

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 History of Water Management in Ventura County

Agencies and organizations in Ventura County have a long history working together to address water resources issues, dating back to the early 1970s. In the past 35 years numerous water supply and conservation, water quality, wetland restoration and reclamation projects have been planned and implemented. Many individuals and agencies have worked together to assure effective management of local water resources and protection of water-dependent environmental resources and species habitats. These entities include local retail and wholesale water districts, Cities, sanitary districts, the County of Ventura, environmental and non-profit organizations, the Association of Water Agencies, State and Federal agencies and many others. Multi-jurisdictional and coordinated efforts are taking place on a watershed and/or countywide basis. These efforts are addressed in this Plan.

Background

1974 Ventura County Designated as 208 Planning Area

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, commonly known as the Clean Water Act, was originally enacted in 1948. The Act was amended by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 (Public Law 92-500) by Congress with the primary purpose of "restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's water" and "to achieve a level of water quality by July 1983, which provides for recreation in and on the water; and for the propagation of fish and wildlife." Section 208 of the amendments and the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR's) specified general designation procedures, time constraints, grant funding criteria, and minimum plan content requirements. Ventura County was designated as a 208 Planning Area in 1974.

Funded by a Federal 208 grant (Environmental Protection Agency), Ventura County undertook a comprehensive assessment of its water quality problems between 1975 and 1978. The initial 208 Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) was adopted in 1978 by 23 local agencies. The plan recommended short-term programs to remedy those water quality problems which required immediate attention, as well as governmental action aimed at enhancing water quality over the long term. The Ventura Regional Sanitation District was the lead agency for the initial 1975 to 1978 effort. In October of 1978, the Board of Supervisors of Ventura County was designated by the State to implement the Plan, as well as the continuing planning program.

1980 208 Plan

From 1979 to 1980, the Ventura County Water Quality Planning Program continued by identifying additional water quality issues, updating the Population/Land Use Forecasts and reevaluating the 1978 Water Quality Management Plan's Regional Goals and Policies. As a result of these efforts, the 1978 plan was updated, revised and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors as the 208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan (1979-1980). Additional information on the contents of the 1978 and 1980 Areawide Water Quality Management Plans are provided in Volume II, the Plan's Technical Appendix.

Following review of the Areawide Water Quality Management Plan, the County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 431 establishing a countywide plan for the protection, preservation and enhancement of countywide water resources. The resolution summarized the direction given by the Board to address seawater intrusion, water conservation, two specific water reclamation projects, local State Water entitlements, creation of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, and the Sespe Creek water rights issue.

1994 Water Management Plan Update

In 1994, the County continued the Water Quality Management Planning Program effort by updating the 1980 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan to include the developments in water management planning during the previous 14 years. This update was referred to as the Water Management Plan Update, and was overseen by a committee which included representatives of the Countywide Planning Program (CPP) and Association of Water Agencies (AWA). The Water Management Plan Update fulfills the requirements of Section 208 of the Clean Water Act. This Update: 1) provided compliance with current legislation; 2) included an update of technical data to provide an adequate information base for decision-making; 3) was a comprehensive planning document, consistent with other regional plans; and 4) was formatted to assure easy referencing and updating. The 1994 Update included details regarding the specific goals, policies and program recommendations of the Water Management Plan and summarized the implementation status of 1980 Plan recommendations (including construction of the Vern Freeman Diversion, Pumping Trough Pipeline, and creation of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency as required as a condition of funding of these two construction projects to address seawater intrusion and groundwater overdraft). The Technical Appendix addressed in more detail the legislative history of water management planning and water supply, demand management and quality issues.

Recent Local Water Management Activities

Local entities have undertaken water management efforts at both the regional (countywide) level and at the watershed level.

Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Planning Process (1996 – Present)

Agencies within the Calleguas Creek Watershed have been working together since 1996 to develop the Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan (WMP or Plan). This process has been a comprehensive, stakeholder driven effort to develop a resource management and protection program and strategy for the 343-square mile Calleguas Creek Watershed in southeastern Ventura County. Watershed stakeholders initiated the WMP in response to a clear need to work cooperatively and responsibly to develop a comprehensive plan which would guarantee the long-term health of natural resources in the watershed, and implementation of a coordinated water quality and land use planning strategy for the watershed as a whole. Led by a broadly representative Steering Committee (local property owners, water and wastewater agencies, environmental groups, agricultural parties, governmental entities, and other private interests), the WMP completed its first phase, the development of action recommendations and technical tools to address coordinated environmental and resource management by public agencies and private sector participants. The Phase I Report (2004) contains the recommendations and actions that were developed during Phase I. Phase II, which is currently underway, focuses on how responsible parties in the Calleguas Creek Watershed will act collectively to address significant water quality improvements and meet the mandatory standards of the Federal Clean Water Act and California Porter-Cologne Act.

In June 2005 local stakeholders, under the direction of the Steering Committee, adopted an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan for the Calleguas Creek Watershed. This plan incorporated the 2004 Phase I Report of the Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan (Volume I) which contains an action plan to address identified problems in the watershed as a result of more than nine years of stakeholder review and study, and an Addendum (Volume II) which addresses the elements required in the State Guidelines for integrated regional water management plans.

Ventura Countywide Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (VCIRWMP) Group (2002 – 2006)

Early in 2002, in anticipation of the approval of a statewide water bond with grant funds for integrated regional water management, a “coalition” of 27 water-related agencies in Ventura County met to identify priority projects for these grant funds, that would address key water problems facing the County (water quality, reliability, etc.), as identified during the earlier water management planning efforts. This water bond passed in the form of Proposition 50. Through this coalition, called the VCIRWMP Group, local agencies worked together, in conjunction with State and Federal regulatory agencies, to discuss water issues facing the Region and seek solutions. The primary areas of focus were the Ventura River and Santa Clara River Watersheds. As described above, the Calleguas Creek Watershed issues were being addressed through a separate management plan and stakeholder process.

In early 2004, a consensus of VCIRWMP Group members recommended that staff from the Ventura County Executive Office (CEO) and County Resource Management Agency Planning Division should coordinate the preparation of a Ventura Countywide Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (VCIRWMP) to be used as the basis to apply for grant funding and future water project funding opportunities. In the fall of 2004, the Board of Supervisors approved County collaboration with the VCIRWMP Group and a share of funding to develop the VCIRWMP and apply for Proposition 50, Chapter 8 Planning Grant and Implementation Grant funds. In May of 2005, the VCIRWMP Group adopted two resolutions formally authorizing the County Resource Management Agency Planning Division to apply for both the Planning and Implementation Grants under Proposition 50. In July of 2005, the Group adopted a resolution approving the Interim VCIRWM Plan and schedule for final Plan completion.

Watershed planning efforts have also been conducted within the Santa Clara River Watershed and the Ventura River Watershed. These are further described in Sections 2, 5 and 6.

Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) (Formed in 2006)

In April 2006 the VCIRWMP Group and the Calleguas Creek Steering Committee agreed, by resolution (**See Appendix A for a copy of the resolution**), to form the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) for purposes of consolidating integrated regional water management plans and for submittal of grant applications for the Proposition 50, Chapter 8 Implementation Grant and other applicable future funds. This consolidated IRWM Plan is the result of the collaboration of agencies through the new Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County. The WCVC meets monthly (**See Section 3 for list of stakeholders**) to guide development of the consolidated plan and to address critical water management issues facing the Region.

Summary of Water Management Collaboration Efforts in Ventura County

Local water districts, sanitation districts, Cities, the County of Ventura, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Department of Water Resources, environmental and public interest groups, and many other interested local, State and Federal organizations and individuals have historically worked together and continue to pursue comprehensive water management goals in the region. From the inception of a comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan in 1975, to the 1994 Countywide Water Management Plan approved and submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board, to current efforts by the WCVC to prepare an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan and develop projects for implementation, there have been many efforts to better manage and improve the County's water resources.

Given the complexity of the issues being addressed and the diverse nature of the stakeholder groups, the planning process and implementation of recommendations will continue well into the 21st Century. The planning process has been an opportunity for local parties to take a greater role in governing local resources, balancing the needs of all stakeholders, and assuring healthy and sustainable watersheds for future generations.

1.2 Proposition 50, Chapter 8 Overview

Proposition 50, the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002, was passed by California voters in November 2002. It amended the California Water Code (CWC) to add, among other articles, § 79560 *et seq.* authorizing the Legislature to appropriate \$500 million for Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) projects. The intent of the IRWM Grant Program is to encourage integrated regional strategies for management of water resources and to provide funding, through competitive grants, for projects that protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependence on imported water. The IRWM Grant Program is administered jointly by the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and is intended to promote an integrated and regional approach to water management. The IRWM Grant Program consists of Planning and Implementation Grant funding that meets the following criteria:

Planning Grants have been, and will be, provided to eligible applicants to develop new, or to update existing, IRWM Plans or Integrated Coastal Watershed Management (ICWM) Plans that meet the requirements of the IRWM Grant Program Guidelines ([Guidelines](#)), November 2004, and the Proposal Solicitation Package (PSP). Proposals that develop, complete, or modify a component of an IRWM Plan are also eligible. Approximately \$12 million was available for planning grants during the first funding cycle; \$2 million of which is allocated for ICWM Plans. Each grant was limited to a maximum of \$500,000. **See Appendix B for a copy of the IRWM Plan standards.** The VCIRWMP Group was successful in obtaining a Planning Grant (\$220,000) in 2006 for development of an IRWM Plan for Ventura County.

Implementation Grants are being provided to eligible applicants to implement proposals that meet the requirements of the IRWM Guidelines ([Guidelines](#)), November 2004, and the Proposal Solicitation Package (PSP). Approximately \$148 million is available for implementation grants during the first funding cycle; Round One. Each grant is limited to a maximum of \$25 million. Projects that are funded by Chapter 8 must be consistent with a locally adopted and State approved Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan. The Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County has submitted a Step 2 Implementation Grant proposal for approximately \$25 million for a

suite of 11 projects which address local objectives and needs and statewide priorities. **See Section 6 for information regarding these proposed projects.**

Because of the State's continuing budget problems, funding from Proposition 50 and future water bonds are of significant importance to local and regional water agencies. Additional water-related legislation is being prepared and another water bond measure, Proposition 84, is on the November 2006 ballot in California. If this bond measure passes, Ventura and Los Angeles Counties (as part of a single hydrologic region) will have the opportunity to vie for \$215 million in IRWM funding.

1.3 Purpose of the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County, Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

As described above, the WCVC authorized the County of Ventura Resource Management Agency to prepare an integrated regional water management plan for the region encompassing Ventura County. The Plan meets the IRWM standards contained in the Proposition 50 Grant Program Guidelines (**See Appendix B**). The WCVC is guiding the County staff and consultants preparing this IRWM Plan to assure coordination of local water management planning efforts.

The purpose of the IRWM Plan is to integrate planning and implementation efforts and facilitate regional cooperation with the goal of improving water supply reliability, water recycling, water conservation, recreation and access, flood control, wetlands enhancement and creation, and environmental and habitat protection. Specifically, it will provide ongoing guidance and prioritization regarding implementation projects, for both Proposition 50 Implementation Grants and other funding sources.

An objective of the IRWM Plan is to build on a long-standing foundation of cooperation and existing efforts of the local entities and others such as wetlands/habitat protection groups, and ongoing watershed management committees. The objective of the IRWMP is not to duplicate existing and ongoing plans, but to better integrate these efforts and utilize the results and findings of existing plans to put forward the projects needed to address local objectives.

The IRWM Plan complies with and incorporates relevant sections of Chapter 8 of Proposition 50 and IRWMP principles and criteria for integrated water management planning as set forth in the Guidelines. In addition, development of the IRWM Plan includes the following:

1. A process for ongoing decision-making
2. Identification of multiple issues and objectives and potential solutions
3. Integration and coordination of planning with other agencies and entities
4. An inclusive and participatory public involvement process to ensure meaningful input
5. Appropriate level of scientific watershed assessment information
6. A long-term perspective
7. Phased implementation and staging of resources
8. Ongoing monitoring of project and plan implementation
9. A means for adaptive planning and management

The IRWMP provides an integration of projects that protect the natural resources of Ventura County. The Plan identifies additional projects that are critical to achieving watershed objectives.