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REALIZING THE WMI VISION

10a | A Vision and a Plan

WMI stakeholders began work on this Action Plan by identifying about 112 individual actions that would benefit the Basin's watersheds.

The stakeholders agreed that the actions should be part of a comprehensive plan to protect and enhance Basin watersheds. The plan should be guided by a common vision of a future Santa Clara Basin where the uses of land and water are planned and balanced to support society and nature alike.

As is shown in the previous chapters, nearly all of the needed actions are within the scope of existing environmental-protection mandates and programs.

The WMI must work to align, coordinate, and integrate these existing programs and mandates. Reducing overlaps and conflicts between programs will make it possible to accelerate stakeholder actions and, at the same time, achieve the economic benefits of more efficient regulation.

In this way, the WMI will promote purposeful progress toward the stakeholders' common vision.

10b | How the WMI Can Benefit the Basin

Alignment, coordination, and integration of environmental programs won't happen all at once. Improvement will come slowly, through education, communication, negotiation, and trust-building.

Public agency managers and staff, environmental advocates, business representatives, and citizens groups alike have learned that conflicts can be avoided or resolved through stakeholder processes. Many of these processes have been established, within and outside the WMI. Stakeholder processes are implementing TMDLs, resolving interagency disputes, planning projects, and allocating public funds.

In general, these stakeholder processes focus on one project or issue. The process ends when the project is complete or the issue is resolved. When a new project starts, or a new conflict arises, another process must be built from scratch. Participants in the process may overlook interconnections to other watershed issues.

As a permanent, ongoing institution, the WMI provides a context and resources for establishing successful stakeholder

Regulatory Corner: Streamlining and Certainty

Santa Clara Basin local agencies have two general concerns about the way that Federal and state environmental regulations are implemented.

The first concern is that “one-size-fits-all,” “command and control” regulations contain cumbersome and unnecessary requirements. Regulations also overlap and sometimes conflict. Streamlining the regulations could achieve the same environmental benefits at lower cost and with less bureaucracy.

The second concern is that the regulations change frequently, making it difficult to plan and budget local programs. The local agencies seek regulatory certainty—a limit to the changes in requirements that may occur during the period of a discharge permit.

processes. WMI participants acknowledge each other’s legitimate perspectives and interests and share consensus on a balanced approach to environmental protection that streamlines regulations and benefits the regional economy. Ongoing working relationships build communication and trust.

But the WMI does more: the WMI facilitates a shared understanding of how each project can be an incremental contribution to achieving the comprehensive long-term vision for the watershed. This comprehensive, long-term perspective yields insight into how projects and programs overlap, interconnect, or potentially conflict.

As WMI participants come to understand the complex, interconnected nature of environmental issues and the long-term process of watershed degradation and renewal, consensus-building becomes much more than simply negotiating or “trading off” one benefit against another. Instead of mere compromise, participants may find creative solutions that solve many problems at once. It is often possible, through consensus-based planning, to come up with a new solution that achieves higher economic values for land use, conserves public funds, and improves habitat quality.

However, the solution may not become apparent until stakeholders develop a common background in watershed science and policy. WMI participants share an interdisciplinary understanding that encompasses hydrogeomorphology, ecology, pollutant fate and transport, land-use policy, tax policy, land-development economics, and urban design. The WMI makes it possible for individual participants

to build up this background over time. As the WMI continues, they can apply that expanded knowledge to help develop solutions to the next set of issues that arise.

This process of investigating, educating, sharing information, and opening up discussion is what the WMI does best.

10c | Adaptive Management of Santa Clara Basin Watersheds

In summary, the WMI is laying the groundwork for adaptive management of Santa Clara Basin watersheds. As described in Section 8f, adaptive management is the process of implementing policy decisions as scientifically driven management experiments that test predictions and assumptions in management plans, and using the resulting information to improve the plans.

Adaptive management requires that stakeholders make long-term commitments to a process of planning, doing, checking, and adapting their plans, and that they commit to doing this together.

There are two basic requirements to make this kind of iterative planning process work: A starting point, and a method to evaluate and improve with each iteration of the process.

10d | Initial Priorities

To suggest a starting point for the WMI’s future work, the WMI’s Core Group reviewed the strategic objectives and “Next Steps for the WMI” in Chapters 3–9 and conducted a prioritization exercise.

The results are a rough indication of what WMI participants believe will be the most important concerns of the WMI in the next 1-2 years.

The following strategic objectives scored highest:

- Better Assessments, TMDLs, and Discharge Permits
- Integrated Planning of Floodplains and Riparian Corridors
- Integrated multi-objective planning and adaptive management for in-stream projects and programs.
- Incorporating the WMI Vision into General Plans and Specific Area Plans

The highest-ranking “Next Steps for the WMI” included:

- Coordinate implementation of watershed stewardship plans, floodplain/riparian corridor planning, SCVURPPP’s hydro-graphic modification management plans, and habitat conservation planning.
- Convene a dialogue with Planning Commissioners and Directors regarding the use of General Plans and Specific Area Plans to implement the WMI’s vision of continuous habitat corridors and intensely developed neighborhoods.
- Improve and expand pilot watershed assessments.
- Continue and build on the WMI’s successful collaborative processes that led the 1998 adoption of uncontested discharge permits for the three POTWs and to the 2002 adoption of site-specific objectives for copper and nickel.

- Prepare annual reports updating key indicators of watershed health and describing recent progress in preserving and enhancing Basin watersheds, new findings and study results, and WMI achievements and successes.
- Bring the WMI’s message to advisory boards, environmental commissions, planning commissions, and other venues for public input to agency decision-making.

10e | Measures of Success

The WMI will develop and use programmatic indicators and environmental indicators to characterize progress toward the strategic objectives and to assess the effectiveness of the “next steps” identified in Chapters 3–9. These indicators will be reported annually.

Programmatic indicators will measure both outputs (efforts made) and outcomes (results achieved). Measured outputs will include stakeholder processes established, grants applied for, literature distributed, and presentations made. Measured outcomes will include permits adopted without contest, agreements reached, consensus documents published, and public response to watershed education efforts.

Environmental indicators should be scientifically driven and will be established by stakeholder groups working on specific issues. Environmental indicators may also measure both outputs and outcomes. Measured outputs may include acres of wetlands restored, linear feet of stream bank stabilized, or number of barriers to

Three Examples of How a Comprehensive Approach Can Lead to Better, More Cost-Effective Solutions

1. Instead of building channels to accommodate rare, large floods, protect buildings to minimize damage and create floodplain areas with trails, recreation, and protected riparian habitat. (See Chapter 5.)
2. Use water recycling to reduce potential impacts of summertime freshwater discharges to southern South San Francisco Bay, while supplementing the Basin’s water supply. (See Chapter 6.)
3. Instead of requiring expensive enhancements to wastewater treatment, use the TMDL process to consider all pollutant sources and find the most efficient way to achieve water-quality objectives. (See Chapter 9.)

fish passage removed. Measured outcomes may include improved biotic indices, improved stream functions, and reduced numbers of pollutant “hot spots.”

10f | The WMI’s Role in Managing Santa Clara Basin Watersheds

This Watershed Action Plan is not merely a list of actions to be implemented by others; rather, it initiates an ongoing, iterative process of adaptive management for Santa Clara Basin watersheds.

The WMI will continue to pursue the goals that it adopted in 1999: a broad, consensus-based process, simplifying regulatory requirements without compromising environmental protection, balancing the objectives of water supply management, habitat protection, flood management and land use, and a commitment to an implementable plan that incorporates science and is continuously improved.

Each of the WMI’s stakeholders has a unique role to play, and unique contributions to make, toward achieving those goals. Many of the things that agencies, organizations, and individuals can do are specified in Chapters 3-9.

The WMI itself will focus on three general tasks:

- ◀ **facilitating stakeholder processes.**
- ◀ **bringing recommendations to decision-makers.**
- ◀ **educating and involving the public.**

The WMI will continue to advance long-term stakeholder collaboration and information sharing and, at the same time, will

support stakeholder work groups dedicated to TMDLs or other specific and current regulatory and environmental issues. The WMI will be an ongoing stakeholder forum to which contentious issues can be referred. The WMI will continue to emphasize the interconnectedness of watershed issues and will look for ways to align, coordinate, and integrate programs, policies, and actions.

The WMI will continue to develop consensus recommendations, such as those in Chapters 3–9, on what agencies, organizations, and individuals can do to help protect and enhance Basin watersheds. These recommendations will include grant applications and requests to fund watershed projects. The WMI will communicate these recommendations to commissions and advisory committees as well as to the Councils and Boards of public agencies.

10g | WMI Outreach

The WMI will also continue to educate the public on watershed issues and to encourage community participation and stewardship to protect and enhance watersheds.

In a large metropolitan area with a wide variety of communications media, it is difficult for any one message to cut through the “clutter” and reach all area residents unless it is disseminated widely and repeatedly.¹ SCVURPPP, the WMI, and the DESFBNWR are emphasizing the following messages in a multi-year public/private “Watershed Watch” campaign:²

- ◀ A watershed is a land area that drains water into a creek, river, lake, wetland, bay or groundwater aquifer.

- Because you live in the Santa Clara Basin watershed, your actions affect local creeks and the Bay.
- Be a watershed steward.
- By protecting the watershed, creeks, and the Bay, you are protecting the environment for you, your children, and future generations.

Through partnerships with media companies, the campaign is leveraging hundreds of thousands of dollars in media buys to promote both general watershed messages and seasonal messages focused on specific pollutants.

Through Watershed Watch, SCVURPPP, other public agencies, and private donors also fund outreach at schools and at fairs and other special events. A Creek Connections Action Group, which includes staff from SCVWD, San Jose, Santa Clara County Parks, and SCVURPPP, coordinates creek clean-ups. SCVURPPP and individual co-permittees conduct well-planned outreach targeted at employees, residents, businesses, and schools. These activities cover a broad range of watershed issues.³

Pollution prevention outreach typically aims to change individual behaviors; the WMI's outreach needs also to educate and inform the Basin community about the public policies and public investment needed to achieve the WMI's vision.

The WMI will encourage its stakeholders to align and coordinate their messages in a way that promotes the WMI vision. In particular, the stakeholders will promote broader understanding of stream functions, the effects of urbanization on streams, the multiple uses of floodplains in an urban area, the importance of imperviousness,

how conservation and recycling can make more water available for stream habitat, the need for habitat reserves, and the advantages of smart growth, as well as pollution prevention.

The WMI will help stakeholders promote the WMI vision by:

- Developing, updating, and refining a message to popularize the WMI's approach to preserving and enhancing Basin watersheds.
- Bringing this message to advisory boards, environmental commissions, planning commissions, and other venues for public input to agency decision-making.
- Assessing the need for, and feasibility of, watershed councils in each watershed.
- Linking watershed issues and outreach to community organizations such as homeowners associations and groups that are established or supported in connection with municipal improvement efforts (e.g. San Jose's Strong Neighborhoods Initiative).
- Helping to coordinate input to, and distribution of, outreach newsletters published by agencies and community groups.
- Bringing the WMI's perspective on watershed management to K-12 environmental education curricula.
- Encouraging and assisting agencies to incorporate interpretive and educational features as part of recreational facilities and other public works projects (particu-



larly those in the floodplain or that otherwise relate to streams or wetlands).

- ▶ Developing, in cooperation with stakeholders, an annual report updating key indicators of watershed health and describing recent progress in preserving and enhancing Basin watersheds, new findings and study results, and WMI achievements and successes.

10h | Moving from Planning to Implementation

This Action Plan is intended to provide the basis for more detailed planning and adaptive management at the watershed scale through identification of the main areas of concern and action that were voiced by stakeholders through the Action Sheets.

The next steps for the WMI will include:

1. The Action Plan will be adopted by signatories during the fall of 2003. In addition, the WMI intends to prepare a factsheet to summarize the Action Plan and communicate it to the public.
2. The Core Group will finalize its workplan for the first year of the WMI and define a process to phase actions outlined in this plan. The workplan will then be implemented through aligning existing programs and/or obtaining grants and other resources to implement new actions. As part of its commitment to adaptive management, the Core Group will review all products and processes, accomplishments and successes in preparing workplans for subsequent years.
3. The Core Group will complete its review of options for the future structure of the

WMI and determine the most appropriate structure.

10h1 First Year Workplan

As described earlier in this chapter, the WMI, in approaching implementation of the program of the Watershed Action Plan, initiated a process to establish consensual first year priorities. From the resulting list of priority Actions, a preliminary first year workplan was developed that emphasized the following five activities:

- 1. Planning Dialogue:** Convene a dialogue with local county and municipal planning officials to encourage adoption/acceptance of the Watershed Action Plan and to move toward the integration of water resources protection interests or watershed stewardship into land use planning
- 2. Wastewater Permit Adoption:** Secure adoption of appropriate permits for Wastewater Discharge.
- 3. Baylands and Watershed Assessment:** Provide technical support and staff resources for Baylands Assessment and review watershed assessment methodology options for the next phase of watershed assessment in individual watersheds.
- 4. Watershed Councils:** Assess the feasibility of establishing Watershed Councils to coordinate assessment and planning activities in individual watersheds.
- 5. Watershed Stewardship Plans:** Provide input into the Santa Clara Valley Water District's development of Watershed Stewardship Plans for the Guadalupe River, West Valley and Lower Peninsula Watersheds.

The first year work plan also places high priority on restructuring the WMI organization to facilitate implementation of the Watershed Action Plan, developing performance indicators of Action Plan Success, and completing distribution of its *Watershed Characteristics Report, Watershed Assessment Report* and *Watershed Action Plan*.

The workplan also includes continuing to track and share information with other watershed related efforts, such as, San Francisco Estuary Project, Habitat Conservation Plan process, South Bay wetlands restoration, IWRP/South Bay Recycling program and the Community Outreach program of the Stormwater Program.

10h2 Leveraging Resources

A key element of the Action Plan's implementation strategy is to leverage resources—by securing grant assistance, by linking with existing programs and by efficiently using staff and resources of participating agencies and organizations.

For example, in the grant arena, the WMI is supporting grant applications for state grants to:

- stabilize eroding banks in Thompson creek, a tributary of Coyote Creek, develop design tools to aid in addressing urban development-related increases in peak flood flows, complete feasibility analyses of promising habitat improvements in Coyote Creek, and provide technical assistance to creek side landowners for bank stabilization and stream restoration,

- develop watershed health indicators and watershed planning indicators to measure success of the Action Plan implementation, support development of watershed councils to assist with watershed planning and project implementation,
- conduct feasibility analyses of habitat improvement projects on the Guadalupe River.

In the planning arena, the WMI intends to seek involvement and linkage with several initiatives, for example, planning for the restoration of South Bay wetlands, development of a county-wide Habitat Conservation Plan, and support, if requested, for the Watershed Resources Protection Collaborative.

The Watershed Resources Protection Collaborative is a forum among high-level planning officials, Water District executives and leaders of the business and environmental community in response to the Water District's efforts to update Ordinance 83-2 to address water resources protection interests. The Collaborative provides a unique opportunity for advancing the WMI's interests in convening a dialogue with planning officials on land use and water resources issues. The WMI's Land Use Subgroup, as well as members of the WMI, are either actively participating or seeking clarification on how it can develop linkages with such a forum as the Collaborative is evolving.

The WMI, through its Land Use Subgroup, has developed a comparison of local land use plans, policies, and ordinances with respect to watershed protection. The WMI

therefore has expertise and information that could be of use to the Collaborative at the point where the Collaborative begins its fact finding process to develop guidelines and standards.

10h3 WMI Organizational Structure

The WMI Core Group is examining how it can adapt its current organizational structure to reflect the functions it will perform as it moves into implementation of the Action Plan. Some of the ideas include a structure to focus on the functions it performs best: information exchange, conflict resolution; a structure that would convene subgroups or workgroups only as needed; align the subgroups along the tasks of the WMI workplan.

10h4 Next Steps

The completion and adoption of this Action Plan is a major milestone for the WMI, because it concludes the Planning Phase and initiates the Implementation Phase of the WMI and accomplishes one of its goals.

In order to accomplish the WMI goals and realize the vision of restored habitat and healthy ecosystems balanced with needs for housing, recreation, and economic activities, the WMI will continue to play its

unique role. The WMI's first year workplan is one step towards addressing the strategic objectives described in this action plan.

The initial work will include more efficiently using existing resources and aligning programs, continued use of facilitated stakeholder processes, and building relationships with other important efforts in the area, such as the Watershed Resources Protection Collaborative and the South Bay Saltponds restoration effort.

With the WMI's continued stakeholder support it can do what it does best—building a common understanding and integrating the various efforts to improve the Santa Clara Basin's environment.

10i | Conclusion

Ecosystems are integrated and complex; social, legal, and political systems are also integrated and complex. These systems are in constant change, and change each other. Successful intervention follows from a common understanding of how our social, political, and natural environments interact. This Action Plan is one step in the journey toward that common understanding.