

9 March 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Howard Dashiell

From: Amir Mani, PhD, PE (EKI)
Anona Dutton, PG, CHg (EKI)
Sarah Hodson (EKI)

Subject: Summary Report for the Mendocino County Water Agency Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to Prioritize Community Water Needs (EKI C20176.00)

This memorandum (Memo) presents a summary of discussions and the final recommendations by the Mendocino County Water Resources Team (MCWRT) Technical Advisory Committee to Prioritize Community Water Needs (TAC). The Memo is organized to follow the formatting and structure of the Mendocino County Public Health, Safety, and Resources Standing Committee Agenda Packet to facilitate its inclusion as an agenda item for the Committee's upcoming public meeting on 27 February 2023.

Agenda Title: Discussion of Proposed Priority Projects by the Mendocino County Water Resources Team (MCWRT) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to Prioritize Community Water Needs

Recommended Action/Motion: Consider input from local water districts, purveyors, and community partners regarding proposal of priority projects; provide direction to staff as appropriate.

Previous Board/Board Committee Actions: On 21 September 2022, the Mendocino County Public Health, Safety, and Resources Standing Committee (PHSR) discussed the proposed priority water resilience projects sponsored by Supervisor McGourty. The project proposal was further discussed during a Board of Supervisor (BOS) meeting on 1 November 2022. Since the County of Mendocino was in the process of hiring a consultant to serve as the Water Resource Specialist and Create a Mendocino County Water Resource Team, the BOS decided that the hired consultant would maintain an updated list of water resilience projects and water needs and convene a TAC to prioritize those projects. The prioritized list of projects would then be reported back to the PSHR and the BOS for public discussion and further direction. On 13 December 2022, the BOS approved Department of Transportation Agreement Number 220025, Professional Services Agreement with EKI Environment & Water, Inc. (EKI), to serve as the consultant. On 27 February 2023, the PSHR reviewed and discussed the presentation from EKI regarding TAC's recommendation to prioritize community water needs.

Summary of Request/Referral: The following are the priority water resilience projects proposed by TAC. The priority projects were presented for review and discussion with the PSHR on 27 February 2023. The discussion has been updated based on the information received from entities, lead agencies, and State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) to be presented and discussed at the BOS meeting on 28 March 2023.

SUMMARY OF WORK

The TAC is an eight-member committee, with five voting members representing each of the County supervisorial districts and three non-voting members, as listed in **Table 1** below. EKI is the consulting Water Resources Team responsible for convening the TAC and facilitating discussion in TAC meetings.

The TAC convened on 24 January 2023 and 8 February 2023 to propose and prioritize water supply resiliency and reliability projects for the County.

Table 1. Technical Advisory Committee to Prioritize Community Water Needs

<u><i>Voting Members:</i></u> • Deborah Edelman*, Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD; District 1) • Sean White, City of Ukiah (District 2) • Jim Shields, Laytonville County Water District (District 3) • John Smith, City of Fort Bragg (District 4) • James Sullivan, Mendocino City Community Services District (District 5)	<u><i>Non-Voting Members:</i></u> • Howard Dashiell, Department of Transportation • Steve Dunncliff, Executive Office • John Harper, University of California Cooperative Extensions (UCCE) <u><i>Other Participants:</i></u> • EKI Environment & Water, Inc. (MCWRT)
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*Elizabeth Salomone (Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District) was originally selected to represent District 1 but forfeited her position after the first TAC meeting.

Compile List of County-wide Projects

EKI conducted outreach to various stakeholders, including tribes, water districts, community services districts, small water agencies, and consulting firms, using the contact information provided by TAC members. EKI shared an editable project information table with all stakeholders, allowing each participant to enter proposed and ongoing water resiliency projects.

The updated list of projects builds upon a project list previously developed by MCRCD for the County's application to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR's) Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Program (submitted in December 2021). The project list was used to facilitate TAC discussions and will be updated as needed by EKI throughout its contract with the County.

Initial Project Prioritization

EKI developed the following ten criteria based on the County Water Agency Implementation Plan (WAIP) goals to score and rank the proposed projects:

1. Promotes conservation, recycled water, or provides capacity for drought response;
2. Promotes habitat restoration and protects fisheries;
3. Promotes education and outreach;

4. Serves disadvantaged and underserved communities;
5. Promotes long-term investment in water reliability and resiliency;
6. Well-defined or -designed project, ready for implementation;
7. Includes publicly available monitoring and data collection;
8. Multi-benefit with quantifiable benefits and impact;
9. Increases access and transparency to water data in the County; and,
10. Eligible for an existing grant.

At the 24 January 2023 TAC meeting, TAC members completed a survey to rank the importance of each of the above-listed criteria, as it relates to project selection. Prior to the second TAC meeting, EKI determined which criteria were satisfied by each proposed project. The projects were then scored by weighting the criteria based on TAC survey results and ranked accordingly.

Recommended Projects

At the 8 February 2023 meeting, the TAC discussed over 40 projects included on the ranked list, individually and at length. After discussion, the TAC chose to select the top ten ranked projects based off the prioritization described above, excluding projects that were recently included in the Ukiah Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's application to the Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Grant Program, and increasing the rank of one project (Rainwater Harvest and Greywater Workshops and Tank Cost Share) that the TAC agreed had significant County-wide benefits.

It is important to note that although the recommended project list includes projects for all supervisorial districts, the TAC viewed the projects holistically (i.e., based on technical merits and their benefit to County's water reliability and resiliency) and did not select projects by any geographical or political boundaries. Recommended projects are listed in **Table 2** below. EKI's scope of work includes assistance for grant writing for up to five projects depending on the solicitations. However, the TAC chose to include ten projects on the priority list due to the needed communications and consultations for most of the projects to further determine their scope and eligibility for grant applications. The additional projects will be selected as ranked when higher priority projects are deemed ineligible for open solicitations or have lower chances of funding.

Table 2. Technical Advisory Committee Recommended Projects

Rank	Project Name	Agency	District	Project Description
1	135 Acre-Foot Raw Water Reservoirs	City of Fort Bragg	4	The City will purchase 582 acres of land for the purpose of constructing three 45-acre foot reservoirs that provide an additional 44 million gallons of stored water. Floating solar panels will be installed and generate three megawatts of electricity and reduce algal growth and evaporation. Benefits to this work include; watershed protection, off stream storage, riparian habitat relief, sensitive natural communities protection, community fire protection (helicopter water access), Community Forest, coastal water support set aside and Blue Economy tie-in. Reservoirs to be filled during winter months to reduce impacts on stream sources.
2	Recycled Water System Upgrade and Expansion and Modernization of Wastewater Treatment Plant	Mendocino City Community Services District	5	The wastewater treatment plant was designed over 50 years ago and requires upgrade to provide tertiary treated water for landscape irrigation. Presently, there is only a 3-day emergency storage facility for untreated wastewater which is inadequate should a breakdown incapacitate the facility. Additionally, the town of Mendocino is very water insecure. Modern tertiary water treatment can be used for landscape irrigation and possibly groundwater replenishment during summer months when over 25% of the wells supplying town water go dry. Additionally, this project includes the design and construction of a new Recycled Water System to meet current State Title-22 standards, the addition of a 50,000-gallon recycled water storage/contact tank, and expanded recycled water use and fire protection.
3	Water Treatment Plant Repairs	Laytonville County Water District (LCWD)	3	LCWD is in the initial stage of seeking funding for Water Treatment Plant repairs for booster pumps and roof replacements for a backwash tank and reaction tank, as well as the abandonment of a non-producing water well. This project also includes the interior epoxy re-coating of a 250,000-gallon storage tank.

Rank	Project Name	Agency	District	Project Description
4	Smart Water Meter Project	Mendocino City Community Services District (MCCSD)	5	This project will replace 500 water meters on private well heads, for more accurate and timely data collection, improving groundwater management and helps better detect leaks. Meters could be repurposed when MCCSD has a community water system.
5	Gualala River Flow Bank Project	North Gualala Water Company	5	This project includes the purchase and installation of a 22'D x 21'H, 36,000-gallon glass-lined Backwash Tank as part of a larger water project to conserve water in the Gualala River and provide drinking water for the Gualala residents.
6	Ackerman Creek Floodplain Management and Groundwater Recharge Project	Pinoleville Pomo Nation	1	Pinoleville is located on a flood plain adjacent to Ackerman Creek. Decades ago, berms were installed using the accepted technology of the time (junked cars) that have since rusted into scrap metal. Pinoleville has been actively working on remediating this issue and enhancing the natural flow of the creek. The Tribe has many riparian restoration studies and plans for restoring the flow and flood plain, and has been working with McBain and Associate in Arcata for many years gathering flow data and conducting in-house groundwater and stream monitoring. Funding for final plans and the pilot project would allow the Tribe to move forward with this project, providing much needed groundwater recharge and flood management, benefiting the Ukiah Valley Aquifer.
7	Consolidation of URRWA	Upper Russian River Water Agency (URRWA) or Mendocino County	1	The URRWA is a Joint Powers Authority working for the consolidation of Ukiah Valley's water. The board includes a single member from Willow County Water, Calpella County Water, Redwood Valley County Water, Millview County Water, and most recently the Ukiah Valley Sanitation District. This project will connect water service from Ukiah to Redwood Valley to ensure that there is a safe, clean, reliable, and water system supplying potable water to residents in the service area that managed as a unit.

Rank	Project Name	Agency	District	Project Description
8	Western Hills Source Water Protection	City of Ukiah	2	This project is proposed to purchase the undeveloped headwater properties in the western hills. The current hydrology of the western hills of the Ukiah Valley is a major driver for recharging the underlying aquifer. Preserving these properties will protect these important resources and help ensure that natural runoff and groundwater recharge patterns will continue in perpetuity.
9	Eel River – Trout Creek Water Resource Project	Potter Valley Tribe	2	This project includes the design and installation of rainwater catchment system and tanks on Trout Creek property to promote fire response and reforestation projects.
10	Rainwater Harvest and Greywater Workshops and Tank Cost Share	MCRC	All	This project involves four workshops to demonstrate installation of rainwater catchment and greywater systems, as well as funding for tank purchases.

Recommendation of the TAC for the County to Pursue SAFER Grant

In addition to the projects listed above, the TAC recommends considering a County-wide application to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) program. Senate Bill (SB) 200 established the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, which provides \$130 million annually to develop and implement sustainable solutions for small systems with violations of drinking water standards. Expenditures from the Fund will complement other funding, including General Fund appropriations, general obligation bond funds, and funding available through annual Drinking Water State Revolving Fund capitalization grants. The SAFER Program's goal is to provide safe and affordable drinking water in every California community, for every Californian.

The TAC identified several projects that may be eligible for SAFER program funding, such as water distribution system replacements and upgrades at the Little Lake and Branscomb Mobile Home Parks. The TAC's recommendation was for the County to apply to the County-wide and Regional Funding Program (County-wide SAFER)¹ to be able to bundle the above-mentioned projects under one application to the SAFER program, which the County would sponsor. This approach would allow small entities, often with

¹ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/funding_solicitation.html

insufficient resources for grant administration, to receive funding for projects critical to meeting drinking water needs. Additionally, previous correspondence between James Sullivan, a member of the TAC, and SWRCB has indicated that funding is readily available for these types of projects in the County.

Upon approving this recommendation, EKI has reached out to the lead agencies for the projects being considered for County-wide SAFER and the State Board to receive more information on the program's requirements and the feasibility and potential of this approach. The County-wide SAFER is intended to address the needs of state smalls, domestic wells, and small public water systems that generally need immediate assistance and serve disadvantaged communities (DACs) and low-income households. Counties, Non-governmental organizations (NGO) or other public agencies on behalf of one or more counties are eligible for funding under this program.² The County-wide SAFER supports and funds the following project types:

- Assessment
 - Community outreach
 - Domestic well testing
- Interim Solutions
 - Bottled water
 - Tanks and hauled water
 - Kiosk filling stations
 - Point of Use/Point of Entry (POU/POE) installation and maintenance
- Long-Term Solutions
 - Well repairs and/or replacements
 - Limited-scale consolidation (such as laterals, above-ground interties)
 - POU/POE installation and maintenance, in selected cases

The County-wide SAFER will follow the priorities outlined in the Fund Expenditure Plan³ for funding allocation. The overall process for a County-wide SAFER grant application is as follows:

1. The County or an eligible partner entity applies through Financial Assistance Application Tool (FAAST).
2. State Water Board staff review the application. State Water Board staff work with the applicant to obtain any additional information to complete the application package and make a funding recommendation.

² <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/docs/2022/application-and-funding-process-overview-accessible.pdf>

³ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/docs/2022/final-2022-23-sadw-fep.pdf

3. State Water Board approves the funding. The recipient may start implementing the project and costs may start being incurred upon approval. However, costs cannot be reimbursed until after the execution of a funding agreement.
4. A funding agreement is drafted and executed.
5. Recipient submits reimbursement requests and progress reports in accordance with the terms of the funding agreement.
6. State Water Board makes payments for reimbursement requests.

Notably, the County would be responsible for writing and submitting the grant application. Therefore, as the application sponsor, the County would ultimately be responsible for grant administration should funding be awarded. Additionally, SAFER funding is typically done on a reimbursement basis⁴, and as such, the County or the project lead would be responsible for providing project funding until reimbursed for expenses when grant funding is received.

With respect to the projects identified by the TAC to be considered for a bundled SAFER application, EKI's correspondence with the State Board indicates that due to the construction and infrastructural nature of the projects, and their relatively large scopes and expenses, separate applications for each project under the overall SAFER program is the most reasonable pathway for funding. Furthermore, projects that do not address immediate needs or water quality non-compliance, such as installation of meters, would be unlikely to be eligible for funding under the SAFER program, based on the Fund Expenditure Plan.

Fiscal Details

EKI recommends that fiscal details be provided as needed by the County staff for the PSHR and the BOS review.

⁴ SWRCB is authorized to provide necessary advance payment for projects funded by the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, with advance payments for construction projects not to exceed 25% of the total amount of construction funding provided by the State Water Board for a project.