

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 3

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE APPROVAL OF SAN DIEGO INTEGRATED REGIONAL
WATER MANAGEMENT GRANT PROGRAM AGREEMENT AND RELATED
CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego (County) works to protect and enhance the region's water resources through collaborative planning and strategic investment in multi-benefit water projects. A key strategy in this effort is leveraging grant funding to support projects that improve water quality, water supply resilience, habitat protection, and community health. One avenue for such grant funding is the County's participation in the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program. Established under the Regional Water Management Planning Act (SB 1672) in 2002 and led by the California Department of Water Resources, the IRWM Program fosters collaboration among public agencies, non-profits, and stakeholders to address the region's most pressing water challenges through coordinated planning and implementation. The program encourages efficient use of resources, reduces duplication of efforts, and strengthens the region's ability to obtain grant funds for multi-benefit projects. The return on investment in this program has been high with grant awards to the region through the IRWM far exceeding the collective cost to operate this entity.

In 2005, the County, City of San Diego (City), and San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority) formed the San Diego IRWM Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) to coordinate regional water planning efforts which have been approved by the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors (Board) on May 11, 2005 (15), January 28, 2009 (18), and October 28, 2020 (8). Since then, the IRWM Program has obtained about \$133 million in grant funding for projects that have provided significant benefits to the San Diego region, including improved watershed and groundwater management, investment in water infrastructure, stronger regional coordination, and expanded engagement with tribal and under-represented communities. This integrated approach supports long-term sustainability of the region's water resources while aligning with State water policy priorities.

The current San Diego IRWM MOU expires on December 31, 2025 and requires a new five-year agreement through 2030. A new five-year agreement will extend collaboration through 2030, guiding program administration, project selection, grant coordination, and cost-sharing. It also supports outreach and technical assistance for under-represented communities. Program costs are shared equally among the three RWMG agencies. If authorized, the County's share of program costs will most likely not exceed \$333,334 over the five-year period from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2030. The \$333,334 funding commitment does not include grant administration expenses incurred by the Water Authority, as these expenses have historically been paid from grant funds and have not been billed.

Funding for Fiscal Year 2025-26 (up to \$100,000) is included in the Department of Public Works approved Operational Plan (General Fund, Watershed Protection Program). This covers expenses under the current MOU, which runs through December 31, 2025, and the proposed MOU through June 30, 2026. If approved, funding for future years will be included in subsequent Operational Plans. This request will result in no additional staff years. Today's request is for the Board to approve the County's continued participation in the San Diego IRWM Program.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Find that the proposed action to approve funding and execute an updated Memorandum of Understanding for the County's continued participation in the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management Program is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.
2. Authorize the Director, Department of Public Works, to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of San Diego and the San Diego County Water Authority for the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management Plan and Grant Program for Fiscal Years 2025-26 through 2030-31 and to execute all amendments to the agreement as necessary, with a County cost-share not to exceed \$333,334 for the five-year period from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2030.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today's action supports the County of San Diego's (County) ongoing commitment to protecting public health, enhancing community well-being, and advancing regional water sustainability. Through the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program, efforts to improve water supply reliability, protect natural resources, and reduce pollution to local waterways directly benefit residents across the region, including in the unincorporated area. By prioritizing equity in project planning and implementation, the IRWM program aims to ensure all communities have fair access to clean water and share the benefits of regional investments. In particular, the County is committed to addressing water quality challenges in under-represented communities, which have historically experienced greater impacts from environmental stressors. Ensuring the health of our streams and beaches is essential for providing diverse and accessible recreational opportunities for citizens throughout all regions of San Diego County.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today's action to authorize approval of the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program agreement aligns with the County's Sustainability Goals. These goals aim to safeguard the environment, promote the health and well-being of residents, and ensure the protection of water in all its forms. Continued participation in the IRWM Program enables regional collaboration and sustained investment in projects that enhance water supply reliability, improve water quality, and protect critical water resources and habitat across San Diego County.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in the Department of Public Works (DPW), General Fund. If approved, this will result in current fiscal year cost of \$50,000 for the period of January 1, 2026, to June 30, 2026, for the County's share of Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program costs identified in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The funding source is existing DPW Watershed Protection Program General Purpose Revenue. The MOU covers a five-year period, from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2030, and while total cost for IRWM program management per the MOU may fluctuate annually, it will not exceed \$333,334 over the five-year period. Funds for FY 2026-27 through FY 2030-31 will be included in future years'

Operational Plan. The funding source for future years' cost is existing DPW Watershed Protection Program General Purpose Revenue. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, seconded by Supervisor Aguirre, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended, on Consent.

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe

RECUSED: Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter