Composition

Chapter 16, Governance, gives an in-depth look at the composition of the stakeholder body. It is important to note that stakeholder identification and outreach has been happening since the RAP process began in 2009. Interested stakeholders who are new to the IRWM effort are constantly integrated into the planning process in whatever capacity in which they're interested and willing to participate.

Of the stakeholder types listed in the California Water Code, the USR has representatives from:

1. Retail water purveyors, including local agencies;
2. Wastewater agencies;
3. Flood control agencies;
4. Municipal and county governments and special districts;
5. Electrical corporations;
6. Native American tribes that have lands within the region;
7. Environmental stewardship organizations (including watershed groups, land conservancies, and environmental groups);
8. Industry organizations (including agriculture);
9. State, federal, and regional agencies with specific responsibilities and knowledge within the region; and
10. Disadvantaged community representatives.

A full list of participants may be found in Chapter 16, Governance.

### 2.2.3 Process to Identify Stakeholders

The River Exchange, as the grant recipient from DWR, publically noticed the IRWM development process in March 2011 as a news release to a number of regional news outlets. It announced the grant award and contract as well as a description of the planning process and intent to prepare an IRWMP. The news release included contact information for the River Exchange should any readers be interested in participation. This announcement was preceded by at least two years of outreach to and

research by a variety of organizations within the region, including those types listed above and in Chapter 16, Governance.

As described above, stakeholder identification was complimented by the numerous collaborative activities that have occurred in the region, including the Upper Sacramento Watershed Assessment, the Redband Trout Conservation Agreement, and various FERC relicensing processes. Through these efforts, many stakeholders knew each other, or were at least aware of organizational interests. This aided REX in their initial outreach. The 2009 group was asked to further identify potential interested organizations for participation, and this was requested again in 2012 with the beginning of the planning grant. While the process was structured to ensure that all stakeholders were able to submit their comments and viewpoints, at no point in the development of the RAP or the IRWMP was participation closed to any individual or organization.

#### **2.2.4 Disadvantaged Community Outreach**

Most of the region can be qualified as “disadvantaged,” using DWR’s criteria of 80% of statewide median household income as recorded in the last census. The major communities in the USR have all participated actively in the planning process, including Dunsmuir, the City of Mt. Shasta, and McCloud. These communities all qualify as disadvantaged.

Outreach to these entities began with the RAP process, as described in section 2.2.1. They were identified through the history the River Exchange has in the region, and were described as disadvantaged through the tool the DWR has made available on its IRWM website. Continual contact with these entities by the River Exchange and through collaborative outreach with other groups ensured that these communities were well integrated into the process early on, and consistently incorporated and included throughout. This outreach included individual phone calls, informative e-mails, process updates through other organizations, and one-to-one discussions in the project development phase to ensure that these communities had every opportunity to identify and describe their projects, thereby preparing them for future implementation opportunities.

Stakeholders were aware during the RAP process and continue to consider that these disadvantaged communities have critical water supply, delivery, and wastewater treatment issues that must be addressed. All stakeholders in this IRWM development process have made it clear that a major project implementation priority for the region – if not the major priority – is to provide support for the infrastructure challenges faced by these communities. This support from all parties has been key in the continuity of these communities’ participation, and will likely provide a foundation on which future USR RWMG activities can be based.

#### **2.2.5 Aboriginal Community Outreach**

As described in the Region Description (Chapter 3), there are four tribes represented in the USR: the Modoc Nation, the Shasta Tribe (represented by the Shasta Nation and the Shasta Indian Nation), the Pit River Tribes, and the Winnemem Wintu. These tribes began to be identified in the RAP process (though the Shasta Nation band of the Shasta Tribe was invited at the beginning of the planning process, in early 2012).

Similar to the disadvantaged communities, these nations have been involved in the planning process; dissimilarly, however, the involvement varies widely from group to group. Participation in the planning process has run from the limited participation of the Shasta Indian Nation, which attended a few planning meetings and did not submit any projects, to the Winnemem Wintu, a nation that has been quite active due to their partnership status on several projects and which submitted many comments on nearly all chapter drafts. While the Pit River Tribe is the only federally recognized tribe

in the USR, its representatives have been involved tangentially, attending most of the larger planning meetings but not submitting any projects. The Pit River Tribe has commented that their participation has been limited in part because of their inclusion in several IRWM regions, thus putting additional pressure on their staff resources.

Outreach completed during the planning process has included a special effort to encourage input and comments from these aboriginal nations. This has ranged from one-to-one discussions regarding process and timeline to accepting late chapter comments for consideration. Each group was asked on at least one occasion about project development, including the offer of technical assistance. In addition, the budget identified in the planning grant application for completing an assessment of regional tribes' ethnographies and attitudes towards water and natural resources was actually doubled partway through the planning process to accommodate the number of tribes and the importance of their contribution to the planning process. For at least one nation, this ethnography work will be their primary contribution to the document; for others, it represents a compliment to the effort they've put into contributing to – and, in some cases, developing – Plan content.

### **2.2.6 Technology and Information Access**

A website was developed early in the planning process to make information available to all stakeholders and interested parties, available at [www.uppersacirwm.org](http://www.uppersacirwm.org). The website adds to process transparency, but also ensures that all participants get access to the same information at the same time. The website also has a password-protected area to allow internal information – mostly related to project development – to be kept confidential to the process and participating stakeholders until it is ready to be made public. The password component allows for a “gestation time” for projects and other discussions, so that participating stakeholders can work together to get comfortable with the suite of projects before they are made public. This allows the group to develop greater cohesion through an element of safety and confidentiality in their collaboration efforts.

In addition to the website, REX keeps an e-mail and contact list updated with new stakeholders, representatives, and their contact information. It is anticipated that this contact information will be passed along to any future organization that is able to take on the outreach activities for the RWMG.

The IRWM development project team encouraged an open process with information going both ways. Much of the role of the stakeholders in the plan development process was to provide current and accurate information regarding regional conditions, policies, values, and priorities. In return, the project team provided source information, bibliographic references, and arranged forums for discussion in the case that further discussion was needed on any topic. The most relevant and used references were added to the website data management system for universal reference (see Chapter 13, Data Management, for more information).

### **2.2.7 Decision Making Process**

This topic is covered in more depth in Chapter 16, Governance, however, on a basic level, the USR stakeholders went through two formats of decision making in developing the IRWMP.

The first approach to decision-making was identified in 2012 before the formal RWMG was established. This was done through an interim governance structure to facilitate decision-making without having the immediate requirement for a formal agreement. Through a majority decision made via a noticed vote of interest groups present, stakeholders agreed to have a direct democracy through the “general assembly” of all interested and participating stakeholders. To have a say in any decision, the organization must have had a representative participating in at least two out of the previous three meetings. The first attempt at a decision was for consensus. If one could not be reached, the parties

not in agreement met to work out their differences. At the next meeting that same issue was brought back, first for consensus and then, if consensus could not be reached, a vote requiring 75% approval. If the issue did not pass the second round of consensus and did not achieve a 75% approval, it was identified as a “dead” issue.

In addition to this, and in order to facilitate the process of document development, stakeholders agreed that any chapter that received no comments at all during review could be considered approved by the stakeholders for use as foundational material in further chapter development. This agreement was reached with the caveat that all stakeholders would be able to review the document again before plan adoption.

The second decision-making development came with the writing and signing of an MOU in mid-2013 to formalize the governance structure. This document altered, somewhat, the decision-making process, but retained the representative democracy of the stakeholder group – now the regional water management group, or RWMG – made up of signatories to the MOU. More about this topic may be found in Chapter 16, Governance.

### 2.2.8 Involving Stakeholders

As shown in table 16.1 (Chapter 16, Governance), the suite of entities participating in the development of the USR IRWMP is diverse and includes varied interests throughout the region. During the initial outreach phase of the development of the USR IRWMP, all organizations and agencies in the region were alerted of the opportunity to participate and, subsequently, sign on to the MOU. This outreach was achieved through personal contact by the grantee (REX) as well as through encouraging those contacted to invite others they thought might be interested. Outreach also included public announcements. The outreach phase extended from the RAP through much of the planning process, allowing extensive time for contact, communication, and ongoing opportunities for participation in the planning process.

The diverse nature of the USR stakeholder group is an essential component to implementing the objectives through the use of the resource management strategies (RMS) (see Chapters 7 and 8). As described in the Governance section (Chapter 16), the work group identified to draft the initial objectives included aboriginal groups, environmental advocacy organizations, timber companies, water purveyors, and federal and local public agencies. The individuals representing these points of view made use of the RMS to identify concrete, measurable outcomes for the objectives, which were then turned into performance measures. The decision made by this group, and affirmed by the stakeholder group, was that the measures used to identify successful implementation of the objectives (and, therefore, the Plan), would be cumulative between the diverse entities active in the region and in the development of the IRWMP. For example, while the USFS may address up to 3,000 acres annually for fuels control, the other entities implementing this work – including the resource conservation districts and fire safe councils – also implement fuels control projects and their work is included in the established goal for a total of 5,000 acres. In addition, the diverse stakeholder participation present in the development and ongoing governance of the USR RWMG established a governance structure that will encourage a balance as far as input and implementation of these objectives and the use of these resource management strategies. More about this is available in Chapter 16, Governance.

In the Coastal Smart Growth reference<sup>1</sup> provided as part of the DWR Guidelines (November 2012), the website lists the following as the goal of involvement: “to fairly identify and respond to all legitimate interests by providing clear and convenient opportunities for substantive involvement at

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<sup>1</sup> <http://coastalsmartgrowth.noaa.gov/elements/encourage.html>

critical stages in the development process.” On regular occasions, all stakeholders received a list of chapters for review, along with the due date for edits and comments, and whether the chapter was out for the first or second review round. In most cases, submitting comments on review documents represented the best and most important way for stakeholders to take part in the plan development process, and this was completed through a very fair, open, and representative process.

Not present at the planning process was Shasta County. Early in the RAP development, Shasta County had a reticence to participating in the USR process, perhaps due to the fact that the county has a physical presence in three IRWM regions. In any case, they were kept informed through the e-mail list, and also periodic meetings and documents for review. Information relevant to county service areas and other topics of interest represents accurate and current information because of these contacts. It is possible that the county may be interested in future participation.

Also not present in the planning process were PG&E and the Bureau of Reclamation. Both of these entities have substantial fiscal and policy interest in the USR, and were unwilling to participate after several invitations. As with Shasta County, it’s possible that these entities may be interested in future participation; they will be kept informed via remaining on the process e-mail list.

### **2.2.9 Technical Assistance to Project Proponents**

The process by which project proponents could receive technical assistance was straightforward and open. It began with the initial presentation by the project team at a stakeholder meeting regarding project development and application for inclusion in the IRWMP. The suggested process included that 1) the project proponent make a request to REX for help, 2) REX would then either help the sponsor themselves or ask another member of the project team to assist the project sponsor, 3) that contact was made as assigned, and all questions worked out between the project sponsor and their individual technical assistant. For clarity and consistency, the same technical assistant followed each project through the development process. In addition, the project team advised that ongoing assistance was a possibility, even after the completion of the IRWMP. This will be worked out through REX.

## **2.3 Integration**

There are four types of integration discussed here: integration of local, state, and Federal perspectives and priorities; stakeholder integration; resource integration; and project integration. While many of the processes and structures facilitating this integration are in other sections of the document, and the outcomes of this integration are evident throughout the document, it is important to note that the USR RWMG continues to coordinate and integrate specific efforts with the goal of better functioning as a unified whole.

### **2.3.1 Integration of Local, State, and Federal Priorities**

As noted in the Region Description (Chapter 3), there are significant planning efforts going on throughout the USR, led by a variety of institutions. Some of these institutions are active participants in the USR planning process, and some of them are not. In all cases, the jurisdictional responsibility of these groups is respected in that the USR IRWMP does not challenge, negate, or oppose any of these authorities, nor does the governance structure or authority of the USR MOU document affect these authorities. The relation of the USR IRWMP function to these documents and processes is meant to be a positive and complimentary one. Stakeholders would like to see the USR IRWMP integrate these other efforts, and encourage the further integration of planning efforts together. The goal of the planning document is to be a hub for information as well as an inspiration for further collaboration, developing synergies that result in implementation approaches that would never be possible without the IRWM structure. Further integration efforts on a local, state, and federal governmental level will pursue this ideal, and are memorialized in section 3.04 of the MOU:

“Although the IRWMP refers to many legally binding statutory and regulatory provisions—such as general plans, zoning ordinances, water quality plans, and various permits, licenses, and approvals—its purpose in doing so is to ensure that the IRWMP is consistent and compatible with those existing legal obligations. Rather than adding to or modifying the present legal and regulatory environment, the IRWMP is intended to streamline and improve the stakeholders’ ability to operate and succeed within that environment.”

### **2.3.2 Stakeholder/Institutional Integration**

One of the most tangible, yet unquantifiable, benefits of IRWM planning is the practice of regular meetings of water-related interest groups to discuss activities, opportunities, and issues. Many of the organizations sitting at the table have historically been (or may currently be) at odds over water issues. While it is not expected, nor intended, that the RWMG will solve all water-related conflicts in the region, there are definite advantages to increased communication and cooperation. The process has helped to educate stakeholders about each other’s activities, priorities, and challenges. During the RWMG’s discussions regarding their collective future and the future of the group, many participants expressed the desire that the IRWM planning process should continue with the objective of increased education and coordination regarding common issues. Stakeholders see this continued communication as a way to overcome conflict and, possibly, achieve common objectives on issues that affect all participants.

In addition to the goals and outcomes of USR stakeholder integration, the governance structure was identified and further refined so that all stakeholders were on equal footing with regard to input and expectations. Financial support is not expected from any participant and, though in-kind effort is expected with regard to participation, it is hoped that organizations will be able to equitably share the coordination and meeting facilitation efforts.

### **2.3.3 Resource Integration**

Integrating resources can include financial and/or staff resources, how data is shared, coordinating technical expertise and capacity, or looking at resources in a more integrated and “ecosystemic” way. USR stakeholders have encouraged organizational integration through placing a priority on projects with multiple partners (see Objective 2 – Cooperation and Trust). In addition, the integration of organizational resources is memorialized in the MOU through the identification of a “roving” responsibility for fiscal agent and secretary. IRWM implementation can be seen to be integrating the ecosystemic component of resource integration; more information is available on this topic in Chapter 10, Project Review Process and Implementation.

### **2.3.4 Project Implementation and Integration**

Chapter 10, Project Review Process and Implementation, gives more detail on this topic, however, in general project sponsors have responded positively to requests and opportunities for integration. As project development began after the identification of regional issues and challenges, objectives, and resource management strategies, participants were able to respond to these topics and collaborate with other stakeholders to identify true regional gaps in management and/or knowledge in designing their project responses. Project sponsors had many facilitated opportunities to discuss integration and coordination through project development workshops. In addition, proximity made further collaboration – outside the facilitated process – easy. One of the key tasks for future RWMG activities and implementation includes further coordination in issue identification and project development; stakeholders see this as an important service provided by the IRWM process, and one that is not duplicated in other arenas.

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