SECTION 1.0 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Integrated Regional Water Management in Ventura County

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a new paradigm for managing water and related resources that was established with the passage of Proposition 50 in 2002 and Proposition 84 in 2006. This approach integrates on a regional level the many facets of water resources management, such as water supply, water quality, flood management, ecosystem health, and recreation through enhanced collaboration across geographic and political boundaries and diverse stakeholder groups. IRWM "regions" have been formed across California to develop plans that identify water management challenges, resolve conflicts over the best use of resources, bridge gaps in data, find common ground, and seek innovative solutions among stakeholders. Ultimately the goal is implementation of projects and programs that efficiently address water management priorities.

A significant motivation for formation of these new regions, which are as diverse as the state itself, was the availability of substantial grant funding, which has leveraged, and continues to leverage, local funds for project implementation. The grant funds have helped communities throughout the state to enhance the availability of clean water supplies for the benefit of people and the environment, to protect communities from flood damage, and provide access to water-related recreation opportunities. In addition to grant funding, participants in these IRWM regions benefit from the cost-sharing, collaboration, and effective problem-solving made possible by joining together.

IRWM is, first and foremost, a process built on collaboration and coordination among the people and interests in each region. This process brings together stakeholders that in the past may have worked in parallel, rather than closely together, to identify and solve water-related problems. IRWM offers a framework for the consideration of diverse water resource management issues that incorporates science, engineering, history, natural processes, planning, culture, and economics. The integration of these disciplines and a new approach to identifying and implementing water resource development and protection projects has resulted in new synergies and solutions that expand the possibilities for managing our scarce water resources.
In some respects, IRWM is as much art as science as it is a creative process that includes adaptive management and problem-solving. California's water challenges will always require innovative management strategies, particularly as the state's population grows and climate change impacts our resources. IRWM offers a flexible, inclusive approach to assuring that our water supplies are protected, our resources preserved and our communities continue to thrive.

1.2 Successful Water Management in Ventura County – Historical Perspective

The Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) IRWM Region, which encompasses the majority of Ventura County, was formed to serve as the "region" responsible for IRWM planning and implementation. The Region has been very successful in bringing diverse interests together to manage water resources on a regional level. Ventura County is the ideal size and composition for successful collaboration and represents a microcosm of issues and resources facing the state as a whole. The County has a thriving agricultural industry, miles of coastline and rivers offering recreational opportunities, a strong economy, a mix of communities large and small, research institutions, valuable and abundant pristine ecosystems and forest land, local groundwater and surface water reserves, as well as access to imported state water. The County

is blessed with rich natural, economic, social, and cultural resources. Due to a long history of collaborative management of water resources in the County, the existing IRWM program was built on a strong, established foundation.

History of Water Management in Ventura County

- Regional collaboration, starting in 1970s – 208 Water Quality Management Plan
- 1994 – Regional Water Management Plan adopted
- 2006 - IRWM Plan adopted – funded by Prop. 50 Planning Grant
- 2006 – Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County formed
- 2007 – Received $25 million Prop. 50 Implementation Grant, which resulted in the successful implementation of 11 water management projects
- 2011 – Received $17.5 million Prop. 84 Implementation Grant, including implementation of eight water management projects
- 2005-20012 Three IRWM Planning Grants Received (Prop 50 - $220,000, Prop 84 - $1 million)
- 2013 – Recommended for $13.5 million in Prop. 84 Implementation Grant funds, including 6 projects.

Agencies and organizations in Ventura County have a long history working together to address water resources issues dating back to the early 1970s. In the past 40 years numerous water supply and conservation, water quality, wetland restoration, and reclamation projects have been planned and implemented. Many individuals and agencies have collaborated to ensure effective management of local water resources and protection of water-dependent environmental resources and species habitats. These entities include local retail and wholesale water districts, Cities, sanitary districts, the County of Ventura, environmental and non-profit organizations, the Association of Water Agencies, State and Federal agencies, and many others.

Background

1974 Ventura County Designated as 208 Planning Area

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, commonly known as the Clean Water Act, was originally enacted in 1948. The Act was amended by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of

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

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

1980 208 Plan

From 1979 to 1980, the Ventura County Water Quality Planning Program identified additional water quality issues, updated the Population/Land Use Forecasts, and reevaluated the 1978 Water Quality Management Plan's Regional Goals and Policies. As a result of these efforts, the 1978 plan was updated, revised, and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors as the 208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan (1979-1980). Following review of the Areawide Water Quality Management Plan, the County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 431 establishing a countywide plan for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of countywide water resources. The resolution summarized the direction given by the Board to address seawater intrusion, water conservation, two specific water reclamation projects, local State Water entitlements, creation of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, and Sespe Creek water rights issues.

1994 - Water Management Plan Update

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

1996-2006 - Local Water Management Activities

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

Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Planning Process (1996 – Present)

Agencies within the Calleguas Creek Watershed began working together in 1996 to develop the Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan (WMP or Plan). This process has been a comprehensive, stakeholder driven effort to develop a resource management and protection program and strategy for the 343 square-mile Calleguas Creek Watershed in southeastern Ventura County. Watershed stakeholders initiated the WMP in response to a clear need to work cooperatively and responsibly to develop a comprehensive plan that would enhance the long-term health of natural resources in the watershed and result in the implementation of a coordinated water quality and land use planning strategy for the watershed as a whole. Led by a broadly representative Steering Committee (local property owners, water and wastewater agencies, environmental groups, agricultural parties, governmental entities, and other private interests), the WMP completed its first phase, which was the development of action recommendations and technical

tools to address coordinated environmental and resource management by public agencies and private sector participants. The Phase I Report (2004) contains the recommendations and actions developed during Phase I. As part of the watershed planning process, parties responsible have organized to act collectively to address significant water quality improvements and meet the mandatory standards of the Federal Clean Water Act and California Porter-Cologne Act.

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

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

Early in 2002, in anticipation of the approval of a statewide water bond with grant funds for integrated regional water management, a "coalition" of 27 water-related agencies in Ventura County met to identify priority projects for these grant funds that would address key water problems facing the County (water quality, reliability, etc.) as identified during the earlier water management planning efforts. This water bond passed in the form of Proposition 50. Through this coalition, called the VCIRWMP Group, local agencies worked together, in conjunction with State and Federal regulatory agencies, to discuss water issues facing the Region and seek solutions. The areas included were the Ventura River and Santa Clara River Watersheds. As described above, the Calleguas Creek Watershed issues were being addressed through a separate management plan and stakeholder process.
In early 2004, a consensus of VCIRWMP Group members recommended that staff from the Ventura County Executive Office (CEO) and County Resource Management Agency Planning Division should coordinate the preparation of a Ventura Countywide Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (VCIRWMP) to be used as the basis to apply for grant funding and future water project funding opportunities. In the fall of 2004, the Board of Supervisors approved County collaboration with the VCIRWMP Group and a share of funding to develop the VCIRWMP and apply for Proposition 50, Chapter 8 Planning Grant and Implementation Grant funds. In May of 2005, the VCIRWMP Group adopted two resolutions formally authorizing the County Resource Management Agency Planning Division to apply for both the Planning and Implementation Grants under Proposition 50.

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

In April 2006 local stakeholders came together to form the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) for purposes of integrated regional water management planning and to serve as the Regional Water Management Group for entities within Ventura County. This merger was the result combining the VCIRWMP Group with the Calleguas Creek Steering Committee described above. It was felt that an IRWM region encompassing most or all of the County was more appropriate for planning and implementation purposes. Subsequently, WCVC's governance structure was established to coordinate individual watersheds with the Region as a whole.

Summary of Water Management Collaboration Efforts in Ventura County

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

Given the complexity of the issues being addressed and the diverse nature of the stakeholder groups, it is imperative that the water resource planning and implementation process continue into the future. The planning process has been an opportunity for local parties to take a greater role in governing local resources, balancing the needs of all stakeholders, and assuring healthy and sustainable watersheds for future generations.

1.3 Proposition 84 Overview

Proposition 84: Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 was passed by voters in November 2006 and is administered by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). The Proposition 84 Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program (Chapter 2) provides funding for projects that assist local public agencies (such as WCVC) to meet long-term water needs of the state including the delivery of safe drinking water and the protection of water quality and the environment.

Chapter 2 of the Act provides $1 billion for water-related grants statewide, including $215 million to the Los Angeles/Ventura County Funding Area. Projects funded by Chapter 2 must be consistent with a locally adopted and State approved Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan. The intent of the Proposition 84 IRWM Grant Program is to encourage integrated regional strategies for management of water resources and to provide funding through competitive grants for projects that protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependence on imported water. The IRWM Grant Program is administered by the State
Department of Water Resources (DWR) and is intended to promote an integrated and regional approach to water management. The IRWM Grant Program consists of Planning and Implementation Grant funding that meets the following criteria:

Planning Grants are provided to eligible applicants to develop new, or to update existing, IRWM Plans that meet the requirements of the IRWM Grant Program Guidelines (Guidelines). Proposals that develop, complete, or modify a component of an IRWM Plan are also eligible. ***See Appendix B for a copy of the IRWM Plan standards***. WCVC has received a total of 1.2 million in Planning Grants from Proposition 50 and 84 for IRWM Plan development and related studies.

Implementation Grants are provided to eligible applicants to implement proposals that meet the requirements of the IRWM Guidelines (Guidelines). To date, WCVC has received almost $56 million in Implementation Grant funding from Propositions 50 and 84 for 25 projects.

Because of the State's continuing budget problems, water bonds are of significant importance to local and regional water agencies. Additional water-related legislation is being prepared and another water bond measure is on the November 2014 ballot in California.

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

The purpose of the IRWM Plan is to integrate planning and implementation efforts and facilitate regional cooperation with the goal of improving water supply reliability, water recycling, water conservation, recreation and access, flood control, and environmental and habitat protection. Specifically, it will provide ongoing guidance for implementation of projects and programs to meet the Plan's goals and objectives.

An objective of the IRWM Plan is to build on a long-standing foundation of cooperation and the ongoing efforts of local entities and others such as the County, cities, water agencies, wetlands/habitat protection groups and ongoing watershed management committees. The objective of the IRWM Plan is not to duplicate existing and ongoing plans, but to better integrate these efforts and utilize the results and findings of existing plans to put forward the projects needed to address local goals.
In general, the benefits of the IRWM Plan include the following:

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

1.5 Ahwahnee Watershed Principles

The Local Government Commission (LGC), in partnership with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and the League of California Cities, developed a comprehensive and integrated set of principles and policies (based on whole system planning) called the Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource Efficient Land Use. The Ahwahnee Water Principles offer communities common sense and straightforward ways to address multiple water resource issues with smart planning and land use decisions.

Maintaining adequate water supplies and water quality, and protecting the beneficial uses of water, depends largely on land use decisions made by local governments. These decisions can either cause or avoid physical impacts to wetland, riparian habitat, urban pollution, and alteration of flow regimes and groundwater recharge. The disconnect between water supplies and quality, and land use regulation has resulted in permitting conflicts, costly regulatory delays, and inadequate resource protection. The relationship between land use and water will become increasingly critical given California's projected population growth and urbanization.

The Ahwahnee Water Principles provide the communities of California a broader, more coordinated, and more flexible water management system that addresses water quality, supply and flood risks together. Implementation of the Ahwahnee Water Principles helps communities develop solutions for long-term regional and watershed-wide benefits.

The Board of Supervisors of Ventura County adopted the Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource Efficient Land Use in March 2006 and implements the principles in its land use decision making process.

The Ahwahnee Water Principles

Community Principles

1. Community design should be compact, mixed use, walkable and transit-oriented so that automobile-generated urban runoff pollutants are minimized and the open lands that absorb water are preserved to the maximum extent possible. (See the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities)
2. Natural resources such as wetlands, flood plains, recharge zones, riparian areas, open space, and native habitats should be identified, preserved and restored as valued assets for flood protection, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, habitat, and overall long-term water resource sustainability.
3. Water holding areas such as creek beds, recessed athletic fields, ponds, cisterns, and other features that serve to recharge groundwater, reduce runoff, improve water quality and decrease flooding should be incorporated into the urban landscape.
4. All aspects of landscaping from the selection of plants to soil preparation and the installation of irrigation systems should be designed to reduce water demand, retain runoff, decrease flooding, and recharge groundwater.
5. Permeable surfaces should be used for hardscape. Impervious surfaces such as driveways, streets, and parking lots should be minimized so that land is available to absorb storm water, reduce polluted urban runoff, recharge groundwater and reduce flooding.
6. Dual plumbing that allows graywater from showers, sinks and washers to be reused for landscape irrigation should be included in the infrastructure of new development.
7. Community design should maximize the use of recycled water for appropriate applications including outdoor irrigation, toilet flushing, and commercial and industrial processes. Purple pipe should be installed in all new construction and remodeled buildings in anticipation of the future availability of recycled water.
8. Urban water conservation technologies such as low-flow toilets, efficient clothes washers, and more efficient water-using industrial equipment should be incorporated in all new construction and retrofitted in remodeled buildings.
9. Ground water treatment and brackish water desalination should be pursued when necessary to maximize locally available, drought-proof water supplies.

Implementation Principles

1. Water supply agencies should be consulted early in the land use decision-making process regarding technology, demographics and growth projections.
2. City and county officials, the watershed council, LAFCO, special districts and other stakeholders sharing watersheds should collaborate to take advantage of the benefits and synergies of water resource planning at a watershed level.
3. The best, multi-benefit and integrated strategies and projects should be identified and implemented before less integrated proposals, unless urgency demands otherwise.
4. From start to finish, projects and programs should involve the public, build relationships, and increase the sharing of and access to information.
5. Plans, programs, projects and policies should be monitored and evaluated to determine if the expected results are achieved and to improve future practices.