

APPROVED

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

MAR 07 2007

NO. 07-60

DATE March 7, 2007

BOARD OF RECREATION  
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. ALL

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS AND VARIOUS OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES FOR COORDINATION OF WATER RESOURCES PLANNING RELATING TO PROPOSITION 50; CONSIDERATION OF THE INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

R. Adams	_____	J. Kolb	_____
J. Combs	_____	F. Mok	_____
H. Fujita	_____	K. Regan	_____
S. Huntley	_____	*M. Shull	<i>M. Shull</i>

*[Signature]*  
General Manager

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_

Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Approve a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, between the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) and various other governmental agencies for the development of a Regional Water Management Group (Group) for the Greater Los Angeles County Region, subject to the approval of the Mayor, pursuant to Executive Directive No. 3 and the City Attorney as to form;
2. Authorize the General Manager or his representative to execute the MOU, upon receipt of all the necessary approvals;
3. Adopt the final Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) dated December 27, 2006, on file in the Board Office;

## REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 2

NO. 07-60

4. Recommend that the City Council review, consider, and adopt the final IRWMP and authorize the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) to accept the approved project funds; and,
5. Authorize staff to work with the Group to coordinate and share information concerning water resources management planning programs, projects, and other information for grant funding and IRWMP project implementation purposes.

### SUMMARY:

Proposition 50, Chapter 8, established the Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program (Program) that is jointly administered by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The intent of the Program is to encourage the development of integrated regional water resource management plans, provide funding through competitive grants for integrated projects that protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependence on imported water.

Under Proposition 50, Chapter 8, approximately \$380 million of funding is available on a competitive basis. Of the total funding, approximately \$12 million is available for the development of Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMPs), and \$368 million is available (in two funding rounds) for regional projects that integrate water supply, water conservation, water quality, habitat restoration/protection and recreation/open space. Proposition 50, Chapter 8 guidelines require that applicants adopt a final IRWMP by January 1, 2007, to be eligible for round one funding. The second round of project funding is tentatively scheduled for mid-2007.

In response to the release of the Program guidelines in 2004, six groups within Los Angeles County submitted grant applications in May 2005 for the development of an IRWMP. The six groups included:

- Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission;
- City of Los Angeles;
- Watershed Conservation Authority;
- Upper San Gabriel Basin Municipal Water District;
- West Basin Municipal Water District; and,
- City of Downey.

Based on review of the applications, DWR recommended funding only one application in the amount of \$500,000 – the Watershed Conservation Authority. In response, representatives from the other groups worked together with DWR and the SWRCB and suggested expanding the

## REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 3

NO. 07-60

funding pool in order to provide funds for additional applications. DWR responded by proposing a single grant of \$1.5 million, on the condition that the six original applicants prepare a single, consolidated plan for the entire area.

The six applicants accepted DWR's proposal and formed the Greater Los Angeles County Region (Region), comprised of the following five sub-regions:

- South Bay Watersheds;
- North Santa Monica Bay Watersheds;
- Upper Los Angeles River Watershed;
- Lower San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Watersheds; and,
- Upper San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo Watersheds.

Spanning from Ventura County to Orange County, the Region encompasses 92 cities representing over 9 million people and 2,200 square miles. An interim governance structure was formed consisting of a steering committee for each sub-region, and a leadership committee that serves as the overarching decision-making body for the entire Region. The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) currently serves as the Chair for the Leadership Committee. LACFCD, the program manager for the Region, will manage the planning grant agreement with the State on behalf of the five sub-regional groups. RAP, the Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation (BOS), all hold seats on the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed sub-region. LADWP is the chair of the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed sub-region and represents the sub-region and the City of Los Angeles as member of the Leadership Committee.

In November 2005, the Region hired the consulting firm of Brown & Caldwell, along with sub-consultants, to develop the Greater Los Angeles County Region IRWMP. Many meetings and workshops have taken place during 2006 to plan and develop the IRWMP and to prepare an implementation grant application for the first round of Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. All cities and pertinent stakeholders in the Region were invited to participate and provide input on the development of the IRWMP. Because of the size and complexity of the Region, an important goal was to develop a transparent process that fostered open communication, collaboration, and trust among the many stakeholders.

In July 2006, the Region submitted an implementation grant application for the first round of project funding in the amount of \$25 million. Three (3) of the 13 projects included in the application, with a total funding request of \$10 million, were submitted by the BOS:

## REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 4

NO. 07-60

- North Atwater Park Stream Restoration (\$2.25M)
- South LA Wetlands (\$3.3M)
- Wilmington Drain Restoration Project (\$4.5M)

In November 2006, DWR announce that the Region's first round implementation grant application had been recommended for approval, including the three aforementioned BOS projects. However, in order to be eligible to receive the recommended grant funding, Proposition 50, Chapter 8 guidelines may require that the Region adopt a final IRWMP.

In order for the Region to adopt the final IRWMP, Proposition 50 guidelines require that the Region first form a Regional Water Management Group (Group). The Group, which is comprised of various governmental agencies, non-profit groups, and local organizations (Parties), was established through the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The purpose of the MOU is to establish the mutual understandings of various Los Angeles area agencies with respect to their joint efforts towards developing a Region IRWMP that will increase regional coordination, collaboration, and communication and help in obtaining funding for water-related projects. Under the MOU, the Parties agree to coordinate, share information, and have open communication concerning water resources management planning programs and projects and other information for Proposition 50 grant funding and implementation. The coordination and information sharing among the Parties, including the preparation and adoption of a Region IRWMP, will assist all stakeholders in Los Angeles County in achieving their respective missions in a cost-effective and environmentally responsive manner and is necessary in order to compete for state funding under Proposition 50. The MOU shall be in effect once it has been executed by the Parties and shall expire on December 31, 2010, or upon its replacement by the adoption of a subsequent MOU, Agreement, Joint Powers Authority Agreement, or unless earlier terminated.

The MOU has been adopted by the following agencies (as of December 12, 2006):

- Central Basin Municipal Water District
- City of Arcadia
- City of Burbank, Department of Water and Power
- City of Downey
- City of Long Beach
- City of Long Beach, Department of Water
- City of Los Angeles, Board of Public Works
- City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power
- City of Malibu
- City of Pasadena

## REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 5

NO. 07-60

- County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
- Gateway Cities Council of Governments
- Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
- Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council
- Los Angeles County Flood Control District
- Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster
- Palos Verdes / South Bay Audubon
- San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy
- San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority
- Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
- West Basin Municipal Water District
- Watershed Conservation Authority
- Water Replenishment District of Southern California

The adoption of the MOU by the above agencies has already fulfilled the Region's requirement of forming a Regional Water Management Group. Approval of the MOU by the Board would commit RAP to working cooperatively and sharing information and resources with the other stakeholders in the Region as the IRWMP is further developed.

On December 13, 2006, the Group adopted the final IRWMP. However, it should be noted that although LADWP and BOS had executed the MOU, the City of Los Angeles elected to abstain from adopting the plan at that time.

Consistent with the requirements of Proposition 50, the purpose of the IRWMP is to improve water supplies, enhance water supply reliability, improve surface water quality, preserve flood protection, conserve habitat, and expand recreational access in the Region in an integrated fashion. The IRWMP is also consistent with the objectives of the City of Los Angeles Water/Wastewater Integrated Resources Plan (IRP). The IRWMP is intended to be a tool for the development of solutions that achieve the 20 year planning targets identified for the Region and improve the sustainability of water resources and ecological health of local watersheds. The solutions identified in the IRWMP respond to statewide priorities, allow for local variation, and create a unified and coherent ecological system across the Region. The IRWMP includes a series of quantitative goals for measurable progress and accountability, and associated cost estimates, to be achieved in the next 20 years. The IRWMP has seven objectives and planning targets:

- Increase Water Supply Reliability
- Increase Reclaimed Water Usage
- Improve Water Quality
- Improve Groundwater Quality
- Enhance Habitat

## REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 6

NO. 07-60

- Enhance Open Space, Recreation
- Sustain Communities

The IRWMP recognizes the important role that open space and parkland have in improving the quality of the watershed. Open space and parkland have the potential to enhance groundwater resources by providing areas for natural groundwater recharge, to improve surface water quality by retaining and filtering storm water runoff, and to provide opportunities to reuse treated runoff or recycled water for irrigation purposes. The IRWMP proposes to increase watershed friendly recreational space in the Region by 30,000 acres in the next 20 years by developing integrated projects designed to meet multiple regional objectives.

The IRWMP also includes more than 1,500 projects and project concepts that were submitted by various stakeholders, including the City of Los Angeles, for inclusion in the IRWMP planning process. The inclusion of these projects in the IRWMP will be one factor used as a basis for determining the eligibility and relative priority of projects for future funds from Proposition 50. In addition, future water quality bond measures, such as Proposition 84, proposed to use the IRWMPs developed by each region as a part of Proposition 50 as a guideline and model for the distribution of their funding.

Adoption of the IRWMP by the City of Los Angeles may be necessary in order for DWR to release funding for the three City of Los Angeles projects that were approved as part of the first round implementation grant proposal. Additionally, adoption of the IRWMP will demonstrate that the City of Los Angeles is committed to collaborating with other Parties in the Region to develop integrated, multipurpose projects to meet the Region's current and future water demands in a responsible manner.

Staff has determined that the action of entering into an MOU for the purpose of coordinating water resources planning activities undertaken by multiple governmental agencies is exempt pursuant to the General Exemption described in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3). General Exemptions apply in situations where it can be seen with reasonable certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question will have any effect on the environment.

Furthermore, staff has determined that the IRWMP is a planning activity that identifies possible future actions that have not been approved, adopted, or funded. Therefore, this project is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review under 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262 because it only involves feasibility and planning studies. Similarly, the project is categorically exempt from CEQA review under Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection, research, and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

## REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 7

NO. 07-60

Adoption of the IRWMP indicates concurrence with the IRWMP regional goals and objectives. This adoption is not a direct commitment of resources, but rather an agreement with regional priorities. Implementation of each proposed project included in the Plan will be the responsibility of the project proponent and any applicable project partners. If implementing a project, project proponents bear sole responsibility for ensuring CEQA requirements for the project are met.

### FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

The approval and execution of the MOU and the approval of the IRWMP will not have any impact on the General Fund. However, it is expected that the parties adopting the MOU will meet on a regular basis to share information, discuss project integration, and pursue funding opportunities.

This report was prepared by Darryl Ford, Planning Assistant, Planning and Development.