



2020 DACTI Virtual Summit Ensuring Equitable Involvement in Regional Water Planning

October 8, 13 & 14, 2020

“Those in power must recognize water users that haven’t had a voice in decision-making, take the time to learn their challenges, and work to build solutions that include them and address their concerns.”

– Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency



2020 DACTI Virtual Summit: Ensuring Equitable Involvement in Regional Water Planning

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“The Summit provided an outstanding forum for community leaders and IRWM practitioners to share lessons learned by engaging both underrepresented communities and Tribal nations in integrated regional water management as well as discussing new strategies of engagement to apply across the state.”

– Rich Haller, General Manager,
Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

Background and Purpose

The virtual Summit, “**Ensuring Equitable Involvement in Regional Water Planning**,” was held over three half-day sessions (October 8, 13, and 14, 2020) for attendees to share strategies for engaging Tribes and marginalized communities in regional water management, as learned through local implementation of the **Proposition 1 Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Disadvantaged Communities and Tribal Involvement (DACTI)** program.

The Summit was sponsored by the **Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority** and facilitated by **Local Government Commission**, with support from the **California Department of Water Resources** and the **IRWM Roundtable of Regions**. Community leaders, water experts, Tribal representatives, and government staff shared lessons learned from 10+ years of engaging marginalized groups in regional water planning, and participants strategized

how to apply these approaches and best practices within their regions and across other statewide water planning efforts.

Each day addressed a new theme:

- * **Day 1** focused on setting the stage and reviewing lessons learned from 10+ years of the DACTI program;
- * **Day 2** then took a deep dive into regional strategies for engaging marginalized communities and Tribes; and
- * **Day 3** challenged presenters and participants to identify how IRWM efforts can inform other state water programs to collectively advance marginalized community and Tribal engagement. Each day included expert panels and interactive, small-group discussions to help participants coordinate and collaborate in real-time.

For all Summit recordings, PowerPoints, resources, and materials: lgc.org/summit
Speaker biographies can be found at lgc.org/summit-attendee-packet

Emerging Themes

Below are important concepts that emerged throughout the three days of the Summit in breakout-group sessions and panel discussions.

Our most entrenched water challenges have to do with people and relationships and cannot be solved solely through engineering and technology.

Co-equal to technical expertise is on-the-ground cultural, historic, and ancestral knowledge. Water issues are deeper than infrastructure – social inequity and racial injustice play a major role in water access and affordability. Historic systems of oppression must be confronted as we seek equitable water management. We must honor truth in history.

Overlooking the intrinsic connections between housing and water exacerbates inequities.

- * Renters lack decision-making power but often bear the burden of water rate increases, and face significant barriers

to accessing water quality information. Public agencies, water managers, elected officials, and communities all share concerns regarding how water users receive information and misinformation. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on communicating in culturally and linguistically sensitive ways.

- * California has many initiatives and funding mechanisms for developing green-space and water-infrastructure projects, but these projects often fail to adequately consider community displacement and impacts to unhoused community members. Safeguards like rent control and public access to sanitation services should be implemented to protect and support unsheltered or housing-insecure communities before green-infrastructure projects move forward.



“All of our restoration efforts begin with restoring the spirituality of Mother Earth. You don’t have to learn our songs, prayers, and ceremonies. What’s important is that you open your heart, and you take care of the four-legged, the winged, the finned, the water, and live your life in a way that is respecting Mother Earth. A lot of people in the environmental movement have good hearts and they want to do the good thing but they don’t know what they’re doing. They call stewardship acquiring land, putting a trail on it, and putting up a sign that says “be home by dark.” Where are those relationships? How are they taking care of the birds and the four-legged?”

– Chairman Valentin Lopez, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band



Public agencies pursuing “check-the-box engagement” rather than meaningful connections with marginalized communities and Tribes exacerbate feelings of mistrust.

Decision-makers must go beyond the “checklist” outreach requirements and ensure community education and relationship-building are incorporated into engagement efforts. While opportunities to participate may be abundant, community members and Tribes often feel unheard or misunderstood. The technical language of science and policy can feel prohibitive to those outside of the water world. Public agencies should empower community members and Tribal representatives by giving them a seat at the decision-making table and addressing systemic barriers to participation.

It is difficult but critical to “reverse the flow” of information by asking communities and Tribes about their needs prior to trying to meet those needs.

This year’s COVID-19 pandemic, the state’s historic wildfires, and the broader movement for racial justice underscore the multitude of challenges facing communities. Water planning efforts cannot move forward if communities lack the time or ability to respond. The natural tendency is to focus on our separate, individual needs in response to COVID-19. Greater initiative is needed to ensure efforts are connective and engaged. Now more than ever, decision-making requires creative partnerships and patience. Public agencies should work collaboratively to address immediate community needs, such as childcare, healthcare, food security, and broadband access, in order to build long-term community capacity.

“There’s no denying that we have to plan for long-term, but we also must understand that there are issues taking place on a daily basis at the local level that impede our participation and thoughtful opinions. Issues that over the years have evolved from individual trauma to community trauma. Making sure those issues are heard and acknowledged are key to building trust.”

– Miguel Angel Luna, Principal, DakeLuna Consultants

Collaborative convenings such as this Summit are critical for reflecting on our collective successes and challenges to help chart the course forward.

Decision-makers, communities, and Tribes need to engage in cross-regional dialogue to learn and share new approaches for addressing complex water challenges. Decision-makers should create space for reflection and listening, foregrounding Tribal and community voices.

It takes time to understand the community’s relationships, histories, and connections to a place.

A key part of relationship-building and a necessary component of building trust is first understanding and acknowledging local issues, including individual and community trauma, however uncomfortable.

Key Recommendations

The following recommendations were derived from a holistic review of the content presented and notes from participant discussions throughout the course of the Summit. These recommendations are directed toward local, regional, and state governments as top priorities to continue advancing underrepresented community and Tribal involvement in regional water planning.

In Fall 2020, DWR completed its multi-year evaluation of the DACTI program's impact. The Interim Needs Assessment identified five key findings, of which two were Summit attendees' top priorities of "improving interagency coordination" and "considering alternative criteria for the allocation of state and local funding."

Improving Interagency Coordination

1. Collaboration among state agencies is paramount. Tribes and communities are spread across multiple watersheds and are expected to engage with multiple regional, state, and federal agencies. Public agencies have the greatest impact when they coordinate efforts and assist communities, and Tribes identify potential funding and project support across state programs. It will be critical for IRWM to coordinate with the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program (SAFER), and the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio.

The Governor's Office and the legislature should prioritize efficiency through alignment by directing state agencies to coordinate across programs, and granting them the resources and authority necessary to do so. An interagency community and Tribal engagement unit, for example, could provide communities a central point of contact for project support across all agency programming.

Considering Alternative Criteria for Funding Allocation

2. The state should reassess how funding is allocated. Median household income (MHI) is limited in its ability to characterize under-resourced communities. The scale of income survey efforts



"What's needed to address our water challenges in this state...are human solutions... and those solutions require just as real an investment. Fundamentally the solutions start with creating a table that's truly inclusive and representative of all communities that are impacted by water management and water decision-making...As they say, if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. Our state will not get far if we're each going at it alone."

— *Laurel Firestone, Boardmember,
California State Water Resources Control Board*

such as the U.S. Census tend to mask smaller underserved communities and MHI is provided at the household level, regardless of the number of household members who are dependent on the income. Other considerations in determining where funding should be directed include environmental burdens, traditionally underfunded communities, geography (prioritizing headwaters and environmental uses), and the age or reliability of water infrastructure. Such considerations and new mapping tools that address these elements could better address the needs of all Californians.

The remaining six recommendations, while aligned with the DACTI Interim Needs Assessment, emerged organically from the Summit presentations and discussions.

3. Government agencies must be deliberate about dismantling systemic racism. The systems that are in place that suppress participation in decision-making processes need to be addressed across the public landscape.

Dismantling systemic racism will take internal and external reflection. Internal reflection, including cultural competency and equity training for staff and reassessing hiring practices, is important for bringing racial justice into government work, and creating a culture of equity and justice within the workforce. External reflection requires examining the impact of state and local government

decisions and the disparities created by these decisions. Public agencies should follow the Guidelines for Equitable Engagement in Coordinated Planning to ensure marginalized communities are centered in owning and shaping environmental solutions.

Decision-making bodies should include Tribal members and community representatives. There must be a shift from just “giving input” to communities shaping decisions; develop a structure in which communities have a clear role in decision-making.

4. The state legislature should amend rules governing how grant and bond money is spent so that agencies can compensate community members for public meeting attendance (e.g., stipends and transportation allowances) and use grant dollars to provide refreshments, translation, childcare, and other supplies that support engagement. Unlike public agencies and consultants who get paid to attend meetings, community residents and Tribes do not get compensated for their time. Many volunteer their time, but have the burden of expense.

State agencies should streamline invoicing and payment processes to decrease the turnaround time for reimbursement. Delays in payments impact smaller local organizations the hardest, who lack the financial resources to maintain operations without reimbursement. Funding should also be prioritized for hiring community-based and Tribal-led organizations to lead engagement instead of outside consultants.

“In these unprecedented times, some things have not changed. People of color are a group that are highly impacted by COVID-19 and water contamination. We need to acknowledge that we need to change our systems, not just our water systems, but our systems of racism and oppression.”

***– Martha Camacho-Rodriguez,
Director, Central Basin Water District and
Grassroot Organizer, Social Eco Education***





Rosalyn Prickett Woodward-Currant

“The consultation policies say nothing about recognizing our truth and our history and the impact of that history on our culture, our people, and our spirituality...if the State can talk to us in a sincere way and work with us to protect our sacred sites and our cultural sites, that’s what we need and that’s what we’d like to have.”

– *Chairman Valentin Lopez,
Amah Mutsun Tribal Band*

5. Governments must recognize the sovereign status of federally and non-federally recognized Tribes that require unique engagement and support. Government staff should complete cultural-competency training prior to engaging with Tribes. Tribal land acknowledgements are important, but agencies must go beyond this and understand their role in protecting sacred and cultural resources. Governments should explore how traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) can be prioritized in natural resource management, and honor Tribal songs and language and indigenous approaches to relationship-building and consensus.

6. Public agencies should partner with and fund community and Tribal-led organizations to ensure that public meetings are accessible and inclusive. Local and Tribal groups should be compensated for their time in supporting outreach and engagement. Governments must provide multiple avenues for communities to engage in public meetings and identify how public input will be incorporated into the planning process. Due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, many agencies are now transitioning to virtual or small-scale engagement. Staff should work with local and Tribal leaders to address any known barriers to engagement.

7. Governments must dedicate recurring public funding for engagement in watershed planning, and partner with philanthropy to create more stable funding for this work. Relying on short-term funding – such as state bonds – for underrepresented community engagement is an untenable long-term solution that jeopardizes decades of planning meant to connect people, build trust, and fund needed projects.

8. Governments must address both the immediate need of unhoused communities who lack access to sanitation, and the long-term need to better identify, document, and integrate unsheltered communities in watershed planning. Current funding for state water programs does not adequately address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Governments should prioritize flexible short-term funding to pilot unconventional strategies that address the needs of unhoused communities. Small-scale and pilot efforts with potential scalability can yield multiple benefits for watershed health. Pilot grants should maintain simplicity in measurements of success.

“By not acknowledging the cultural and intellectual assets that exist in these communities, we miss out on opportunities for critical partnerships, particularly at a time when so many of us in the public sector may be dealing with budget cuts as a result of COVID-19...Partnerships during this time are so critical, not only with communities but also with each other, across governments.”

– *Yana Garica, Deputy Secretary for Environmental Justice, Tribal Affairs and Border Relations, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)*

Opportunities to Get Involved

- * Participate in the IRWM Roundtable of Regions and the IRWM Disadvantaged Community and Tribal Involvement Workgroup. Email Jodie Monaghan at jodie@jmconsultants.net
- * Attend one of the quarterly webinars in the “Collaborating between IRWM and SGMA” series, hosted by Local Government Commission, the IRWM Roundtable of Regions, Maven’s Notebook, and DWR.
- * Fall 2020: Successful collaboration between IRWM and SGMA.
- * Future webinar announcements coming soon!
- * Sign up to receive LGC updates.
- * Sign up to receive IRWM Roundtable of Region updates.
- * Sign up to receive Maven’s Notebook updates.
- * Take DWR’s Tribal cultural-competency training for public agencies upon request. Email DWR’s Tribal Policy Advisor, Anecita Agustinez, for more information at anecita.agustinez@water.ca.gov

Resources

Resources for Tribal engagement:

- * Native American Heritage Commission
- * Digital Atlas
- * Factsheet: How Tribes Can Engage in IRWM
- * Map: IRWM Regions and California Tribal Lands
- * IRWM-Funded Tribal Projects
- * Tribal Mapping Tool
- * Examples of IRWM-Funded Tribal Projects (Prop 84)
- * Guidance Document for Sustainable Management of Groundwater Engagement with Tribal Governments
- * Tribal Collaboration in IRWM: Challenges, Solutions and Recommendations
- * Previous Tribal Water Summits and May 2020 Tribal Water Proceedings
- * US Forest Service - Tribal Relations

State resources on equitable water management:

- * Governor’s Executive Order N-82-20
- * Governor’s Water Resilience Portfolio
- * Stakeholder Perspectives: Recommendations for Sustaining and Strengthening Integrated Regional Water Management
- * Report: Equitable Integration of Water and Land Use
- * Guidelines for Equitable Engagement in Coordinated Planning
- * Educational Video: Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program
- * Educational Video: IRWM: Addressing Regional Water Challenges

State agency resources on racial equity:

- * California Air Resources Board (CARB) Racial Equity Resolution
- * California Strategic Growth Council’s Racial Equity Resolution
- * California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Race and Equity Action Plan
- * GARE - Government Alliance on Race and Equity Curriculum



Advisory Committee and Staff

Many thanks to the Summit Advisory Committee and Summit Staff for your time and dedication to making this event a success!

Summit Advisory Committee

- * Anne Bremer, The Watershed Project
- * Emily Ontiveros, CivicSpark / Department of Water Resources
- * Holly Alpert, California Rural Water Association
- * Jackie McCloud, City of Watsonville
- * Jodie Monaghan, IRWM Roundtable of Regions
- * Mark Stadler, IRWM Roundtable of Regions
- * Martha Camacho Rodriguez, Social Eco Education-Los Angeles
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Photos have been provided by the Department of Water Resources and the IRWM Funding Area Programs.





Day 1 Proceedings

Ensuring Equitable Involvement
in Regional Water Planning

— Setting the Stage —

October 8, 2020

Session 1.

Summit Welcome

Anecita Agustinez, Department of Water Resources
 Rich Haller, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
 Wade Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Agency

[> Session Recording](#)



Ms. Agustinez, the Summit Emcee, welcomed attendees and took a moment to recognize California's first inhabitants and honor the unceded lands of the state's Tribal nations. Before reviewing the day's agenda, Ms. Agustinez also offered continued blessings to communities and first responders devastated by California's historic wildfires.

Ms. Agustinez underscored the Summit's intended purpose — to examine the complexity of the dynamics watershed planning and highlight how we can ensure equity, engagement and involvement in integrated regional water management.

Ms. Agustinez finished by introducing Mr. Haller to the virtual stage as a representative of the Summit's Sponsor, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority.

Mr. Haller explained that the Summit will reflect upon different experiences across the state and discuss where the Disadvantaged Communities and Tribal Involvement (DACTI) program has worked well, and where things can be improved. Mr. Haller also thanked the California Department of Water Resources for their leadership and vision in coordinating the event.

Next, Secretary Crowfoot took the stage and acknowledged the many challenges facing integrated regional watershed management, including COVID-19, historic wildfires, record setting temperatures, drought, impending floods, and the impacts of climate change. It is critical, he noted, for the state to collaborate with local governments and water agencies in order to combat these interconnected challenges.

Secretary Crowfoot highlighted how the Summit addresses two key priorities of Governor Newsom's Administration — climate and

water resilience and equity and inclusion. He discussed Governor Newsom's 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio, which emphasizes a regional approach to ensuring water reliability for all communities and restoring and maintaining California's natural environment. He stressed the state's support for regional leadership and regional planning and noted that the nearly 20 years of the Integrated Regional Water Management Program has led to more than 1,300 multi-benefit regional watershed projects.

He commended IRWM as a "coalition of the willing," acknowledging that although IRWM is not legally required, regional-scale collaboration is critical to California's future. Secretary Crowfoot also highlighted the Governor's new Executive Order N-82-20, which enlists the state's conservation agencies to take enhanced steps to combat climate change through nature-based solutions.

Secretary Crowfoot also addressed the inherent inequalities in our water systems, acknowledging that communities continue to live with unreliable or toxic water supply. He emphasized the goal of building a "California for All" by encouraging state and local governments to collaborate in building more inclusive systems on all fronts, including water management.

He acknowledged that, "those in power must recognize water users that haven't had a voice in decision-making, take the time to learn their challenges, and work to build solutions that include them and address their concerns." Moving beyond the drive for "shovel ready" projects, this work must instead "move at the speed of trust," and allow time for government agencies to build relationships with historically marginalized communities to build water reliability for all Californians.

Session 2.

Opening Plenary



Laurel Firestone, State Water Resources Control Board

[> Session Recording](#)

Ms. Firestone began by stating the purpose of the Summit – to renew our commitment to equitable involvement in regional water planning and create a true California for All. She stated that this requires deliberate work at every level of government, as well as in NGOs and nonprofits. Water is essential to human health and wellbeing as well as to climate and environmental sustainability, making it an important aspect of a California for All.

Ms. Firestone went on to explain the role of the state in establishing equitable access to water. As a former attorney in an underserved community supporting access to high-quality, affordable water, she learned that there is little oversight in some small disadvantaged communities and minimal enforcement of water quality standards. This is a common issue in small communities which lack adequate resources to upkeep maintenance and efficient operation. Additionally, Ms. Firestone emphasized that these inequalities have the greatest impact on communities that are already vulnerable due to low income or rural location.

Ms. Firestone explained that the most important step to addressing these inequalities is to allow individuals from all regions to have a voice in their water management, especially those from vulnerable communities, Tribal lands, and underrepresented areas. Finally, she highlighted the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Program, which recognizes the human right to safe, clean, and affordable drinking water and strives towards principles of equitable involvement. However, to fully realize its goals of collaborative water governance, SAFER requires greater investment in the Office of Public Participation and establishing a diverse and inclusive SAFER Advisory Committee.

Q&A SESSION

Following the presentation, Ms. Agustinez entered into a brief question-and-answer session with Ms. Firestone. The topics covered included:

- * Collaborative convenings continue to improve over time. Communities have been responsible for convenings since 2005. Over the years, communities reflect on what worked, what didn't, and how to continue. This Summit serves as a way to create a plan of action for communities to move forward.
- * Tribal involvement has increased since the implementation of Proposition 84. Proposition 1 was the first time Tribal governments were considered eligible grantees at the state level. Since its implementation in 2014 and the adoption of the DACTI program, community convenings have made a marked effort to highlight Tribal voices.
- * History of Tribal Water Summits (following 2005 Water Plan Update).
- * Collaboration between state agencies is paramount. The local, regional, and state levels of governance are severely fragmented. In order to establish community-led decision making, government agencies at every level must communicate effectively to support integrated regional planning.
- * Government agencies must be deliberate about dismantling systemic racism. Government agencies ignoring the presence of systemic racism exacerbates racial injustice. Impact is more important than intent, and agencies must listen to feedback from communities to reach true equity in resource management.



Session 3.

Panel. Lessons Learned from 10+ Years of IRWM Engagement

Moderator: Mike Antos, Stantec
 Jennifer Hazard, Rural Community Assistance Corporation
 Holly Alpert, Inyo-Mono IRWM Program
 Javier Silva, California Indian Environmental Alliance

[> Session Recording](#)



This panel consisted of long-term IRWM experts discussing their experiences with Disadvantaged Communities and Tribal Involvement (DACTI). Panelists discussed the following topics:

Early challenges. Prior to and in the early stages of IRWM, connecting with Tribes was difficult due to their history of being taken advantage of by previous water management agencies for their access to resources. Smaller organizations also faced challenges receiving state funding early in the IRWM program.

IRWM has improved collaboration and inclusion across the regions. After initial hesitation, Tribes have felt included through IRWM projects because they are now consulted on many projects that impact their land.

The basis of IRWM is collaboration. Initially, some Regional Water Management Groups (RWMGs) did not discuss water but rather focused on creating an environment of collaboration and discussed how to create an inclusive space to work on future projects.

Moving from needs assessment to implementation. IRWM has helped translate identified needs to technical assistance programs in many regions across the state.

Reciprocity is key. Participants in RWMGs have an understanding that the needs of vulnerable communities with low water quality and accessibility take priority. Once collaborative regional relationships are established, parties feel more comfortable.

Challenges remain. Inconsistent funding from the state is still a hurdle for completion of needed projects and for the continuation of IRWM programs. Tribal and rural participation still have room for improvement.

How Far We've Come and Yet We're Far from Done.

This Summit byline is especially applicable to Tribal inclusion. Although Proposition 1 made substantial progress in including DAC and Tribal voices in regional water planning, there is still room for progress. Bringing back Tribal voices, songs, language, and sustainability practices to the land is of vital importance to true inclusion.

Session 4.

Panel. The Future of IRWM in a Changing Climate

Moderator: Mark Stadler, San Diego County Water Agency
 Martha Camacho-Rodriguez, Social Eco Education - Los Angeles
 Carmel Brown and Anecita Agustinez, Department of Water Resources
 Lynn Rodriguez, IRWM Roundtable of Regions

> [Session Recording](#)

> [Slide Presentation](#)

This panel featured a South LA leader sharing her perspective on the future of marginalized community involvement in water management. Department of Water Resources staff built on these remarks and shared findings from the IRWM DACTI Needs Assessment. Finally, the Co-Chair of the IRWM Roundtable of Regions shared her vision for the future of IRWM.



the bond money is gone. Through the DACTI Needs Assessment, DWR has identified five key areas that need support in order to fulfill their goal of increasing trust and capacity in each of the 48 IRWM regions. These are the main areas in need of support in the Grant Program:

* Martha Camacho-Rodriguez, South LA Leader

Ms. Camacho-Rodriguez opened the panel discussion by explaining the psychology of water and how it affects every aspect of life. She stated that California has nearly one million residents without access to clean drinking water, a staggering number for the fifth-largest economy in the world. She further explained that these disparities disproportionately affect people of color and other vulnerable communities across the state. She urged participants to continue to push for further resources to be dedicated to the most needy communities.



1. Better coordination between State water programs and initiatives, such as IRWM and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

2. Greater support for the established foundations within IRWM. Some regions are doing better than others. For example, the North Coast has a high amount of Tribal involvement, while this work is just beginning in the Central Coast and San Francisco.

3. Consideration of how the inconsistency of funding affects progress. We need to look past voter-approved funds and turn towards foundation funding, federal funding, and disaster-relief funding.

4. Enhancing State support of underrepresented communities and Tribes. In order to work with these communities effectively, the State needs classes on cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

5. Consideration of alternative criteria for the allocation of State and local funding. Median Household Income (MHI) is not an adequate measure of need on which to base funding. The program should also consider factors such as geography, population size, beneficiaries, and prioritizing funding for previously unfunded areas.

* Carmel Brown, DWR Representative

Ms. Brown introduced herself as a representative from the Department of Water Resources, the agency responsible for implementing the Proposition 1 IRWM program. She explained that Proposition 1 was the first time a voter-approved bond allocated money to human solutions in addition to shovel ready projects. She pointed out, however, that the work of IRWM still needs to continue after



* Anecita Agustinez, DWR Representative

Next, Ms. Agustinez took the stage to discuss the importance of considering cultural values when addressing climate change. She explained that agencies must consider food sovereignty, water sovereignty, and the human right to water when addressing climate issues across cultural divides, specifically with Tribes. Communities of interest need autonomy in their decisions about climate and resource issues, which requires elevating the community voice, providing adequate funding, and ensuring that the agency mission statements are reflective of the community's desires.



* Lynn Rodriguez, IRWM Roundtable of Regions Representative

Finally, Ms. Rodriguez took the stage to discuss the future of IRWM. She said that IRWM is more than a grant program, it is an established and voluntary structure of local stakeholders working collaboratively to solve regional water management issues and achieve water and climate resilience. The IRWM vision is trust, engagement, relationship-building, and collaboration. She explained that IRWM has 48 regions which have collectively worked on groundwater-sustainability efforts, watershed health, and restoring critical habitat areas since the creation of the program.



Ms. Rodriguez then explained the origins of the Roundtable of Regions, which was formed in 2006. It hosts representatives from nearly all 48 regions to work together with one another and the state to address watershed challenges. The Roundtable of Regions has developed many new initiatives, including networking, advocacy, baseline funding, and forums for information sharing.

Finally, she addressed the next steps for IRWM. The program faces a lack of funding as its primary barrier and does not want to lose their progress due to this issue. They are focusing on engaging even more underserved communities and continuing to build opportunities for equality.

Q&A SESSION

The panel proceeded to host a Q&A that addressed the following topics:

- * **The Roundtable of Regions is a tool for collaboration.** Joining the Roundtable creates a forum of ideas and information from various regions and creates a collective voice for advocacy. This is especially useful during the isolation of COVID-19.
- * **Cultural Competency Training is available outside of DWR.** DWR's Cultural Competency Training, put together by Anecita Agustinez, is available to other organizations by contacting her. The training is about six hours long and focuses on integrating with local and Tribal communities.
- * **IRWM will eventually address Tribal Land Acknowledgment.** As the UC system, state libraries, and other entities are now being legislated to acknowledge Tribal land, the same steps will soon need to be taken by IRWM. Acknowledgment is only the beginning, however, and must be accompanied by reparations and community engagement.
- * **The legislature and government agencies consider alternatives to the term "Disadvantaged Community" (DAC).** Panelists and participants discussed other more precise terms to use instead – underrepresented, overburdened, structurally disenfranchised – depending on the situation. Definitions must be vetted by community and Tribal leaders prior to adoption. For more information, see "Defining Vulnerable Communities in the Context of Climate Adaptation" (Governor's Office of Planning and Research).



Session 5.

Panel. Small-Group Strategizing

This session consisted of 21 breakout sessions that each discussed the DWR's Statewide Needs Assessment findings and strategized about how to address gaps in serving underrepresented communities and Tribes.

TOP PRIORITIES

Of the five key findings, the top priorities were improving inter-agency coordination and considering alternative criteria for the allocation of state and local funding.

1. Interagency Coordination

State water agencies and their respective programs have varying scopes of impact and resources which often overlap. Projects in differing agencies may have conflicting requirements or may both be addressing the same issues. With the vast amount of available resources in the state, agencies have the biggest impact when they coordinate their efforts and communicate effectively.

Challenges

- * Some programs such as SGMA and IRWM have very different structures, making it difficult to coordinate.

Successes

- * When agencies have collaborated effectively they have produced very successful programs including LAs Safe Clean Water Program.
- * DWR and SWRCB had to collaborate to find success when wells dried up in Porterville.

2. Criteria for Funding

Most programs base funding primarily on population and Median Household Income (MHI); however, there are many communities in need across the state that do not qualify for funding under these standards.

Challenges

- * Underprivileged urban areas may not qualify for funding based on population. Representatives of these areas suggest that population density would be a worthy additional consideration.
- * Some areas may not meet the MHI requirements to receive funding for projects even though they have old or unreliable water infrastructure.
- * MHI data are often not available for small, rural communities in between decennial census counts.

Successes

- * Establishing funding for underprivileged communities, especially through IRWM, has made substantial positive change in communities across the state although there are more changes needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * **Increase Agency Collaboration:** DWR and SAFER should increase collaboration and communication to reduce duplicating work between both programs.
- * **Amend Funding Guidelines:** The state legislature should amend rules governing how grant and bond money is spent so that agencies can compensate community members for community meeting attendance and provide refreshments.
- * **Engage Large Foundations:** Encourage foundations to create a stable fund for smaller NGOs to access for community water projects, creating a more steady form of funding for long-term projects.



Day 2 Proceedings

Ensuring Equitable Involvement
in Regional Water Planning
— Strategies for Marginalized —
Communities and Tribes

October 13, 2020



Session 1.

Understanding Localized Needs



Anecita Agustinez, Department of Water Resources
Yana Garcia, California Environmental Protection Agency

[> Session Recording](#)

This session began with Ms. Agustinez welcoming participants to Day 2 of the Summit and encouraging them to share the traditional Tribal land they were joining in from. She then shared that Day 2 of the Summit would focus on diving deeper into regional strategies and how to implement those strategies across regions, emphasizing practical ways to move from the needs assessment to project implementation.

Next, Ms. Garcia from CalEPA took the stage to discuss how to better understand localized needs. Ms. Garcia has a background in environmental justice advocacy and working with Tribes across the state, which allowed her to appreciate how deeply diverse California is. She emphasized that factors such as zip code, race, and income should not impact an individual's access to clean air and water, but unfortunately they do. In order to help these communities effectively, we must have an accurate grasp of their localized environmental needs.

As a current representative for CalEPA, Ms. Garcia described the CalEnviroScreen tool, which takes a cumulative impact approach

to determine the geography of communities suffering from the heaviest environmental burdens in the state. Typically this tool has been used to determine overall scores of environmental pollution in a community, but she explained that the tool itself holds a vast amount of helpful individual datasets that can help clarify localized needs in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes areas that may not be severely environmentally polluted overall, but may have higher rates of air pollution, a lack of safe drinking water, etc.

Ms. Garcia emphasized that this information is critical to informing both local and State governments about who needs the most assistance during these unstable times, and that cross-government collaboration is key to providing support to communities in need.

RESOURCES

GARE - The Government Alliance on Race and Equity

CalEPA CalEnviroScreen



Session 2.

Concurrent Sessions. From Outreach to Implementation



Valerie Olson, Department of Anthropology,
University of California, Irvine

> [Session Recording](#)

> [Slide Presentation](#)

This session began with a presentation from Ms. Olson before breaking into concurrent sessions.

Ms. Olson presented the Santa Ana Watershed Community Ethnography report, conducted through UC Irvine and funded by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA), which aimed to address the policy problem of how to improve water systems and infrastructures through community engagement in “disadvantaged” communities.

Notably, this report was designed to be a “strengths and needs assessment,” paying attention to each community’s strengths and efforts in addition to their areas of need. In order to accomplish this, the study was completed as a civic ethnography which observed the water-related stories and attitudes of a wide array of

people from the communities of interest, including elected officials, water providers, tribal groups, and local community groups.

Ms. Olson continued to explain how the methodology of the study promoted community engagement. The study posed open-ended questions about these individuals’ “water stories” and “community strengths” rather than providing a simple survey. In doing this, the study aimed to reverse the typical flow of information between experts and communities wherein the experts dictate how the community should shift its practices.

By allowing the community members to become more engaged and responsive in the study, the research team expanded participatory collaboration networks and revealed important information about local attitudes towards water.

Session 2A.

Models of Outreach and Engagement

Keta Price, The Hood Planner

Robin Freeman, Institute for Sustainable Policy Studies

Jonathan Pilch, Watsonville Wetlands Watch

Azucena Lopez, Watsonville Wetlands Watch

Sonia Sanchez, Self-Help Enterprises

> [Session Recording](#)

These presentations from speakers across multiple regions explore their approaches to identifying and understanding the needs of marginalized communities and Tribes.



PRESENTATION 1

> [Slide Presentation](#)

Mr. Freeman stood in for Ms. Price in this presentation where he discussed the models of engagement he has found success with in the East Oakland community. The project example he used in his presentation was the San Leandro Greenway, which stretches from East Oakland – the most disadvantaged community on CalEnviroScreen – to the bay near the Martin Luther King, Jr. shoreline. The Greenway is a Proposition 1 project focused on the human right to water. The project's approach to community engagement focuses on hiring people from the project neighborhood and intentionally trying not to compete with local under-resourced agencies, but rather trying to work with them.

Mr. Freeman explained that this Greenway project has successfully framed these communities, including East Oakland, not as disadvantaged but rather as underrepresented and underestimated. By hiring and working with people from the community itself, the project is able to shorten the distance between project execution and project benefit, building great community engagement in the process. This approach also gives residents ownership of the development occurring in their neighborhood, allowing them to benefit from projects rather than being gentrified out of their homespace.

Participant questions centered around the length and nature of the San Leandro Greenway project. Mr. Freeman specified that the project has been in progress since 2006 and had to avoid partnering with the city itself.

PRESENTATION 2

> [Slide Presentation](#)

Mr. Pilch introduced himself as the Director of Watsonville Wetlands Watch, a program that restores wetlands and promotes community environmental restoration around the city of Watsonville. This area lies near Monterey County and includes 800 acres of coastal wetlands in the Struve Slough Watershed. However, Mr. Pilch explained that this watershed has been severely impacted by agricultural runoff and urban development, with nearly 70% of Watsonville storm drains leading to this important wetland area. He further explained that the city of Watsonville itself is a state-recognized DAC and over 80% of residents are English-language learners.

Mr. Pilch then introduced the Middle Struve Slough Water Quality and Habitat Enhancement Project, a joint project between the City of Watsonville, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, and the Regional Water Management Foundation and funded by DWR's DACIP.



Mr. Pilch then introduced the Middle Struve Slough Water Quality and Habitat Enhancement Project, a joint project between the City of Watsonville, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, and the Regional Water Management Foundation and funded by DWR's DACIP. This project aims to improve wetland water quality in the area and secure public engagement in wetland-management projects. So far, they have found the most success for public engagement in holding creative events that encourage community participation in cleaning the wetlands, rather than simply holding public meetings. They have also seen success through their Green Careers Institute program, which encouraged extensive community engagement with youth interested in pursuing careers in environmental science.

Next we heard from Ms. Lopez, a student involved in the Green Careers Institute. She explained that the program exposed her to many professions in the environmental field, took her on field trips to learn about climate change and the need for environmental activism, and gave her valuable work experience. She emphasized the importance of the Green Institute as a networking tool for

young students interested in environmental careers in the disadvantaged Watsonville community. The Green Career Institute has hosted 120 interns thus far. Both Mr. Pilch and Ms. Lopez expressed encouragement for other communities to invest in programs similar to the Green Career Institute.

Participants asked how communities can start a program similar to this. Ms. Lopez shared that programs with a similar model can help students learn the importance of the environment and increase education engagement. Mr. Pilch emphasized the importance of building relationships with students in order to see success in a program like this.

PRESENTATION 3

> Slide Presentation

Ms. Sanchez is the Senior Community Development Specialist at Self-Help Enterprises (SHE), a community development organization serving the San Joaquin Valley. Ms. Sanchez leads SHE's IRWM DAC Involvement Program for the Tulare-Kern Funding Area. She explained that she and her team recently created a Tribal outreach and engagement plan to promote involvement and education for the IRWM program in her area. This plan included developing outreach methods for Tribes and identifying areas that could benefit from IRWM funding.

Entities involved in creating this plan were IRWM representatives, the Department of Water Resources, and Tribal Liaisons. The group convened virtually over the summer and discussed effective methods to provide outreach to Tribes and possible capacity issues for the program.

Ms. Sanchez disclosed that one of the current barriers to their engagement program is the COVID-19 pandemic because Tribes have postponed Tribal meetings, many organizations are understaffed, and the numerous fires in the Sierras pose a threat to many of their target communities. As a result, they have currently paused their outreach efforts. However, the stakeholder team of the outreach program has committed the meantime to understanding tribal needs, developing IRWM workshops and informational materials for community leaders, and compiling lists of communities and Tribes in need to reach out to in the future.

Session 2B.

Moving from Needs Assessment to Implementation



Katherine Gledhill, West Coast Watershed
Joanna Lessard, Yuba Water Agency
Lance Eckhart, San Geronio Pass Water Agency

[> Session Recording](#)

PRESENTATION 1

[> Slide Presentation](#)

Ms. Gledhill is from the West Coast Watershed and presented on the North Coast Resource Partnership's efforts to engage tribal leaders in IRWM planning in the North Coast region. She explained that the North Coast region encompasses 12% of California's landscape but holds only 2% of its population, including seven counties and 34 federally recognized tribes.

Ninety percent of the North Coast region population is economically disadvantaged. The West Coast Watershed program convened in 2005 to meet the needs of this economically vulnerable area. It includes a coalition of tribes, seven counties, and other diverse stakeholders dedicated to establishing regional equity, watershed health, and planning effective IRWM projects.

Ms. Gledhill explained that since 2005, the North Coast Resource Partnership has implemented 108 watershed projects. In order to ensure their projects are effective, the program conducted a Needs Assessment survey in 2014 and 2019 for non-tribal DACs in the watershed. They found that 5% of water systems in the region were in poor condition and that many systems faced financial instability.

Ms. Gledhill explained that the next step was to create specific project plans in response to the needs assessment, which included distribution system improvement, lead-detection protocols, storage tank upgrades, among others. Seven out of nine of the projects planned in response to the needs assessment were selected for IRWM funding through Proposition 1. The program also created

a Small Community Toolbox that provides resources for small communities to care for their water systems in a systematic, effective fashion.

Ms. Gledhill further explained that the North Coast Resource Partnership conducted a second Tribal Needs Assessment survey, which focused on tribal engagement and creating a unique DACTI work plan. The survey revealed key concerns of aging treatment systems, fire suppression, and financial stability for tribal water systems. The program is currently working on implementing useful programs in response to the tribal needs assessment much like they did for the non-tribal DACs.

Participants asked whether the needs assessment uncovered any local strengths in addition to needs, and whether they were recorded in the final survey results. Ms. Gledhill explained that the main strength in these smaller systems is resilience, and that with the right tools they can likely improve quickly.

PRESENTATION 2

[> Slide Presentation](#)

Dr. Lessard is the Project Manager for the Sacramento River Funding Area (SRFA) DAC Involvement Program. This program began in 2017 with the objectives of coordinating DAC and Tribal outreach, identifying a full array of water needs, and providing technical support and training to address critical needs in project development. Over the past several years, this team has had two main successful projects that have evolved from needs assessment to implementation.



Dr. Lessard explained that the first of these projects was a needs assessment across the SRFA. This assessment identified limited financial resources, consolidation difficulties, and staff retention in water systems as areas of critical need across the region. Small water systems were struggling, and many rural systems had major barriers to consolidation.

In response to these needs, Dr. Lessard explained that the SFRA DACIP team established the Pilot O&M Regionalization Program this year, also known as Small Utility Regional Group Exchange (SURGE). This program provides regionalized technical services to encourage relationships and cooperation between water systems when infrastructure consolidation is not possible. Some of this program's main accomplishments have been sharing technical staff, contractors, and bulk purchasing orders between small water systems in order to cut costs and build cooperation.

The second successful program that Dr. Lessard shared was the SRFA's Community-Based Needs Assessment, which looked closely at communities rather than at systems. This assessment revealed that rental populations tend to know less about their water providers and that Spanish-speaking communities are more likely to not trust their tap water, leading them to spend money on bottled water.

In response to this assessment, the DACIP program joined with Olivehurst Public Utility District in Yuba County to establish an

education program for children to understand water access and quality. This curriculum was included in fourth-grade classes and included field trips to rivers and community water events. Dr. Lessard's program also created the Tu Agua Outreach Pilot Program, promoting water awareness in Spanish-speaking communities.

Participants wondered if it is typical for implementation leaders on a project to be community partners rather than representatives from established water agencies. Dr. Lessard explained that having NGO associates lead implementation allows for more flexibility in communities.

PRESENTATION 3

Mr. Eckhart, current General Manager of the San Geronio Pass Water Agency and a former Director of Planning at the Mojave Water Agency, discussed how the Mojave Water Agency successfully progressed from needs assessment to implementation in assisting their numerous small water systems in securing funding and development resources throughout the 2010s.

Mr. Eckhart explained that the Mojave Water Agency aimed to distribute grant funding beyond the typical recipients and include smaller water systems in need of maintenance. They partnered with the nonprofit California Rural Water Association, which assisted with rapid needs assessment to determine the weak points of over 40 small water systems in the region.

In order to move from needs assessment to project implementation, the Water Agency created a subcommittee of all small local water systems practitioners, general managers and operators and tasked them with creating plans to improve maintenance and collaboration. Mr. Eckhart emphasized that this committee operated on broad agreement rather than consensus, allowing the process to move quickly and see success.

Participants also asked Mr. Eckhart whether his program's needs assessment revealed any community strengths. Mr. Eckhart explained that they did not record strengths found, but through the program they realized the strength of working regionally, which empowered small communities.

Session 2C.

Post-Implementation and Reassessing in a Time of Crisis



Dore A. Bietz, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians

Stephen Ceasar, Tree People

Cindy Donis, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice

AnMarie R. Mendoza, Sacred Places Institute

for Indigenous Peoples

Taylor Chang, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

James Muller, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

and the Association of Bay Area Governments

Roxana Franco, Nuestra Casa

Julio Garcia, Nuestra Casa

[> Session Recording](#)

PRESENTATION 1

[> Slide Presentation](#)

Ms. Bietz of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians discussed how the crises of modern times, from COVID-19 to wildfires and other man-made natural disasters, have had a substantial impact on tribal communities across the state. She explained that Tribal communities are especially vulnerable to the earth and ecosystems due to their reliance on natural materials to carry out their cultural traditions. Additionally, she explained that tribes already facing economic difficulties have been even further impacted by the shutdowns of COVID-19, and many Tribes have very limited access to internet and technology, causing major setbacks to their projects for sustainability.

Overall, Ms. Bietz emphasized the importance of stakeholders learning about the history of Tribal communities as well as their unique barriers to success, as many times these factors are overlooked or misunderstood by state agencies and other non-tribal entities. It is essential that Tribal voices are continually sought out in IRWM planning in order to continue successful program implementation in this time of crisis.

PRESENTATION 2

[> Slide Presentation](#)

First, Mr. Caesar introduced himself as the Senior Manager of Community Organizing at Tree People, a consultant group working with the Los Angeles/Ventura Funding Area of the DACIP program. He explained that the Los Angeles region has 107 DACs, and reaching these communities, in addition to Tribal communities, has been an acute challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. While his organization typically sought community water engagement through social gatherings and activities, they have since transitioned their focus to addressing pressing needs such as food and housing insecurity during the pandemic and remaining open to helping their communities with needs outside of water as well.

Next, we heard from Ms. Donis and Ms. Mendoza, who discussed how tribal communities are often overlooked by state water agencies and projects. Ms. Mendoza pointed out that there have been no tribal voices invited to get involved with SAWPA and several other state-funded programs. Ms. Donis emphasized the success of some programs in and around her tribal community in the Los Angeles area such as the H2Ours program launched by



East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, which provided tools for citizens to inspect and assess their own water. She also pointed out, however, that it is crucial to acknowledge and uplift indigenous voices in water projects and even more frequently when re-assessing past projects.

PRESENTATION 3

> Slide Presentation

The third presentation began with Mr. Muller from the Bay Area IRWM Program. He gave an overview of the nine-county watershed in the Bay Area and its opportunities for funding from Proposition 1. Mr. Muller highlighted the area's plans to use funding for a needs assessment and project planning, as well as the importance of building capacity within the IRWM organization for increased project capacity. Mr. Muller advised that a key part of project assessment in a time of crisis is listening to community needs directly.

Next, Mr. Garcia and Ms. Franco of Nuestra Casa highlighted their experiences in regional water management in East Palo Alto, an area of Silicon Valley that is highly concentrated in service workers and people of color. In their short presentation, they emphasized



that COVID-19 and current demand for racial justice in America has not changed conditions in their community, it has only highlighted the struggles and injustices that already exist. They reinforced the importance of considering these marginalized communities when planning and assessing water projects.

Finally, Ms. Chang from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission highlighted how her organization has taken steps to integrate DAC and Tribal voices into regional water planning efforts. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that DACs and indigenous communities are represented in coordinating committees and project planning. She further emphasized that when prioritizing and assessing projects, it is vital to add new voices to ensure equity.

Participant questions focused on how all of these programs will continue after Prop 1 funding is spent out. Mr. Muller highlighted the importance of teaching the community how to continue participation on their own while seeking out new sources of funding in the meantime. Participants also asked if electing tribal members to office is part of these program's goals. Mr. Muller acknowledged the need to have representatives from currently underrepresented groups.

Session 3.

Breakout Groups. Addressing Needs in Your Region: Applying the Strategies and Tools

This session consisted of 12 regional breakout groups discussing how the strategies, tools, and resources shared in the previous sessions can be applied to each area in California. The key findings in these breakout groups were as follows.

Summary of challenges engaging underrepresented areas in local water planning

- * The lack of compensation for community members to attend meetings is a major barrier to engaging DACs in local water planning.
- * Holding meetings during working hours makes it difficult for working community members to attend.
- * It is imperative to meet communities where they are at (physically and technologically) when seeking engagement in water planning, especially DACs. When communities lack resources to begin with, asking them to put in effort to contribute to water project discussions is not productive.

Summary of challenges engaging Tribes in local water planning

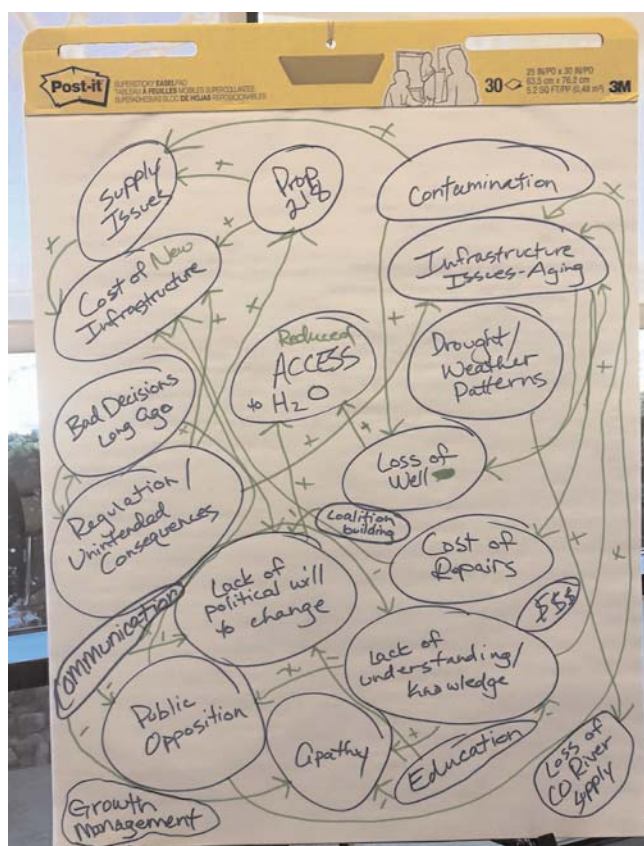
- * Most Tribes have very limited resources to begin with, and are unable to be involved without compensation.
- * There is a level of distrust for the government among many Tribes. In order to encourage engagement, representatives must be culturally aware, sensitive, and not overbearing.
- * It is necessary to understand the appropriate way to approach a Tribe (i.e., through Tribal Council) and that each Tribe is unique.

How we can improve engagement in the midst of the current COVID-19 shutdown

- * Provide technology tutorials and assistance for meetings.
- * When online meetings are not accessible to some communities, consider hosting safe outdoor meetings.
- * Continue to reach out to DACs and Tribes to maintain engagement during COVID-19.

How we can better collaborate to improve engagement

- * Collectively push to change state legislation to allow grant and bond money to be used for meeting-attendance compensation, refreshments, and supplies.



Session 4.

Community and Tribal Leader Panel. How Do We Improve Engagement?

Moderator: Anecita Agustinez, Department of Water Resources
Keta Price, East Oakland Collective
Chairman Valentin Lopez, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
Kanyon CoyoteWoman Sayers-Roods, Association
of Ramaytush Ohlone
Izzy Martin, The Sierra Fund

> [Session Recording](#)



This panel consisted of local and Tribal leaders discussing how we can move forward with the information gathered from the first two days of the Summit. After discussing lessons learned across the state, what can we do to continue advancing engagement within the IRWM program and beyond? Topics discussed included:

- ❖ **Respecting Tribal authority over cultural resources.** Prioritizing Tribal input on the use of traditionally Tribal land, even if it is not currently federally recognized, is an important step in honoring indigenous communities in planning efforts. It is important to take initiative to support and include Tribes rather than only asking for their support of a grant proposal.
- ❖ **Creating intentional Tribal engagement policies.** In order to create truly inclusive and respectful Tribal engagement it is crucial that all agencies establish consultation policies that go beyond checking a box and deeply consider Tribal history and culture. Tribal engagement must be more than a mention in an Environmental Impact Report, it must fully consider the tribal relationship with the land and how water projects will impact that relationship. Reaching out to Tribal members should be a first step in the planning process, not an after-thought.
- ❖ **Honoring Tribal Ecological Knowledge.** Respecting Tribal communities requires modern state agencies to learn and respect traditional Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and

traditions to respect the Earth. Far too often, TEK has been dismissed by colonial forces, leading to the displacement and destruction of Tribal lands and native California landscapes. To fix this, we must listen to and honor indigenous ecological practices.

- ❖ **Past successes and failures in Tribal engagement.** Many programs have had good intentions but lack long-term funding, relationship maintenance, and investment. DAC and Tribal needs assessment programs often try to reassess Tribal needs before truly committing to meet those needs in the first place. Some successes include the Mountain County Funding Area, which requested Tribal representation in IRWM and hired a Spanish-speaking community organizer to discuss securing water quality and access in low-income communities.

Participant questions centered around how public policy has changed Tribal engagement for better or for worse. Chairman Lopez stated that consultation policies in public agencies have tried to include Tribal voices but fail to consider their truth, history, and culture, making the value of their inclusion limited. Ms. Sayers-Roods shared that constraining Tribal members' input to comment-period windows is not true inclusion, and they must be placed in decision-making positions by state agencies to truly be able to represent their opinions.



Day 3 Proceedings

Ensuring Equitable Involvement
in Regional Water Planning

— What's Next? Engaging beyond —
the IRWM Program

October 14, 2020

Session 1.

Opening Speaker. Looking Ahead: Engaging beyond IRWM



Anecita Agustinez, Department of Water Resources

[> Session Recording](#)

This session began with Summit Emcee, Anecita Agustinez, acknowledging the Tribal leaders and members of California and encouraging attendees to share the names of the Tribal lands where they were listening from. She proceeded to recap the proceedings from Days 1 and 2 and provided an introduction for each of the Day 3 concurrent sessions, welcoming attendees to participate in the concurrent session of their choice.



Session 2.

Concurrent Sessions. Integrated Thinking to Advance Marginalized Community Engagement across State Programs

This session began with a brief introduction of representatives from four state agencies, each providing an overview of their programs and how they can be integrated with the IRWM DACTI program. Participants then chose **one of the four concurrent sessions** to attend to learn more about the selected program.





Session 2A.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)



Keith Wallace, Department of Water Resources

- > [Session Recording](#)
- > [Slide Presentation](#)

Mr. Wallace began his presentation with a brief overview of the history and origins of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. He explained the significance of groundwater in California, pointing out that approximately 85% of Californians rely on groundwater, and California as a whole relies on it for 40% of its water supply in an average year.

While surface water has been managed at the state level for over 100 years, groundwater has been largely unregulated until former Governor Jerry Brown signed SGMA into law in 2014 with the goal of establishing statewide sustainable groundwater practices under the supervision of the Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Mr. Wallace then identified the high-priority and critically over-drafted groundwater basins in the state and explained that Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in these areas are required to submit Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to DWR between January 2020–2022 that outline actionable steps to avoid further groundwater depletion. Mr. Wallace explained

that DWR, through SGMA, provides GSAs with technical, planning, and financial assistance and supports regional GSAs in stakeholder communication and Tribal engagement while they craft their GSPs.

Mr. Wallace emphasized that SGMA has unique tools to help promote groundwater sustainability in marginalized communities, which are largely the communities at highest risk of groundwater depletion. SGMA established sustainable groundwater planning grant programs that help fund groundwater activities in under-represented areas, but collaboration with IRWM programs can help promote action even more effectively.

After receiving questions from participants, Mr. Wallace also clarified that DWR is currently making efforts to include under-represented voices in GSP creation, and encouraged members of underrepresented communities to utilize SGMA online resources to learn how their communities can benefit from sustainable groundwater practices.

Session 2B.

Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER)

Andrew Altevogt, State Water Resources Control Board
 Jasmine Oaxaca, State Water Resources Control Board
 Adriana Renteria, State Water Resources Control Board

> [Session Recording](#)
 > [Slide Presentation](#)



This session began with Mr. Altevogt, Ms. Oaxaca, and Ms. Renteria, who gave an overview of the SWRCB's Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) program.

Mr. Altevogt explained that more than one million people in California do not have access to safe drinking water, approximately 300 community water systems across the state do not meet drinking water health standards, there are ~350,000 unregulated domestic wells statewide, and seven Tribal water systems currently have public-health violations. The SAFER program is designed to address these systemic issues and provide immediate, safe drinking water to Californians in the meantime.

Mr. Altevogt explained that the SAFER program has \$492 million in funding for the current fiscal year, which goes to emergency funding needs for outages and cutoffs, addressing water systems that are out of compliance with safety standards, and accelerating water system consolidation when feasible.

Ms. Renteria shared that through SAFER, 20 water systems have already been brought back into compliance and 250,000 more people have safe drinking water in their homes.

The presentation highlighted that an important aspect of the SAFER program is coordinating with other programs to have the maximum impact on communities in need. She explained that the Drinking Water Needs Analysis helps SWRCB assess which water systems should be prioritized for assistance, working with Tribal Water Systems helps SAFER coordinate to support Tribes, and IRWM provides important funding opportunities for drinking water projects around the state.

After receiving participant questions, Ms. Oaxaca further clarified that many marginalized groups could benefit from using SAFER's methods in areas not covered by SWRCB. For example, by assessing drinking water accessibility for unhoused populations and supporting low-income communities in addressing water-quality issues stemming from plumbing rather than the local water system.



Session 2C.

Watershed Health and the Needs of Unhoused Communities



Anne Gillespie, County of San Luis Obispo
Max Gomberg, State Water Resources Control Board

- > [Session Recording](#)
- > [Slide Presentation](#)

This session began with Ms. Gillespie outlining the three main challenges to securing assistance and support for unhoused communities. First, it is inherently difficult to locate, document, and integrate unhoused populations into programs such as IRWM that are regional and location-based.

Second, the majority of the unhoused population has very limited access to sanitation resources, which leads to a ripple effect of unsanitary practices that ultimately affect watershed health. However, Ms. Gillespie outlined the pilot Blue Bag Program in 2019 that provided one water-side homeless encampment of 15–20 individuals with free trash and needle disposal for four weeks. The program resulted in 6.5 tons of material being disposed of instead of polluting the water and surrounding area. This program showed that creative solutions to the needs of unhoused populations benefit both the unhoused people and the surrounding environment.

Third, it is particularly difficult to gain access to funding for unconventional strategies such as the Blue Bag Project, especially since these projects do not fit into the IRWM funding scheme. Ms. Gillespie emphasized that creative solutions are critical to improving living conditions for the unhoused and protecting watershed health, but success also requires creative funding sources.

Next, Mr. Gomberg discussed the role of State and Regional Water Boards in addressing issues that affect the unhoused population. He emphasized the importance of providing sanitation resources

for the unhoused, including waste disposal, hand-washing stations, and public restrooms. He also highlighted the need for public clean drinking water, which can be especially difficult for the unhoused to obtain. These resources would not only fulfill the human right to water, but would also serve to reduce watershed pollution.

One avenue towards securing these resources is measuring the benefits of pilot programs such as the Blue Bag Program. Mr. Gomberg explained that once these benefits are shown, it will be more feasible to secure state and local funding for similar programs.

Finally, participant questions addressed the impact of COVID-19 on access to resources for the unhoused. Mr. Gomberg explained that some areas have actually seen increased sanitation accessibility since the beginning of the pandemic due to the establishment of public hand-washing stations and other resources, but it is important to measure these outcomes in order to promote the implementation of similar programs after the pandemic.

Participants also discussed collaboration efforts between state agencies and other actors. Ms. Gillespie explained that funding avenues and the ability to work on private property separates state agencies and private nonprofits, although they often share similar goals. As for interagency collaboration within the state, lowering barriers to grant funding for projects focusing on the unhoused would open more opportunities for change, as the current application requirements often exclude the migratory, nuanced nature of homelessness.

Session 2D.

Water Resilience Portfolio



Nancy Vogel, California Natural Resources Agency
Cindy Messer, Department of Water Resources

> [Slide Presentation](#)

Due to technical difficulties, this session was not recorded.

This session was presented jointly by Ms. Vogel and Ms. Messer, and it focused on the background and goals of Governor Newsom’s Water Resilience Portfolio (WRP). The presenters explained that the portfolio was the state’s response to Executive Order N-10-19, which called for a detailed water plan with a regional perspective to protect CA communities, economy, and environment through the 21st century. The WRP has many common objectives with IRWM, including prioritizing integration, fostering well functioning regional networks, and building resources in under resourced and under involved communities.

The presenters underscored that successful implementation of the WRP will require strong “regional networks” to address California’s diverse water needs. Local and regional water management – like the IRWM program – are central to implementing the Portfolio’s recommendations. “Effectively managing water resources,” the Portfolio notes, “requires collaboration beyond water agencies, including tribes, local governments, and industries.”

The IRWM DACTI program is well-positioned to support this cross-sector, inter-jurisdictional collaboration, and ensure that Tribes and communities continue to be engaged in future water planning.

Other WRP goals include implementing the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program, supporting local implementation of SGMA, achieving voluntary agreements for positive development in underrepresented communities, expanding water recycling, and restoring multi-benefit floodplains. Within this set of larger goals are commitments to restoring the Salton Sea, removing obsolete Klamath River Dams, and relocating the Sacramento Delta diversion point to the northern part of the Delta to limit the impact of rising sea levels. All of these portfolio goals aim to create a more stable future for California water.



Finally, the presenters specified that the WRP is still an aspirational document and does not yet have the funding it needs to carry out all these tasks, especially since the bond meant to fund it was removed from the November 2020 ballot. However, the Governor encourages existing agencies to work together towards the goals outlined in the portfolio while we await further opportunities for funding.

Session 3.

Breakout Groups. Translating Collaborative Planning

This final small-group discussion reflected on the entirety of the Summit and asked groups to strategize how to translate the lessons learned from the DACTI program into local action that holistically empowers marginalized communities and Tribes. The key findings in these breakout groups were as follows:

Key Takeaways about Community and Tribal Engagement

- * In order to maximize the impact of water programs and outreach efforts state agencies need to communicate and collaborate (ex., IRWM and SGMA collaboration).
- * When it comes to assisting underrepresented communities, one size does not fit all. In the same way, one measurement of need is not adequate to cover all communities in need of assistance across the State. More nuanced measures of need beyond MHI are essential to increasing community and Tribal engagement.
- * The unsheltered population is also an example of an under-represented community. We must take steps to solve the homelessness problems across the state to begin achieving ideal engagement.

Key Points from Summit

- * In order to serve underprivileged communities effectively and achieve water equity, we must first understand where inequity lies and listen to community members.

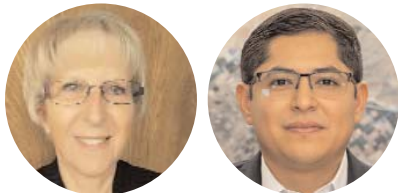


Session 4.

Discussant Panel. Reflecting on What We've Heard and Where We're Going



Moderator: Mike Antos, Stantec
Sherri Norris, California Indian Environmental Alliance
Regine Houchin, Ag Center Accounting
Cástulo R. Estrada, Coachella Valley Water District



[> Session Recording](#)

This panel was meant to elevate the wisdom and perspectives of the Summit Discussants, individuals who listened in all sessions of the Summit for common themes, challenges, and priorities shared by participants. The Discussants shared their reflections on what they heard and highlighted what they see as potential next steps for engaging marginalized communities and Tribes in regional water management. Main topics discussed were:

- ✱ **Making intentional systemic changes.** It is important to be proactive in making changes within IRWM to include and elevate marginalized voices. One example of necessary change is the use of the term “DAC,” which was identified as a misnomer throughout the Summit. Underrepresented communities have a wealth of knowledge to share and are essential to successful water planning. It is important that we consciously change our language around these communities to give them an equal position in the conversation rather than further marginalizing them.
- ✱ **How COVID-19 impacts engagement.** This Summit is evidence that methods of engagement have drastically shifted due to COVID-19. There have been plenty of difficult changes, such as learning to conduct meetings from personal homes and learning new technology, but also some positive changes, such as the slower pace of project planning which allows more time for community response. Panelists agreed that the typical fast pace of project planning rarely gives communities adequate time to learn about proposed projects and give their feedback, but the slower project pace during COVID-19 has further elevated community involvement.
- ✱ **Not just inviting, but prioritizing unheard voices.** IRWM and other state programs have made marked efforts to include marginalized and Tribal voices in their planning efforts thus far, but this Summit has highlighted the need to further emphasize and empower those voices. It is important to examine whether smaller entities are simply in the room to witness planning versus being actively included in decision-making. It is crucial that Tribes are placed at the forefront of the decision-making process, especially when discussing their ancestral lands.
- ✱ **Taking a bottom-up approach to progress.** Government programs and agencies are important actors in solving water issues, but in order to make a tangible impact on communities it is imperative to work from the bottom up, starting with community engagement. Real change comes from inviting participation and opening dialogue to discuss issues with the people they affect the most.

Session 5.

A Call to Action



Miguel Luna, DakeLuna Consultants

[> Session Recording](#)

Mr. Luna delivered the call to action. He began by explaining his own deep relationship with water and rivers throughout his life, and explaining how that relationship has led him to the work he does now. He emphasized the importance of the words “relationship” and “trust” when it comes to water, and pointed out that these were key concepts discussed throughout the Summit.

He highlighted the importance of making time to listen to stories and build relationships in the communities we work in, and to adjust project agendas accordingly. He explained that while experts in the field are, of course, important, the experiences and opinions of community members are absolutely critical to consider. He ended with a reminder that the time to act is now.

Session 6.

Closing. Next Steps



Emily Finnegan,
Local Government Commission

In conclusion, Ms. Finnegan delivered reminders that the Summit materials can be found online and that all sessions were recorded in English and Spanish. She then highlighted opportunities that were mentioned in breakout sessions, including a quarterly webinar series with Roundtable of Regions, DWR, Local Government Commission, and Groundwater Collaborative that focuses on integration between IRWM and SGMA. She then thanked attendees and closed the Summit.



Proceedings of the 2020 DACTI Virtual Summit

Ensuring Equitable Involvement in Regional Water Planning

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