

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN  
UPDATE 2019  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Prepared for :

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY IRWM COOPERATING PARTNERS







# **INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**UPDATE  
2019**

## ***Executive Summary***

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# **Santa Barbara County IRWM Region**

## **IRWM Plan Update 2019**

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The regional boundaries for the Region were proposed by the Cooperating Partners of the Santa Barbara County IRWM and approved by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) through the Regional Acceptance Process in 2009. The county jurisdictional boundary was determined to be appropriate for multiple practical management purposes and for maximizing the opportunities for integration of water management activities, including the following:

- Different sub-regions within the County share water supplies and infrastructure, and water is managed as an interconnected system within the County’s boundaries.
- Water and wastewater management entities must address issues and challenges that are specific to the Region and that would benefit from integrated management.
- Many of the entities within the County have a long history of working together to resolve water issues, and a framework already exists for addressing key issues related to water resource management.
- The County is largely geographically separate from neighboring counties. The County abuts Kern County only along its sparsely populated northeast corner. The portions of the Rincon Creek watershed shared by Ventura County and the Cuyama River watershed shared by Ventura and San Luis Obispo Counties have very low population densities, are smaller in size, and have no shared water infrastructure.

## **ABBREVIATED SANTA BARBARA COUNTY IRWM HISTORY AND SUCCESSES**

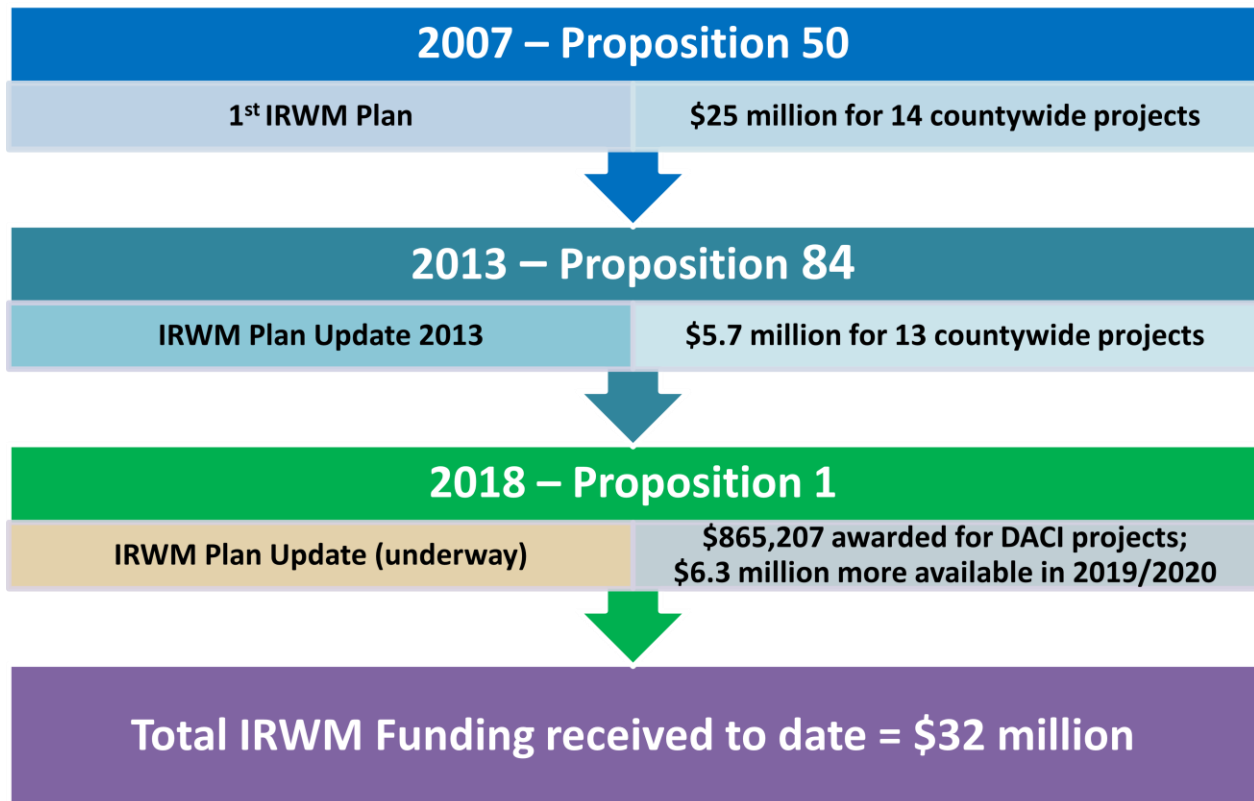
The Santa Barbara County IRWM program began in 2005 following the passage of Proposition 50, The Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002. Chapter 8 of Proposition 50 authorized the legislature to appropriate \$500 million for IRWM planning, the intent of which was to encourage agencies to develop plans using regional water management strategies for water resources and to develop projects using these IRWM strategies to protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependence on imported water. The Santa Barbara County IRWM developed and then adopted its first IRWM plan in 2007, and under Proposition 50 received \$25 million for 14 countywide projects (see Figure 2, IRWM Funding History). The IRWM Plan was updated under the Proposition 84 Guidelines in 2013. The Region is now updating the IRWM Plan under the Proposition 1 Guidelines. In 2018, the Region was awarded

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almost \$900,000 in direct funds to disadvantaged communities (DACs), and the Region will be applying for further implementation funds (up to \$6.3 million) in spring 2019.

**Figure 2. IRWM Funding History**



**IRWM PLAN UPDATE 2019**

The IRWM Plan Update 2019 was prepared in conformance with the DWR 2016 IRWM Guidelines, Volume 2, which contains the IRWM Plan Standards and related guidance. The Proposition 1 IRWM Grant Program provides funding for projects that help meet the long-term water needs of the state, including the following:

- Assisting water infrastructure systems adapt to climate change.
- Providing incentives throughout each watershed to collaborate in managing the Region's water resources and setting regional priorities for water infrastructure.

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- Improving regional water self-reliance, while reducing reliance on Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Only regions that update their IRWM Plans to the 2016 DWR Plan Standards and receive approval from the DWR are eligible for grant funding; hence, the creation of the IRWM Plan Update 2019. The update process and the IRWM Plan represent the work of many dedicated water, wastewater, and stormwater professionals and members of the public. Over the course of a 2-year update process, including targeted outreach, subcommittees meetings, public workshops, and Cooperating Partners meetings, an IRWM Plan has been developed to be responsive to the changing conditions and needs of the region in these challenging times. Projects to implement the IRWM Plan are developed in response to newly identified needs and are updated on an ongoing basis in the project database. As new, relevant planning documents are developed in the Region, they are added as appendices to the IRWM Plan. Objectives, priorities, and resource management strategies are revisited as necessary to respond to the changing conditions in the Region and in response to new state-mandated requirements.

In summary, the IRWM Plan Update 2019 addresses the deficiencies of the IRWM Plan that were identified by the DWR in the 2013 Plan Update, and conforms to the 2016 IRWM Planning Standards. Significant changes to the IRWM Plan as part of this update include the following:

- **GOVERNANCE:** Updates to the governance section to reflect changes in the Cooperating Partners and the inclusion of newly formed entities.
- **SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT:** Updates to the regional description to reflect the outcome of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and the formation of groundwater sustainability agencies.
- **ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:** Updates to the issues and challenges identified and evaluated during the IRWM Plan Update 2019 have been carried forward from the IRWM Plan 2013.
- **SUB-REGIONS:** In the 2013 IRWM Plan, the Region was characterized with five sub-regions based on distinct watersheds. This IRWM Plan Update 2019 recognizes the distinct character and watershed areas of the five regions; however, for efficient, effective, collaborative, and synergistic project planning and implementation, the Santa Ynez River Watershed and San Antonio Creek Watershed Planning sub-regions have been merged into the Mid-County IRWM Sub-Region.
- **CLIMATE CHANGE:** Climate change vulnerabilities were first prioritized for the IRWM Plan 2013. As part of the IRWM Plan Update 2019, the Cooperating Partners



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revisited the prioritization in the context of recent events, including extended drought, wildfires, flooding, and a catastrophic debris flow, as well as new climate change impact assessments. The Cooperating Partners completed a survey in which the vulnerabilities were assigned a ranking of high, medium, or low. The results of this survey were then discussed in a countywide stakeholder meeting during which it was determined that a very high vulnerability category was needed. This category was created in response to vulnerabilities that agencies are facing now that require immediate and targeted response. In addition to reprioritization, the Cooperating Partners also identified an additional vulnerability and recharacterized two vulnerabilities that were previously sub-vulnerabilities to larger issues. For water quality, “poor water quality in groundwater” was added to the vulnerability list, and “increased constituent concentrations” and “increase in treatment needs and costs” were made sub-vulnerabilities to both “poor water quality in groundwater” and “poor water quality in surface waters.”

- **CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE:** A section was added on climate resilience as well as a discussion of the challenges, opportunities, and work going on within the Region.
- **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES:** The list of resource management strategies developed for the IRWM Plan 2013 was reviewed, and additional resource management strategies from the California Water Plan Update 2013 (DWR 2013, Chapter 26, Sediment Management; Chapter 29, Outreach and Engagement; and Chapter 30, Water and Culture) and two from the 2009 California Water Plan Update that had not been included in the IRWM Plan 2013 (DWR 2009, Chapter 29, Other Resource Management Strategies: Crop Idling for Water Transfers and Irrigated Land Retirement) were reviewed for relevance.
- **WATER AND CULTURE AND DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES:** Three subcommittees, the Water and Culture Subcommittee, the Climate Change Subcommittee, and the DAC/Vulnerable Communities Subcommittee were formed and convened for the purpose of updating specific areas of the IRWM Plan. Participation in the meetings was open to the Cooperating Partners and stakeholders. Sections were then generated to reflect the outcome of the work of the subcommittees and the areas where opportunities have been identified.
- **DATA MANAGEMENT:** The Data Management section of the IRWM Plan was rewritten and updated to include the new County-hosted database that was developed to replace the OPTI (Online Project Tracking and Integration) system used briefly in the Proposition 84 process, and a deeper discussion was developed in relation to the data needs related to the passage of Assembly Bill 1755, The Open and Transparent Water Data Act.

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- **Central Coast Funding Area:** The section related to inter-regional coordination was updated and re-written to reflect the significant increase in coordination and collaboration within the Central Coast Funding Area.
- **PROJECTS IN THE PLAN AND PROJECT SELECTION:** A section related to project selection was updated to more accurately reflect the practice and process by which projects are included in the IRWM Plan.
- **SENATE BILL 1000:** Although not explicitly required to be addressed by the DWR’s Guidelines, Senate Bill 1000 does require cities and counties of California to include an environmental justice element in their General Plans. The Santa Barbara IRWM Plan has already characterized DAC communities and qualitatively and quantitatively aggregated their needs. Therefore, this IRWM Plan will inform work required by Planning and Development for conformance to Senate Bill 1000.
- **UNSHELTERED POPULATIONS;** Although not required by the 2016 Guidelines, the Region discussed impacts on water quality and flood control as they relate to unsheltered populations. Moreover, people who are homeless are particularly at risk during events such as fires, heavy rainfall, and flooding. During the Thomas Fire, homeless populations were at increased risk of air quality concerns due to inability to leave the area, lack of shelter, and lack of masks. Subsistence activities, including fishing, are also impacted by extreme weather events.

## **SANTA BARBARA COUNTY IRWM GOVERNANCE**

Sections 10530–10546 of the Water Code state that preparation of an IRWM plan must be guided by a regional water management group composed of three or more local public agencies, at least two of which have statutory authority over water supply, formed by means of a joint powers agreement, memorandum of understanding, or other written agreement that is approved by the governing bodies of the local public agencies. In the Region, the regional water management group is referred to as the Cooperating Partners.

The Cooperating Partners (see Table 1) are made up of a broad Region-wide group that includes water and wastewater districts, community service districts, city departments, county divisions, and a non-governmental organization. Table 1 provides a list of the Cooperating Partners and those entities’ key water management issues.

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**Table 1**  
**Cooperating Partners Key Water Management Issues**

Cooperating Partner	Key Water Management Issues
<i>Cities and County Entities</i>	
City of Buellton	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, stormwater management, water quality, flood control, water use efficiency, water conservation
City of Carpinteria	Stormwater management, water quality, flood control
City of Guadalupe	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, stormwater management water quality, flood control, water use efficiency, water conservation, salt and nutrient management
City of Goleta	Stormwater management, water quality, flood control
City of Lompoc	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, stormwater management treatment and infiltration, water use efficiency, water conservation, flood control
City of Santa Barbara	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, stormwater management, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation, flood control
City of Santa Maria	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, stormwater management, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation, flood control, salt and nutrient management
City of Solvang	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, stormwater management, flood control, water use efficiency, water conservation, water quality
<i>Joint Powers Agencies</i>	
Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board	Water supply
<i>Non-Governmental Organization</i>	
Heal the Ocean	Water quality
<i>Community Services Districts</i>	
Cuyama Community Services District	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, water quality
Los Olivos Community Services District	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, water quality
Vandenberg Village Community Services District	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation, salt and nutrient management

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**Table 1  
Cooperating Partners Key Water Management Issues**

Cooperating Partner	Key Water Management Issues
Santa Ynez Community Services District	Water supply, water treatment, sewer and wastewater treatment, water quality
<i>Sanitary Districts</i>	
Carpinteria Sanitary District	Wastewater treatment, water quality
Goleta Sanitary District	Wastewater treatment, water quality
Goleta West Sanitary District	Wastewater treatment, water quality
<i>Special Districts (Independent and Dependent)</i>	
Laguna County Sanitation District (Dependent)	Wastewater treatment, water quality, salt and nutrient management, discharge capacity
Santa Barbara County Water Agency (Dependent)	Regional water use efficiency and conservation, County-wide hydrologic data and development of hydrologic models, County-wide groundwater conditions, stormwater, administration of regional water supply projects
Santa Barbara County Flood Control District (Dependent)	Flood control and stormwater
<i>Water Districts</i>	
Carpinteria Valley Water District	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation
Goleta Water District	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation
Montecito Water District	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation, water reuse, water supply reliability
La Cumbre Mutual Water Company	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation
<i>Tribes</i>	
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians of the Santa Ynez Reservation	Water supply, water treatment, water quality, water use efficiency, water conservation

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#### ***Memorandum of Understanding***

The Region has been governed through a series of memoranda of understanding that have been continually updated as recently as 2018. All of the Cooperating Partners are responsible for implementing the IRWM Plan and have signed a memorandum of understanding as required for participation in the IRWM program and process. The memorandum of understanding commits most of the Cooperating Partners to a financial contribution for supporting the IRWM program costs, which include staff, consultants, materials, data management, and other costs, but do not include the cost of regional grant applications. Under some circumstances, financial contribution can be waived and replaced with in-lieu contributions upon request to and approval of the Cooperating Partners.

Decision making for the IRWM program is outlined in the memorandum of understanding, which describes the purpose of the program; guiding principles for IRWM planning; and the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency, Cooperating Partners, project proponents, subcommittees, workgroups, and stakeholders.

The lead agency is the single point of contact for the IRWM program and is liaison between all entities involved in the program. The lead agency must be a Cooperating Partner. As an agency that has IRWM Region-wide governance and geographic coverage, Santa Barbara County Water Agency has been the lead agency since the program's inception in 2005. The lead agency keeps the Cooperating Partners apprised of the principles and makes recommendations to ensure adherence to the principles. The lead agency also ensures that public outreach and opportunities to participate in IRWM Plan development and implementation are adequately supported and addressed.

#### ***IRWM Projects and Project Selection***

The IRWM Plan is always open to accepting eligible projects at any time. At a minimum, an annual call for projects for the IRWM Plan is released to the stakeholders, public, and Cooperating Partners. Eligible projects will then be adopted into the IRWM Plan by a simple majority. On an annual basis, the project list will be updated to remove old, inactive, or completed projects. In addition, a separate call for projects will be released to the stakeholders, public, and Cooperating Partners in relation to a specific project solicitation package from the DWR for a specific funding round. Projects related to a funding round must conform to the IRWM Plan and the goals of the project solicitation package. Projects competing for funding are required to adhere to a separate scoring rubric and will be prioritized and selected by a



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subset of the Cooperating Partners as an ad-hoc subcommittee. Project selection presentations and scoring meetings or workshops are open to the public and subject to public comment.

## **ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE IRWM PROCESS**

Each entity discussed above has the ability to attend IRWM meetings and make comments on the IRWM Plan, projects, and the project selection process. All meeting notes and materials are available on the IRWM website (<http://www.countyofsb.org/pwd/irwmp.sbc>). All Cooperating Partners meetings and workgroup meetings are open to the public, providing any public stakeholder an opportunity to participate in development and implementation of the IRWM Plan. A forum for public comment is provided at each Cooperating Partners' meeting.

Stakeholders are defined as all interested parties in the Region who are not directly participating in the IRWM process as a Cooperating Partner. Broad outreach has been conducted to diversify stakeholder participation. Outreach has been initiated to the following stakeholder categories: wholesale and retail water purveyors, including a local agency, mutual water company, or a water corporation as defined in Section 241 of the Public Utilities Code; wastewater agencies; flood control agencies; municipal and county governments and special districts; electrical corporations, as defined in Section 218 of the Public Utilities Code; Native American tribes that have lands within the Region; self-supplied water users, including agricultural, industrial, residential, park districts, school districts, colleges and universities, and others; environmental stewardship organizations, including watershed groups, fishing groups, land conservancies, and environmental groups; community organizations, including landowner organizations, taxpayer groups, and recreational interests; industry organizations representing agriculture, developers, and other industries appropriate to the Region; state, federal, and regional agencies or universities with specific responsibilities or knowledge within the Region; DAC members and representatives, including environmental justice organizations, neighborhood councils, and social justice organizations; and any other interested groups appropriate to the Region.

### ***Disadvantaged Community Outreach and Involvement***

The Region includes a number of DACs (see Figure 3, Santa Barbara County Disadvantaged Communities). There has been significant outreach, project development, and implementation of projects within DACs over the course of the last 12 years. Additionally, there is a current effort being funded by a grant secured by the Santa Barbara County IRWM through Proposition 1 IRWM Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant funds. The grant includes targets to

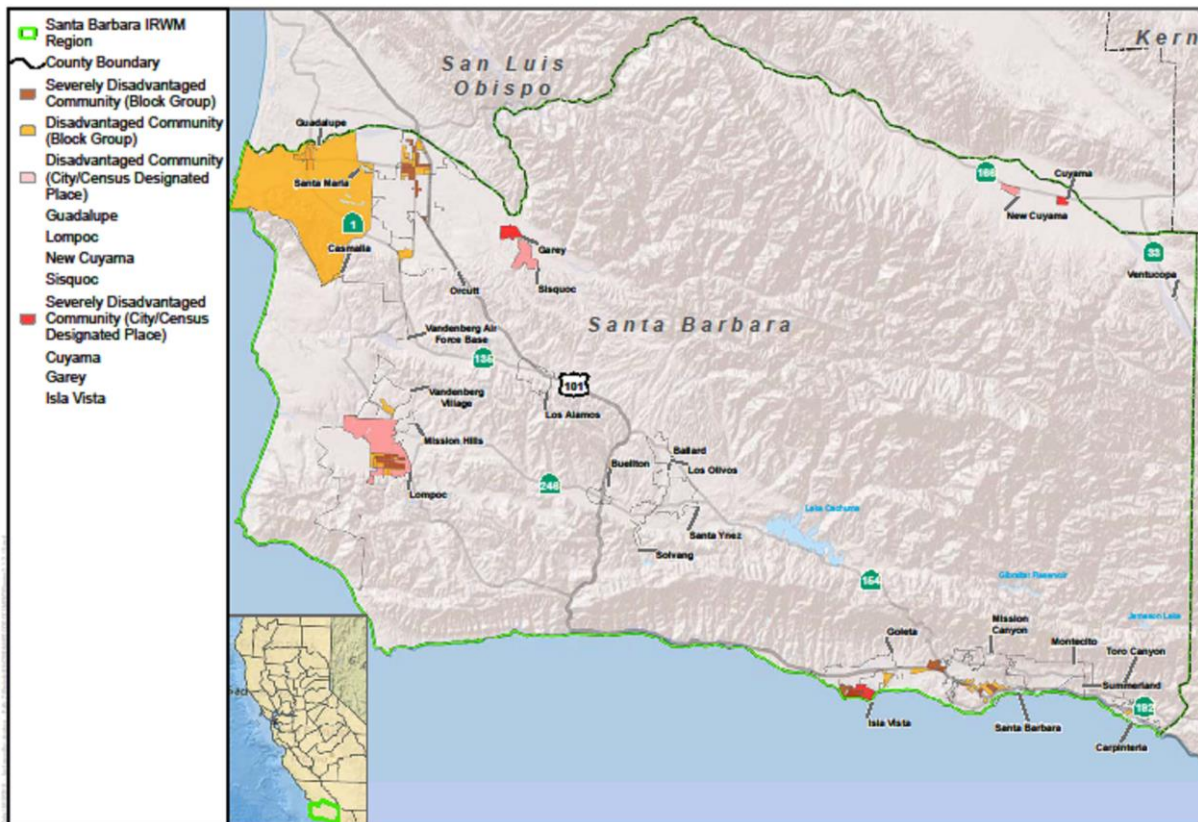
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continue and increase involvement of DACs, economically distressed areas, severely disadvantaged communities, and underrepresented communities in IRWM planning efforts. One goal of the funding is to increase engagement by DACs in the IRWM process, including in identifying issues, setting priorities, and developing objectives and management strategies for the Region. In addition, the IRWM program offers resources for capacity development and access to funding to support DACs in addressing local issues and challenges.

**Figure 3. Santa Barbara County Disadvantaged Communities**



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#### ***Tribal Communities***

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians receives all communications regarding IRWM meetings, project opportunities, and IRWM Plan updates and participates in IRWM meetings. The Santa Ynez Chumash Environmental Office has stated that it is particularly interested in topics related to the Santa Ynez River Watershed, since the Zanja de Cota Creek, a tributary to the Santa Ynez River, runs through the Santa Ynez Reservation. The Santa Ynez Chumash Environmental Office has ongoing projects working on riparian efforts to remove invasive species and protect wetlands.

#### **SUMMARY OF BENEFITS**

Water is one of the most fundamental resources in the Region and every single person interacts with water every day. Water is necessary for the life and health of humans and ecosystems, for the success of our food systems and our economic systems, and for our security. Integrated regional water management encompasses all of these sectors of communities and economies and provides a framework for the most efficient use, management, and replenishment of our precious water resources.

Proposition 50 and Proposition 84 funding made important water, wastewater, stormwater, agricultural water, and ecosystem-related projects possible. The IRWM Plan and process has also created a series of important dialogues and actions aimed at positioning the Region to better deal with current and future challenges of water supply, water reliability, water resources diversification, and drought and hazards. The Region, and some of its most vulnerable populations, have also benefited through the DAC Involvement grant under Proposition 1, and the Cooperating Partners are discussing implementation projects for further Proposition 1 funds through DWR's IRWM allotment.

IRWM has stood the test of time in the Region and has endured for over 13 years. All of the innovative project work, hard discussions, well-developed strategies, and collaboration on projects have yielded benefits because of the dedication of all the Cooperating Partners and stakeholders who value the rigor and integrity of the IRWM process and who look to the IRWM Plan as a useful tool to guide better regional water management.







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