

REGION ACCEPTANCE PROCESS

A COMPONENT OF THE INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Purpose

This document is a component of the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program Guidelines. It presents the California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) Region Acceptance Process (RAP) that will be used to evaluate and accept an IRWM region into the IRWM grant program, California Water Code (CWC) §10541(f) (effective March 1, 2009). Acceptance and approval of the composition of an IRWM region into the IRWM grant program will be required before any region can submit an application for IRWM grant funds. DWR has not previously reviewed and accepted any region, therefore, this process applies to all IRWM regions, both existing and developing. DWR will conduct the RAP on, at least, an annual basis. Timing of the annual RAP review may be coordinated with any upcoming grant solicitation cycle. This opportunity will be given again to those regions that could not apply or were not approved the first time.

Background

Since the inception of the IRWM grant program, DWR has encouraged and supported the formation of self-determined IRWM regions. However, effective guidance in IRWM region development has been challenging, because there is no single physical size, organizational structure, or governance definition that applies uniformly to all areas in the state. IRWM regions are dynamic and evolving and as IRWM regions change, it is important that those changes be understood at local and state levels and that the changes work toward the goals of better regional management.

In September 2008, SB 1 (Perata, Stats. 2008, Ch. 1; eff. March 1, 2009) was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger. SB1 contains the "Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Act", CWC §10530 *et seq.* The IRWM Planning Act provides a general definition of an IRWM plan as well as guidance to DWR as to what IRWM program guidelines must contain. CWC §10541(f) states that the guidelines shall include standards for identifying a region for the purposes of developing or modifying an IRWM plan. This section also directs DWR to develop a process to approve the composition of the region for the purposes of Proposition 84 IRWM Program. At a minimum, a region is defined as a contiguous geographic area encompassing the service areas of multiple local agencies; is defined to maximize the opportunities to integrate water management activities; and effectively integrates water management programs and projects within a hydrologic region defined in the California Water Plan, the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) region, or subdivision or other region specifically identified by DWR (Public Resource Code §75026.(b)(1)).

Equally important to the region boundary is how the IRWM region develops and implements its governance structure and stakeholder involvement functions. A Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) is a group of three or more local agencies, at least two of which have statutory authority over water supply or management, as well as those other persons necessary for the development and implementation of a plan (CWC §10539). This definition acknowledges multiple perspectives on water management and requires collaborative involvement of multiple

stakeholders. The governance structure must outline the roles and responsibilities of the governing body, including how decisions are made within the region. DWR will not mandate a specific governance structure; however, certain general governance structure and processes must be addressed. Through the RAP, DWR seeks to meet with the RWMGs to:

1. Understand the challenges the RWMGs face in defining regions and their functions;
2. Provide the state's perspective on their specific region;
3. Give clear direction on to developing regional efforts on IRWM region boundaries;
4. Establish a mechanism for the RWMG and state to communicate as the region evolves; and
5. Comply with CWC §10541(f).

IRWM Region Description

An IRWM region is not based solely on geographic considerations or characteristics. It is also defined by water management issues, its stakeholders, and water-related conflicts. An IRWM region must be designed or configured to diversify and strengthen the regional water management portfolio.

While there is no quantitative definition of a region (such as a certain number of acres), it is possible to define the region too narrowly in terms of geography, participants, water resources, water management strategies, and water management objectives. A narrowly defined region would limit opportunities to integrate water management strategies or diversify a region's water management portfolio.

The IRWM region must consider the broad variety of the water systems being managed in the planning area, including:

- Water supply;
- Water quality;
- Environmental stewardship;
- Flood management;
- Drought preparedness;
- Wastewater treatment;
- Watershed management;
- Recycled water;
- Groundwater management;
- Land use;
- Natural habitat and conservation;
- Conjunctive use; and
- Emphasis on reduced dependence on imported water.

IRWM Region Characteristics

Functional, successful regions will typically be composed of numerous, diverse stakeholders that manage, direct, or are involved in processes that influence regional water management.

Desirable Characteristics of an IRWM Region

The following is a listing of some of the desirable characteristics of an IRWM Region that DWR will continue to encourage.

- The IRWM region is the largest defined contiguous geographic area encompassing the service areas of multiple local agencies, and it is defined to maximize opportunities to integrate water management activities related to natural and man-made water system(s), including water supply reliability, water quality, environmental stewardship; and flood management.
- The IRWM region is inclusive and utilizes a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process that provides mechanisms to assist disadvantaged communities (DAC); address water management issues; and develop integrated, multi-benefit, regional solutions that incorporate environmental stewardship to implement the IRWM plan.
- The IRWM region encompasses a water system containing natural and man-made components with diverse water management issues that are included in a single collaborative water management portfolio, prioritized on regional goals and objectives.
- The IRWM region should demonstrate a reasonable and effective governance structure for developing and implementing its IRWM plan.

Undesirable Characteristics of an IRWM Region

The following is a summary of some of the undesirable characteristics of an IRWM Region that DWR does not encourage.

- Multiple IRWM regions in the same geographic area all planning to manage the same water system.
- A region that is solely defined by a jurisdictional boundary, county line, or other geopolitical boundary, without consideration of watershed boundaries or physical location of water resources and infrastructure.
- A region that is formed for the sole purpose of seeking short-term grant funds rather than to sustain a long-term regional planning effort to ensure water supply reliability, water quality, environmental stewardship, and flood management.
- A region that is project driven where existing projects are the primary focus and collaborative integrated regional planning and management is secondary.
- A region where the boundaries tend to exclude rather than include other water management entities and stakeholders.

Who Should Submit?

Any RWMG should submit RAP materials if it anticipates applying for grant funding from DWR's IRWM grant program which includes funding from Proposition 84 IRWM funds, Proposition 1E stormwater flood management funds, or other IRWM funds that may be available in the future. The requested information should be submitted by a local agency or non-profit organization.

What to Submit

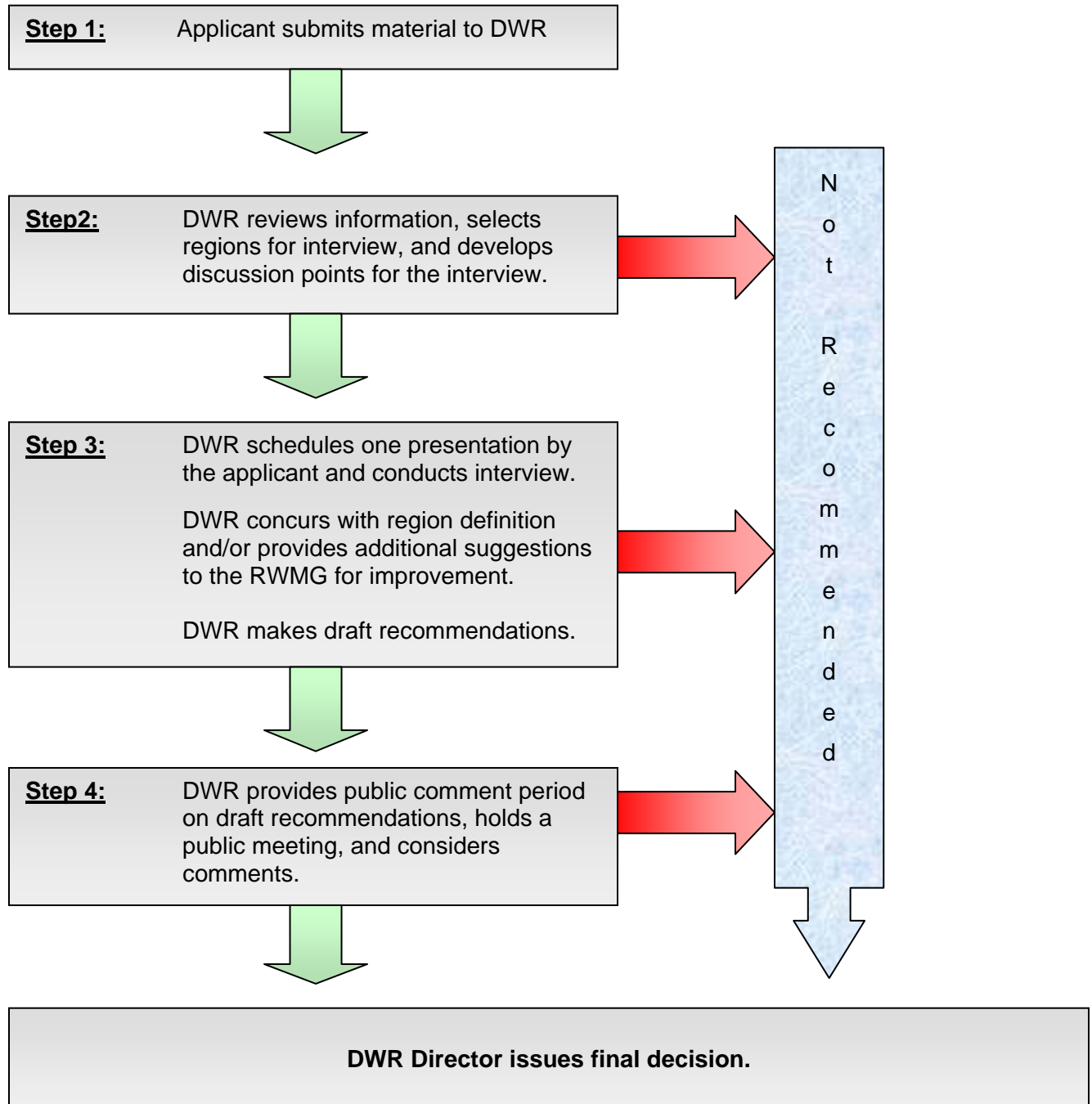
The RWMG shall submit RAP materials in the form of written text, maps, figures, and tables that thoroughly demonstrate that the IRWM region is the most comprehensive, contiguous area defined by common water management issues related to the water system(s) both natural and man-made, including water supply, water quality, environmental stewardship, and flood management.

DWR understands that some regions may be in the initial developmental process and other regions may have more fully developed IRWM planning efforts. A developing IRWM region and an established region may have differing abilities to provide information about their IRWM region. In these cases, the developing region may only be able to provide a conceptual discussion and limited supporting information regarding the composition of the IRWM region. The RAP materials must provide the information necessary to justify and support the proposed region boundary. Use of pre-existing documents is encouraged and the RWMG may extract the relevant information into the RAP materials. The RAP materials should be a stand-alone document that thoroughly supports the basis for the proposed region boundary.

Table 1 lists and describes the items RWMG must submit for the RAP. Corresponding reviewer information is also provided to clarify how the submittal material will be evaluated. See Table 1.

IRWM RAP Review Steps

The following flow diagram provides an overview of the RWMG submittal and acceptance process:



Step 1 – Submission of RAP material

RWMG submits materials to DWR, as described in “What to Submit” Section.

Step 2 – DWR reviews RAP material

DWR will review the RAP material and make one of the following determinations:

1. **Application Not Recommended.** The information presented does not meet basic eligibility requirements to reasonably support the concepts and basis for the proposed IRWM Region Boundary. The agencies in this category will not be invited to the region acceptance process interview.
2. **Application Recommended.** DWR will notify the applicant and schedule an initial applicant interview with the RWMG. DWR will prepare a list of questions or discussion points regarding the questionnaire responses. An email with the questions/discussion points will be sent to the point-of-contact listed in Question 1. DWR may request minor revisions or clarification or submittal of additional material for the RAP interview (discussed in Step 3). The email will also provide the time and location of the interview.

Step 3 – Interviews

The RWMG will have an opportunity to discuss the RAP material with DWR representatives during a scheduled interview period. DWR will have an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification. The purpose of the interview is to provide DWR with answers to questions raised during the review process. Representatives of the State Water Resources Control Board, the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board, or other interested state agencies may participate in the interviews. The applicant will be allowed a limited number of representatives to participate in the RAP interview.

At the end of Step 3, draft recommendations for the RWMGs that submitted RAP materials will be posted on the DWR website (list below, in “IRWM Grant Program Website”) and a news release and email announcement will be issued.

Step 4 – Public comment period

Before making a final decision, DWR will provide a public comment period, which includes a public meeting to consider public comments. Based on the public comments received and consultation with reviewers, DWR will make one of the following recommendations to the DWR Director:

1. **Region Not Accepted.** The information provided in the RAP materials and the interview does not reasonably support the concepts and basis for the IRWM region boundary;
2. **Region Accepted.** The information provided in the RAP materials and the interview reasonably support the IRWM region boundary.
3. **Region Conditionally Accepted.** In some regions where information on the exact region boundaries may not be complete, it may be necessary for the RWMG to

coordinate with stakeholders on the conceptual vision for the region boundary. In these cases, DWR may issue a conditional region approval to allow the applicant an opportunity to coordinate with stakeholders in an effort to finalize the region boundaries and submit to DWR for review and approval. In this case, the applicant would re-enter the process at Step 3. Due to the RAP schedule, the RWGM may need to wait until the next cycle of the RAP review to be able to submit an application for IRWM grant funding.

4. **Other Action.** DWR make may other recommendations as necessary to address specific concerns with an individual IRWM region or a group of IRWM regions.

Following consideration of public comments, the Director of DWR will issue the final RAP decisions which will be announced in a news release; posted on the IRWM website, along with an updated map of IRWM regions; and emailed to the IRWM distribution list.

Timeline

The estimated schedule for the 2009 Expedited RAP is presented below:

Issue draft RAP guidelines and provide 30-Day public comment period	Dec 22, 2008
RAP Public Meeting: Northern and Southern California	<i>January 2009¹⁾</i>
Consider public comment and issue final RAP guidelines	<i>January 2009</i>
RWGM's prepare RAP materials (approximately 30 days)	<i>Jan – Feb 2009</i>
RAP materials due	<i>February 2009</i>
DWR meetings and interviews with RWGMs (approximately 14 days)	<i>March 2009</i>
Release draft RAP recommendations	<i>April 2009</i>
Public comment period on draft RAP recommendations (at least 15 days)	<i>April 2009</i>
DWR's final RAP decisions	<i>April 2009</i>

1) *Italics* denote tentative dates.

When and How to Submit

Applications are due on <date> at 5:00PM Pacific Time. Submit three (3) hardcopies and five (5) electronic copies in MS Word on five (5) CDs of the material listed in Table 1. In addition, if necessary provide the map(s) on a separate CD with UTM Zone 10, NAD 27 format. All of the RAP materials above must be sent or delivered to one of the following addresses:

Mailing Address

State of California
Department of Water Resources
Division of Planning and Local Assistance
Attn. Ralph Svetich
Post Office Box 942836
Sacramento, California 94236-0001

Courier Address

State of California
Department of Water Resources
Division of Planning and Local Assistance
Attn. Ralph Svetich
901 P St.
Sacramento, California 95814

Mailing List

In addition to the website referenced below, DWR will distribute information via e-mail. If you are not already on the IRWM contact list and wish to be placed on it, please e-mail your contact information to: DWR_IRWM@water.ca.gov

IRWM Grant Program Websites

DWR will use the Internet to notify interested parties of the status of this proposal process and to convey pertinent information. Information will be posted at the following website:
<http://www.grantsloans.water.ca.gov/grants/integregio.cfm>

Point of Contact

For questions about the Guidelines, please contact Norman Shopay at (916) 651-9218, nshopay@water.ca.gov.

Review Guidance

The review of RAP materials will be primarily based on information provided in the submittal and the interview. However, the reviewers' knowledge of the IRWM region and the funding area will be critical in determining if regions meet the desired characteristics of an IRWM region. If specific information is not presented in the RAP materials, the review team should identify needed additional materials for the RAP interview. Table 1, below, provides guidance and direction to the review team on how and what to consider during the RAP review effort.

Eligibility

As part of the RAP review, DWR will determine if the RWMG meets basic fundamental eligibility requirements. DWR will review whether the RWMG composed of three or more local agencies, at least two of which have statutory authority over water supply or management, as well as those other persons necessary for the development and implementation of a plan.

Table 1 – Submittal Materials and Reviewer Information

NO.	WHAT TO SUBMIT	REVIEWER INFORMATION
1	Information on the submitting entity including why the RWMG has selected the entity to submit the RAP materials. Include contact information (name, address, phone, fax, and email) of the person whom DWR should coordinate.	Ensure that contact information was provided. Is it clear that the submitting agency has been given permission to submit on behalf of the RWMG.
2	<p>A description of the composition of the RWMG. Identify RWMG members, including their role in the RWMG process, regional water management responsibilities, and the level of IRWM participation. For each entity, state if they have adopted plan to adopt, or will not adopt the IRWM plan.</p> <p>Provide a listing of the local agencies with statutory authority over water supply or water management, and the basis and nature of that statutory authority. For the purposes of this document “statutory authority over water supply or water management” may include, but is not limited to, water supply, water quality management, wastewater treatment, flood management/control, or storm water management.</p> <p>Provide a listing of the other participants such as agencies, stakeholders, and others included in the RWMG and their role in developing and implementing the IRWM Plan.</p> <p>List and describe the working relationship of identified agencies and stakeholders per CWC §10541.(g), which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholesale and retail water purveyors; including a local agency, mutual water company, or a water corporation as defined by Section 241 of the Public Utilities Code; • Wastewater agencies; • Flood management agencies; • Municipal and county governments and special districts; • Electrical corporation, as defined in Section 218 of the Public Utilities Code; • Native American Tribes that have lands within the region; • Land use authorities; • Watermaster for adjudicated surface water or groundwater basins; • Self-supplied water users, including agricultural, industrial, residential and 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 land owner 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 that have specific responsibilities or knowledge within the region; • Members and representatives of disadvantaged communities, including environmental justice organizations, neighborhood councils, and social justice organizations; and • Any other interested groups appropriate to the region. <p>Descriptions of working relationship may include but is not limited to information regarding the sharing of information, shared infrastructure, or competing interests.</p>	<p>Does the submittal list and discuss the role of the RWMG members and water management stakeholders that have agreed to participate in this process? Have the necessary RWMG members indicated they have or will adopt the completed IRWM plan?</p> <p>Do the RWMG members identified represent the majority of the water management authorities and stakeholders within the region boundary? Are there any entities known to have an interest in the area that have not been listed? Do you understand for each member whether they have statutory authority over water management, their participation in IRWM planning and implementation, and their local and regional interests in water management and planning?</p> <p>Do the members and groups appear to have good working relationships? Do they exchange information on water management issues? Do they share any facilities or infrastructure? Are there any competing interests or conflicting policies among the members that may affect integrated water planning and management?</p>

*Draft IRWM Regional Acceptance Process Guidelines
For 30-Day Public Comment Starting December 22, 2008*

3	<p>A description of how stakeholders, including DACs, are identified and invited to participate. List the procedures, processes, or structures that promote access to and collaboration with people or agencies with diverse views within the region. Discuss how the outreach efforts address the diversity of water management issues, geographical representation, and stakeholder interests in the region.</p> <p>Explain how the IRWM region is inclusive and utilizes a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process that provides mechanisms to assist DAC; address water management issues; and develop integrated, multi-benefit, regional solutions that incorporate environmental stewardship to implement future IRWM plans.</p>	<p>Does the list of stakeholders appear to be inclusive? Are DACs given an opportunity to participate? Does it appear that the RWMG includes stakeholders, including DACs, in its planning process and implementation?</p> <p>Do stakeholder outreach efforts promote participation of broad-based water planning and management interests in the region? Do the listed stakeholders provide a balanced representation of the water issues in the region?</p> <p>Does the submittal describe how stakeholders, including DACs, are identified and invited to participate? Are the procedures, processes, or structures that promote access to and collaboration with people or agencies with diverse views within the region listed and discussed?</p> <p>Does it appear that the IRWM region is inclusive and utilizes a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process that provides mechanisms to assist DAC and address water management issues? Will this result in the development of integrated, multi-benefit, regional solutions that incorporate environmental stewardship to implement the IRWM plan?</p>
4	<p>A description of the process being used that makes the public both part of and aware of the regional management and IRWM efforts. Discuss ways for the public to gain access to the RWMG and IRWM process for information and provide input.</p>	<p>Does the RWMG allow the public to participate in regular meetings? Is there an established method of posting meeting agendas, notices, and minutes? Are they posted with sufficient lead time for the public to participate in meetings?</p> <p>Is it clear who the public should contact within the RWMG if they have questions regarding regional water management efforts or IRWM planning and implementation in the region? Are there public meetings held to solicit public comments ahead of major decisions to be made by the RWMG? What is the process for the public to provide input to RWMG on regional water management and/or IRWMP? And what is the process being used by the RWMG to evaluate and respond to that input?</p>
5	<p>A description of the RWMG governance structure and how it will facilitate the sustained development of regional water management and the IRWM process, both now and beyond the state grant IRWM funding programs.</p> <p>Discuss how decisions are made. Identify the steps in which RWMG arrives at decisions and how RWMG members participate in the decision-making process. Examples of RWMG decisions to consider in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing IRWM plan goals and objectives • Prioritizing projects • Financing RWMG and IRWMP activities • Implementing plan activities • Making future revisions to the IRWM plan • Hiring & managing consultants <p>Describe how the RWMG will incorporate new members into the governance structure. Explain the manner in which a balance of interested persons or entities representing different sectors and interests have been or will be engaged in the process, regardless of their ability to contribute financially to the plan.</p> <p>Describe how the governance structure facilitates development of a single collaborative water management portfolio, prioritized on the regional goals and objectives of the IRWM region.</p>	<p>Are the roles and responsibilities of the RWMG clearly supportive of regional planning?</p> <p>Does the RWMG operate in a collaborative manner? Is it clear how decisions are made, including establishing plan goals and objectives, prioritizing projects, financing RWMG activities, implementing plan activities, and making future revisions to the IRWM plan?</p> <p>Who participates in the decision making process? Are all of the RWMG members involved or are there designated committees? Does the governance structure allow only certain members to vote on decisions? Does the decision making process allow for the participation of stakeholders and smaller entities? Do members have to contribute financially to the RWMG to be allowed to vote?</p> <p>Can the RWMG governance structure facilitate the sustained development of the IRWM region now and beyond the current IRWM funding programs? Does the group require members to contribute to the group's expenses, and if not, how will the group identify a budget for its operations, such as plan updates.</p> <p>Will the governance structure facilitates development of a single collaborative water management portfolio, prioritized on the regional goals and objectives of the IRWM region?</p>

6	<p>Present the IRWM regional boundary. Indicate in the submittal which boundaries are included and if/how they affect the determination of the region boundary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political/jurisdictional boundaries; • Water, conservation, irrigation, and flood district boundaries; • Watershed management areas; • Groundwater basins as defined in DWR Bulletin 118, Update 2003 – California’s Groundwater; • RWQCB boundaries • Floodplain maps (i.e. FEMA/Corps of Engineers); • Physical, topographical, geographical and biological features; • Surface water bodies; • Major water related infrastructure; • Impaired water bodies; • Population; • Biological significant units or other biological features (critical habitat areas); and • Disadvantaged communities with median household income demographics <p>Explain how the IRWM region encompasses the service areas of multiple local agencies and will maximize opportunities to integrate water management activities related to natural and man-made water systems, including water supply reliability, water quality, environmental stewardship, and flood management.</p> <p>On a CD, provide map(s) that present the regional boundaries in UTM Zone 10, NAD 27 format, including the above information, if applicable.</p>	<p>Does it appear that the IRWM region boundary was based solely on political boundaries?</p> <p>Is it clear what is the basis and rationale for the IRWM region boundary? Does it make sense for long term water management?</p> <p>Does the IRWM region boundary consider multiple water management boundaries such as watershed and groundwater basins?</p> <p>Does the region boundary appear appropriate given the context of the region’s unique water management issues?</p> <p>Does the IRWM region encompass the service areas of multiple local agencies? Does it appear that the IRWM region is structured to maximize opportunities to integrate water management activities related to natural and man-made water systems, including water supply reliability, water quality, environmental stewardship, and flood management?</p>
7	<p>A description of the history of IRWM efforts in the region. Describe how the region boundary relates to the current water resources and historic water management issues in the region?</p> <p>A description of the regional water management issues, and conflicts in the region. Issues and conflicts may relate to water supply, water quality, flood management, environmental stewardship, imported water, waste water, conjunctive use, etc. Also describe efforts to develop multi-benefit integrated programs and projects that meet regional priorities.</p> <p>A description of the water related components of the region. The submittal must consider two different types of components, the physical components and the groups that manage or have input to those components. Physical components of a water system include natural and man made infrastructure. Some of the components we expect to see include are watersheds, surface water impoundments, ground water basins, water collection systems, distribution systems, wastewater systems, flood water systems, and recharge facilities. The submittal should explain how water arrives in the region, how it is used, and how it is handled after it is used.</p>	<p>Is it clear how the history of water management in the region affects the boundaries that exist in the region and how it shapes the water management issues facing the region today?</p> <p>How has water conflict been resolved in the region? Have there been established water management groups that collaborated to resolve these differences? Is the RWMG associated with these groups?</p> <p>Does the submittal provide a comprehensive understanding of the water resources available to the region and provide context to the region’s water management challenges today and into the future?</p> <p>Does it appear that multi-benefit, integrated, programs and projects will be developed to meet regional priorities?</p> <p>Are the extent and conditions of the water infrastructure in the region well understood? Is it clear where the critical components of the water system reside and the parties responsible to manage and maintain them historically? When were they put into service and are there capital improvement plans to repair or replace them in the near future?</p> <p>Does the described system omit any obvious water-related components such as watersheds, surface water impoundments, ground water basins, water collection systems, distribution systems wastewater systems, flood water systems, or recharge facilities?</p>

8	<p>A description of the IRWM region's relationship and coordination with adjacent existing or developing IRWM regions.</p> <p>Identify any overlapping areas and explain the basis for the overlap. Discuss whether there is a clear relationship and acknowledgement by both regions that the overlap is acceptable.</p> <p>Explain whether the regional boundary will leave any uncovered or void areas immediately outside or within the boundary.</p> <p>Describe any areas within the region that are excluded or create a void area and explain why this is reasonable and appropriate.</p> <p>Are there distinct water management differences between adjacent or overlapping IRWM regions and the proposed IRWM region to support being separate IRWM regions?</p>	<p>It is important to note that not only do the region boundaries need to make sense from hydrological, water system, and water issue perspectives; but we also need to consider a broader view of how all the IRWM boundaries fit together to achieve benefits statewide. Consider the shape of the IRWM; and how it relates to other regions nearby.</p> <p>Determine if the RWMG has successfully managed overlaps or gaps within and outside of the region boundary. If there are overlapping IRWM regions, is there a clearly defined relationship between the IRWM planning regions? Are there indications the overlapping regions have discussed their water management issues and coordinated on activities occurring in overlapping areas?</p> <p>Is there sound reasoning for having more than one RWMG planning water management issues for the same area? Are there distinct water management differences between adjacent or overlapping IRWM regions and the proposed IRWM region to support being separate IRWM regions?</p> <p>Does the submittal describe any areas within the region that are excluded or create a void area and explain why this is reasonable and appropriate? Has the boundary been drawn so that the region leaves uncovered or void areas within the region or immediately outside the boundary? Will the region boundary create a planning gap in the region? Are there overlaps, gaps, or holes in the region coverage that do not seem to make sense?</p>
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