

Item 1. Call to Order

Voting members David Janiec, Renee Westa-Lusk, West Katzenstein, Lyle Fisher, Judie Decker, Camille Anderson (joined at ~6:10pm), Tim Carroll and Regina Troglin, and non-voting members Don Zdeba, John Kersey, and Tom Bickaaskas were present. Not present was non-voting member Lorelei Oviatt.

Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance**Item 3. Open Public Comment (Not Related to Other Agenda Items)**

None.

Item 4. Approve Minutes of the June PAC Meeting

Lyle Fisher moved to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Renee Westa-Lusk. The motion was approved 7-0, with Camille Anderson not yet present.

Item 5. Communication and Engagement (C&E) Plan Review and Update

- A. Review Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Recommendation for Draft C&E Plan
- B. Develop full PAC Draft C&E Plan

David Janiec reported that the subcommittee had reviewed and considered the written comments on the first draft plan (at the August PAC meeting) provided by Camille Anderson and Judie Decker, as well as all comment and discussion by all members at the PAC meeting. The subcommittee developed the final draft C&E Plan for full PAC review and approval at this meeting .

The subcommittee and full PAC also reviewed and considered the following in developing the final recommended draft C&E Plan.

1. PAC recommendations for overall C&E during the GSP Implementation phase presented to the GA at the July 13 Board meeting, focusing on the three major items the PAC recommended.
 - a. Key focus elements for GSP implementation phase
 - 1) Integrated schedule
 - 2) Key fact sheets
 - b. Increased/new communication
 - 1) Internet - website, email, select social media
 - 2) Traditional – stakeholder specific, targeted workshops
 - c. C&E Director function and responsibilities
2. Review of individual PAC member written comments and recommendations submitted for the May 26th PAC meeting, particularly regarding recommended plan changes from review of other DWR approved plans (best practices).
3. Lessons learned from the GSP development C&E experiences (positives and negatives).
4. DWR observations and recommendations from their GSP approval document.
5. Review of SGMA and state water code C&E Plan requirements.

PAC Member Comment – The PAC engaged in a comprehensive discussion of the subcommittee draft plan and the written comments provided by Judie Decker.

Public Comment – Don Decker noted that Stetson maintains a separate, technical website (from the iwvga.org) that contains most of the detailed engineering and technical data that underpins GSP and

should not be transferred or duplicated on the GA website, but rather be referenced and linked in the GA website. He noted most of the public is likely not aware of its existence.

PAC Action –The PAC reviewed detailed input and agreed to submit a recommended Communication and Engagement Plan. Regina Troglin moved to approve the draft plan with the agreed-to specific modifications from this meeting, seconded by Lyle Fisher. The motion passed 7-1 with Judie Decker opposed. Judie will provide a minority report to be attached to this report. The final recommended plan is attached to this report.

Item 6. Member Comments

Don Zdeba announced that DWR/Stantec has scheduled a public workshop to present the results of the public facilitation survey at 6pm, October 4th, in City Council Chambers. Stantec will be coordinating with the GA to have a second presentation at the October PAC meeting.

Regina Troglin, West Katzenstein and David Janiec expressed their satisfaction from working together on the subcommittee and the strong engagement of all PAC members in producing a cohesive draft plan.

Specific recognition was given for Regina in acting as the rapid scribe and recorder for the document.

Rene Westa-Lusk, Lyle Fisher and Camille Anderson thanked the subcommittee for their efforts in producing a good plan.

Judie Decker reiterated the need for public engagement in these opportunities.

Item 7. Meeting Adjourned.

Submitted by: David Janiec, IWVGA PAC Chair, October 6, 2022

The page intentionally blank

Communication and Engagement Plan for GSP Implementation Phase
DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority
Policy Advisory Committee

August 25, 2022

I. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin was submitted in January 2021, thus starting the GSP implementation phase per SGMA guidelines. The GSP was subsequently approved by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) on January 13, 2022.

The original Communications & Engagement Plan (C&E) dated April 19, 2018, addressed C&E during the GSP development phase. This document addresses the GSP implementation phase and supersedes the original C&E plan. It retains the essential elements of the original plan and incorporates additional areas of focus to address the C&E needs of the GSP implementation phase, lessons learned during the GSP development phase, and C&E corrective actions recommended by DWR.

During the GSP implementation phase, the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA) is dedicated to expanding the public's trust with enhanced open dialogue and transparency. The IWVGA encourages active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population to ensure that all relevant and interested stakeholders, beneficial users, and the public are involved. The key responsibilities of the IWVGA are: 1. To continually alert and notify stakeholders of the status of groundwater and the actions being taken to reach sustainability, and 2. To provide stakeholders opportunities to obtain information and to engage in the implementation of the GSP. Once alerted, all interested parties have a responsibility to become informed and participate in the process.

II. BACKGROUND

A. BASIN BACKGROUND

The Indian Wells Valley (IWV) Groundwater Basin is located east of the southern Sierra Nevada Range in southern California with an area of approximately 382,000 acres underlying portions of Inyo, Kern, and San Bernardino Counties. The IWV Groundwater Basin is identified by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as Basin 6-54 in Bulletin No. 118. IWV Groundwater Basin is classified as a "critically overdrafted" basin pursuant to the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) program, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), and Bulletin No. 118 interim update (2016) prepared by the DWR. As required by SGMA, all Bulletin No. 118 basins designated as "high" or "medium priority" and "critically overdrafted" such as the IWV Groundwater Basin shall be managed under a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) submitted to DWR by January 31, 2020.

The IWV Groundwater Basin resources are not currently sustainably managed. Groundwater is the sole source of water in the IWV. Overdraft conditions have existed since at least the 1960s as a result of groundwater pumping exceeding the sustainable

yield of the basin. Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), Severely Disadvantaged Communities (SDACs), Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs), and the large number of shallow domestic water wells overlying the IWV Groundwater Basin are particularly susceptible to adverse effects resulting from chronic lowering of groundwater levels. Mitigating the chronic lowering of groundwater levels by implementing the GSP is an urgent requirement. As a result of these conditions, and with the purpose of complying with SGMA regulations and DWR standards and guidance, the IWVGA was established; and in January 2022 DWR approved the IWV Groundwater Basin GSP.

Until the Comprehensive Adjudication, and other lawsuits, are settled in the Superior Court there may be limited communication and information provided on certain issues regarding the IWV Groundwater Basin. The Board may have to prioritize communication actions recommended in this C&E Plan due to limited funding.

B. SGMA COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN REQUIREMENTS

This document is designed to assist the public and the IWVGA in developing a mutual understanding of how the IWVGA will fulfill the requirements of SGMA as they relate to public engagement. Specific guidance in California law requires the GSP to address C&E:

CA Code of Regulations – Title 23 – Division 2 – Chapter 1.5 – Sub Chapter 2 – Article 5 – Sub Article 1 – Sub Section 354.10 (d)

“A communication section of the Plan that includes the following:

1. An explanation of the Agency’s decision-making process
2. Identification of opportunities for public engagement and a discussion of how public input and response will be used.
3. A description of how the Agency encourages the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the basin.
4. The method the Agency shall follow to inform the public about progress implementing the Plan, including the status of projects and actions.”

C. IMPORTANCE OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The GSP clearly identifies the severity of the overdraft in the basin, as well as the challenging magnitude of the projects, actions, and resources necessary to bring the basin into sustainability. The IWV Groundwater Basin underlies a variety of land uses and communities with varying needs and interests relating to the sustainable management of its resources. The plan requires significant public understanding, engagement, and support for successful implementation.

D. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

In July 2016, the IWVGA was formed through a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for the purpose of forming a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), as defined by SGMA, to manage the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin and to implement SGMA requirements, including the development and implementation of a GSP. The IWVGA consists of the following voting member agencies:

- City of Ridgecrest (a public agency)
- Indian Wells Valley Water District (a California Special District)
- County of Kern (a public agency)
- County of Inyo (a public agency)
- County of San Bernardino (a public agency)

And consists of the following non-voting associate members:

- United States Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management
- United States Navy - Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake

During the formation of the IWVGA, a comprehensive listing of interested parties (Appendix A) was developed. This listing of over 150 stakeholders includes representatives from all types of water users within the IWV Groundwater Basin and continues to be used for notification of public meetings, other types of notifications (e.g., mailings, email, etc.), and updates relating to the discussions surrounding SGMA and the implementation of the GSP. This stakeholder listing continues to be used and updated.

The IWVGA conducts regular board meetings on a monthly basis to support the on-going development and implementation of the GSP for the IWV Groundwater Basin. The purpose of these meetings is to conduct the business of the IWVGA, present the status of the GSP and its implementation, and to provide an opportunity for input from interested parties both in-person and virtually.

The IWVGA created two standing committees to advise the IWVGA board on policy and technical issues and information. The Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), provide an additional public engagement opportunity for interested parties of the basin. Through these committees and other identified means of engagement, the public is able to provide input to the IWVGA throughout the implementation phase of the GSP. All input received from interested parties is taken into account during the IWVGA decision-making process.

III. OBJECTIVES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Ultimately, the success of the IWV Groundwater Basin will be determined by the collective action of all groundwater users. On a practical level, that means that in order to meet the ongoing water supply needs, for both health and safety and economic livelihoods, the Basin must be managed in a balanced fashion. The approved GSP has been developed to meet this objective, and the IWVGA needs maximum public engagement in order to be successful in the implementation of the GSP.

Therefore, the IWVGA seeks to involve interested parties, stakeholders, and the public, and to keep the internal information flow seamless among staff, consultants, committee members, and the Board regarding the goals and objectives of the IWV Groundwater Basin GSP and its implementation projects, management actions and execution.

A. DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. Maximum public awareness, understanding, and engagement from all parties in implementing the GSP
2. Increased credibility and public trust and support for the GSP implementation process
3. Reach full sustainability in the basin through GSP implementation

B. CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

1. Fragmented methods of communication and methods of information retrieval.
2. Lack of more extensive use of growing popular social media and other communication vehicles.
3. Apathy or the limited interest in the subject.
4. Use of unfamiliar language and technical terminology.
5. Limited available access to accurate reference materials through affordable communication methods.
6. Absentee and out of basin landowners
7. Temporary employees in the basin who own homes
8. Limited access for non-English language and hearing-impaired individuals
9. Scheduling meetings at times that maximize the opportunity for public participation
10. Gaining and retaining public trust
11. Presenting a balanced statement of the magnitude of the problem and the proposed solutions
12. Ongoing litigation(s) and their potential limits on communications
13. Difficulties in communication with DAC, SDAC, and EDA communities

C. APPROACH

1. Notify and inform the public about the status of groundwater in the IWW and provide accurate, objective, and timely information through the use of multiple communication venues and tools to maximize distribution.
2. Manage a singular repository (i.e., the website) that serves as the central database for all public information and is the primary reference point that all external posts or engagements lead back to. This repository should provide overview and introductory information in layman's terms for newly interested members of the public, as well as detailed information sources.
3. Designate a Communications Director whose responsibility it is to maintain, coordinate and implement the C&E Plan.
4. Implement an integrated schedule available to the public that includes information about the projects and management actions throughout implementation, including budgetary information.

IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

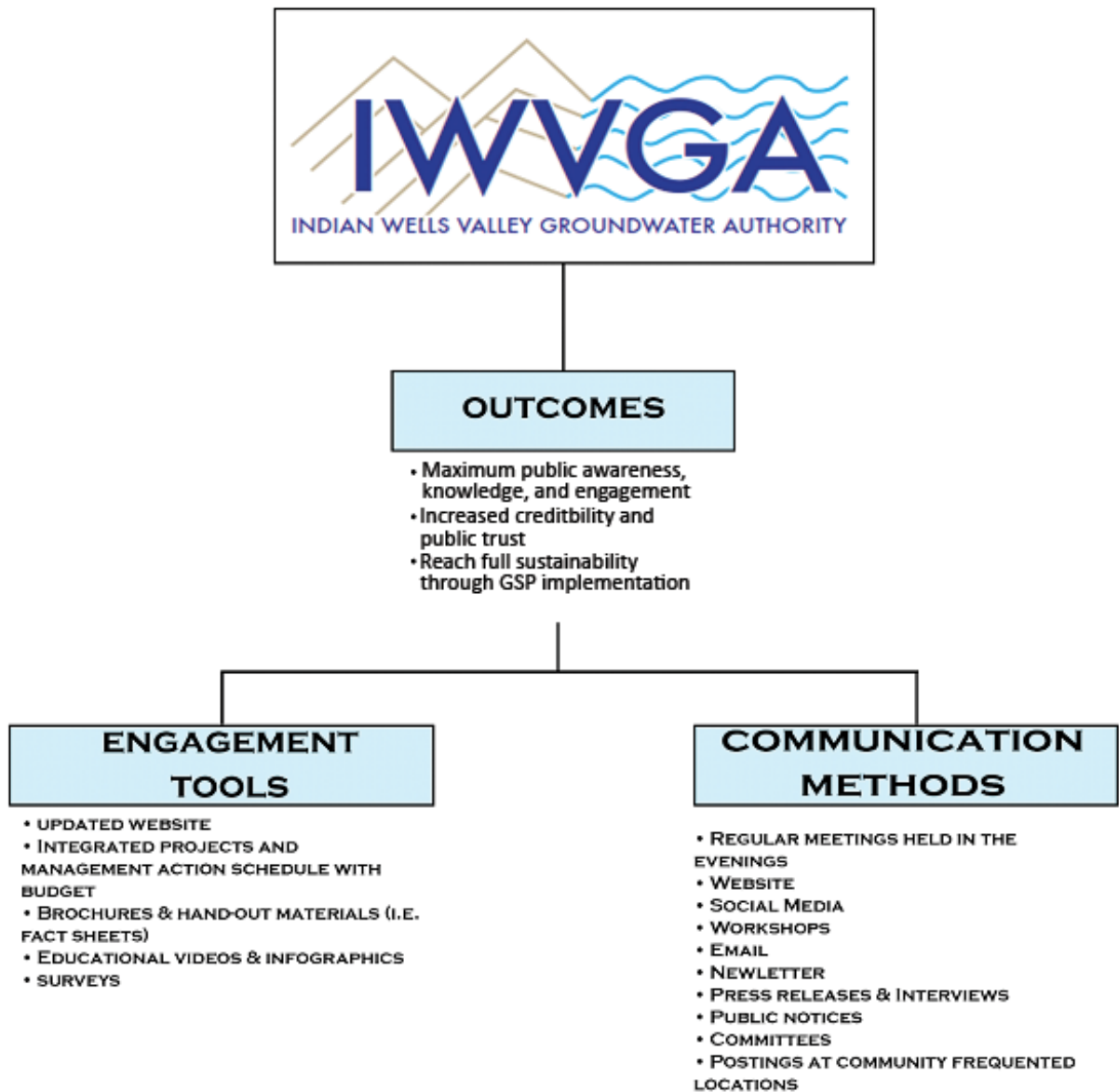
A. AUDIENCE

In addition to the interested parties and stakeholders identified in Appendix A, a listing of organizations, Appendix B, was developed to help inform and engage the general public and key governing agencies/individuals in the GSP implementation process. These can generally be grouped into two categories:

- I. Local Community Information, Outreach, and Engagement Opportunity (Awareness, Coordination, Participation, and Execution)
 - a. Service organizations
 - b. Business and Advocacy Groups
 - c. Schools and Education Organizations
 - d. Tribal Representation
 - e. Local Utilities within the Basin
 - f. Local Government
- II. External Contacts (Proactive Coordinated Execution and Funding Solutions)
 - a. Regional
 - i. Utilities
 - ii. Regulatory Agencies
 - iii. Districts
 - b. State
 - i. Advocacy groups and coalitions
 - ii. Legislative representations

- iii. Executive agencies
- c. National
 - i. Advocacy groups and coalitions
 - ii. Legislative representations
 - iii. Executive agencies

B. OVERVIEW OF IWVGA COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT



C. COMMUNICATION VENUES AND TOOLS

1. REGULAR IWWGA BOARD MEETINGS

Board and Committee Meetings are open to the public, and available for live viewing via YouTube. The IWWGA is deeply rooted in stakeholder engagement, and the IWWGA will continue to provide both in-person and virtual meeting attendance options.

2. COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

The Communications Director is a key staff position for the implementation phase of the GSP. The Communications Director works closely with interested parties, stakeholder groups, staff, and the General Manager (GM) to implement the Communications and Engagement Plan.

3. COMMITTEES

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

The PAC advises the IWWGA board on all policy matters, including GSP implementation. The committee meets on a monthly basis and provides representation for all types of water users in the IWW Groundwater Basin.

The voting members of the PAC include water users from the following:

- 2 representatives from Large Agriculture
- 1 representative from Small Agriculture
- 2 representatives from Business Interests
- 2 representatives from Domestic Well Owners
- 2 representatives from residential customers of a public agency water supplier
- 1 representative from Eastern Kern County Resource Conservation District
- 1 representative from Wholesaler and Industrial User
- At least 1 representative from Disadvantaged Communities (Inyokern)
- 1 representative from private water customers of Trona

The non-voting members of the PAC include:

- The IWW Water District

- United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management – Ridgecrest Field Office
- United States Navy, Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake
- Director of Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

The TAC meets on an as needed basis and provides technical review of data and other information pertaining to the GSP, implementation projects, and other requests from the Board. The TAC is comprised of individuals representing PAC membership stakeholder categories, and the interest of basin landowners and water users. The PAC Committee members may nominate a TAC member for their respective stakeholder membership category.

4. WEBSITE

The website (<https://iwvga.org>), will be updated and maintained to provide all accurate, relevant, and authoritative information about SGMA, the IWVGA, and implementation of the GSP. The website should be seen as the primary resource for all publicly available information and should be structured to appear prominently when an interested party executes a search about groundwater in the IWV.

The website should include:

- Primary Homepage/Landing Page that is easily navigated to find desired links or files within the site
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Meeting Packets and Video Links
- Document and web links with an easily searchable feature
- Integrated schedule for projects and management actions with budget
- Basin information, background, and additional data repository web link (<https://iwvgagasp.com>)

Social Media, infographics, brochures, and fact sheets will directly link back to the website and the information provided within it.

5. MASTER INTEGRATED PROJECT SCHEDULE

An essential element of the C&E phase is an integrated schedule which will be available to the public. This schedule will provide transparency about the timelines, inter-dependencies, and costs of projects and management actions. It will communicate

historical and planned actions of the IWVGA and provide a comprehensive overview for the public and stakeholders.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA

Existing well-established social media (e.g., Facebook) platforms will be leveraged to contact the public, share IWVGA activities, and GSP updates/milestones. Both an information-only avenue for dissemination, and a two-way communication method may be used to answer public questions and provide much needed information in a timely manner to a large sector of stakeholders. Any IWVGA social media posts will direct users to the IWVGA website for complete and in-depth information.

7. FACT SHEETS AND HAND-OUT MATERIALS

Fact sheets and hand-out materials should provide information on topics such as, but not limited to,

- SGMA
- GSP development and implementation
- Implementation Projects and Management Actions
- Basin Background and Basic Hydrologic Information

8. WORKSHOPS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

The IWVGA will conduct public workshops that pertain to implementation projects and actions. These workshops will focus on providing the public as much information as possible on the projects, the budget, schedule, and provide interested parties an opportunity to engage throughout implementation.

9. EDUCATIONS VIDEOS & INFOGRAPHICS

Short videos and infographics should be leveraged to provide concise information in an easy to consume format for IWVGA utilized social media platforms.

10. C&E CONTACT LISTS (APPENDIX A AND APPENDIX B)

The C&E contact lists, found in Appendix A and B, are used to send out IWVGA information relating to important updates, meeting packets, etc. Personal contact information provided to the IWVGA shall be secured and not available to the public.

Methods of communications using this information can include, but are not limited to, Push notifications, email communications, text alerts, etc.

11. EXISTING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

To expand the IWVGA's sphere of engagement, the IWVGA will partner with existing agencies, committees, and organizations to disseminate information and invite public involvement. The Communications Director and/or GM will request the opportunity to provide articles, updates, and announcements for existing social media pages and newsletters (both digital and print). The Communications Director and/or GM will attend board/committee meetings, brief leadership, and coordinate public outreach at key IWVGA milestones.

12. ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND VENUES

- A. Quarterly or Annual E-Newsletter
- B. Public Notices
- C. Surveys
- D. Press releases and interviews
- E. Community Groups

D. COMMUNICATION RESPONSIBILITIES

1. PRESS PROTOCOLS

The press is an important partner for getting the IWVGA message out to the stakeholders. To maximize the effectiveness in working with the media, a consistent protocol should be followed by all staff, consultants, board members, and committee members.

- A. The Spokespersons
 - The primary spokespersons for all media inquiries are the GM and Communications Director. Media inquiries should first be directed to the Communications Director to coordinate a response.
 - Reporters may want to also interview board members and community members. The Communications Director and GM will maintain a list of board members and other designated spokespersons who will be prepared and can be called on for media interviews.
 - In preparation for the interview, the GM and Communications Director will work closely with the spokesperson chosen in

preparation for the media interviews. Factual and coordinated talking points will be provided in advance of the interview.

B. Responsiveness

- Reporters often work on tight deadlines. If there is a media request, it should be referred to the Communications Director and GM at the earliest possible opportunity.

C. Notifying the IWVGA

- Following the interview or press statement, if published, the GM or Communications Director will send notification to the Board and committee members.

2. GENERAL MANAGER (GM)

The GM, as described in the bylaws article 3.3, is the key personnel position that is the link between the IWVGA Board, staff, consultants, committee members, and interested parties in the community. The GM should be an employee of the IWVGA reporting directly to the Board and is responsible and accountable for C&E Plan execution by the Communications Director.

3. COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

The Communications Director function will report directly to the GM. The Communications Director should not be a representative of any of the member agencies that comprise the IWVGA; he/she should be a member of IWVGA staff similar to the GM. The Communications Director will work closely with the GM, board members, and designated spokespersons to provide the public with accurate and verifiable information in a timely manner.

The Communications Director will monitor social media sites for mentions of the IWVGA, GSP, and implementation projects and management actions. A social media report, including any IWVGA mentions, positive and negative comments, will be provided to the GM monthly. Negative posts will be shared and discussed immediately to determine what, if any, response is warranted.