



2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Communication Plan

TO: Indio Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs)
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Please note, this Communication Plan is a living document that may change as additional stakeholders are identified or feedback is received. Additional schedule changes may occur due to COVID-19, along with changes in our approach to communicating with and engaging stakeholders remotely. An updated Communication Plan will be uploaded to the website as needed.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2014, California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) to provide a framework for long-term sustainable groundwater management across California. SGMA requires that all California basins designated high or medium priority shall be managed under a GSP or Alternative Plan to a GSP (Alternative Plan). The Indio Subbasin (Subbasin) was designated by DWR as a medium priority basin. As such, SGMA requires formation of locally-controlled groundwater sustainability agency(ies) (GSAs) as the entity(ies) responsible for developing and implementing a GSP or Alternative Plan. The primary goal of the GSP or Alternative Plan is to develop sustainable groundwater management practices for managing the groundwater basin or subbasin without causing undesirable results.

Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), Coachella Water Authority (CWA), Desert Water Agency (DWA), and Indio Water Authority (IWA) collectively represent the Indio Subbasin GSAs. In January 2017, the GSAs submitted to DWR the *2010 Coachella Valley Water Management Plan (2010 CVWMP)*, accompanied by an Indio Subbasin Bridge Document, as a SGMA-compliant Alternative Plan. On July 17, 2019, DWR approved the Alternative Plan with a requirement to submit an Alternative Plan Update by January 1, 2022.

This Communication Plan contains outreach strategies and methods to address effective communication with stakeholders during development of the Alternative Plan Update, including: building trust between and among the GSAs and property owners/residents, disadvantaged communities, tribes, agricultural interests, and environmental interests; language barriers and the need for translation;; and the need for strong and transparent facilitation.

2. GSA DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The GSAs are the designated decision-making entities for the Alternative Plan Update process. On October 5, 2016, the GSAs (CVWD, CWA, DWA, and IWA) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an agreement for collaboration and cost-share for management of the Indio Subbasin under SGMA. Each GSA is responsible for the portion of the Indio Subbasin within their respective service area. The MOU establishes that its intent is to foster cooperation, coordination, and communication among the GSAs regarding management of the Indio Subbasin.

The 2016 MOU established the GSAs' intent to develop and submit the Alternative Plan to DWR. On April 3, 2018, the GSAs approved a Supplement to the MOU that outlined the GSAs intent to prepare an Annual Report for Water Year 2017. On October 29, 2018, the GSAs approved a Second Supplement to the MOU that allowed for ongoing preparation of Annual Reports by April 1 of each water year, along with preparation of a 2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update (which is the subject of this Communication Plan). The Second Supplement directs CVWD to serve as the managing entity for selected consultants, but allows for input and review of all SGMA-related deliverables and transmittal of all data and files to each of the four GSAs.

The GSAs will participate in all community workshops and directed outreach meetings. Public input, no matter the method received (e.g., phone, email, public meeting), will be shared with all of the GSAs for consideration throughout the planning process.

3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Purpose

Public engagement includes both stakeholder coordination and general public involvement. The goal of this public engagement effort is to understand the needs of stakeholders, increase awareness and understanding of the Alternative Plan Update, and promote active involvement in the process. Stakeholders with interest in water management – including agency representatives, municipalities, tribes, agricultural representatives, large irrigators, and non-profit organizations – are the target audience for this Alternative Plan Update Communication Plan. The general public will be engaged throughout the planning process to share information about the Indio Subbasin and water management decisions, and solicit input to the Alternative Plan Update.

Coordination with various entities with interests and/or authority over water management will ensure their active involvement in the Alternative Plan Update. These entities have a vested interest in local water resources and can provide invaluable input to the Alternative Plan Update process, as well as implementing projects/management actions during Plan implementation phases. Through public involvement, the Alternative Plan Update process aims to increase awareness and understanding from the general public including residents, community members, tribes and disadvantaged communities that are ultimately served by the GSAs. The Plan Update will take into account community needs, while demonstrating the importance and interrelation of water management strategies, increasing regional and

local support for implementation projects/management actions (and associated investments), and generating broad-based support for continued regional coordination.

3.2 Participants

All interested stakeholders and members of the general public are invited to participate in this process and collaborate with the GSAs. Individuals representing the following groups have been identified as potential stakeholders:

- State, county and municipal governments
- Wastewater and water agencies
- Land use planning and economic development agencies
- Community councils
- School districts
- Environmental conservation and natural resources organizations
- Private pumpers and large irrigators
- Resource agencies and special interest groups
- Flood control districts
- Disadvantaged and environmental justice communities
- Elected officials
- Farm Bureau and agricultural interest
- Tribal governments
- Academic institutions
- Recreational interests
- Regional planning organization
- Regulatory agencies
- Stormwater management agencies
- Development community
- Chambers of Commerce

Interested members of the general public may include:

- Private homeowners or landowners
- Homeowners associations
- Landscape architects and contractors
- Garden clubs and organizations
- Rotary clubs and other service clubs
- Commercial, industrial, and residential developers
- Community-based organizations
- Schools and parent groups
- Churches

The Alternative Plan Update process will leverage stakeholder connections made through the Coachella IRWM Program. **Appendix A** (located at the end of this Plan) lists all regional stakeholders identified in collaboration with the Coachella Valley IRWM Program, as well as additional participants identified by the GSAs. These stakeholders will be contacted and invited to participate in the Alternative Plan Update process. This Communication Plan is a living document and the stakeholder list may continue to expand if additional stakeholders are identified.

4. SCHEDULE FOR PUBLIC INPUT

The Alternative Plan Update planning process will include outreach and education activities that involve stakeholders affected by water management in the Indio Subbasin. The outreach and education process will inform and educate them about SGMA, groundwater management, the Alternative Plan Update planning process, and solicit and address issues and opportunities to improve groundwater management for the Subbasin. The following activities will be undertaken by the GSAs:

- Develop and provide information regarding SGMA, Alternative Plan Update planning, and groundwater management for public dissemination.

- Present groundwater analysis and modeling, and solicit stakeholder and public input on sustainability goals, management actions, and implementation plans.
- Provide and summarize stakeholder and public input for the GSAs to consider throughout the GSP process.
- Identify and provide opportunities for public input at key project milestones as shown in the Project Schedule (see Figure 1).

4.1 Project Schedule

The final Alternative Plan Update must be submitted to the DWR by January 1, 2022. The 2022 Alternative Plan Update is scheduled for completion by November 2021, providing time for adoption and approval by the GSAs. The project schedule is designed to solicit, consider, and address public and stakeholder input regarding the important planning elements, including Subbasin conditions, groundwater modeling, sustainability goals, management actions, implementation plan, and the draft and final Alternative Plan Update. Figure 1 shows a depiction of the generalized schedule for these planning elements and public and stakeholder engagement. This Communication Plan is a living document and the schedule may change as the need arises. All schedule updates will be posted to the website (www.IndioSubbasinSGMA.org).

Alternative Plan review and evaluation will begin in Summer 2021. During this phase, the draft Alternative Plan will be published for public review at the website (www.IndioSubbasinSGMA.org). The GSAs will open a 45-day public comment period. The GSAs will hold a community workshop to provide an overview of the Alternative Plan content, while giving stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback and comments about the Alternative Plan. Once the public review period is completed, public comments will be taken into consideration and incorporated into a final version of the Alternative Plan before submitting to DWR by January 1, 2022. Following submittal, DWR will post the Alternative Plan Update for a 60-day comment period through the DWR's SGMA portal at <http://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/>. Public comments will be posted to the DWR's website prior to the State agency's evaluation, assessment, and approval.

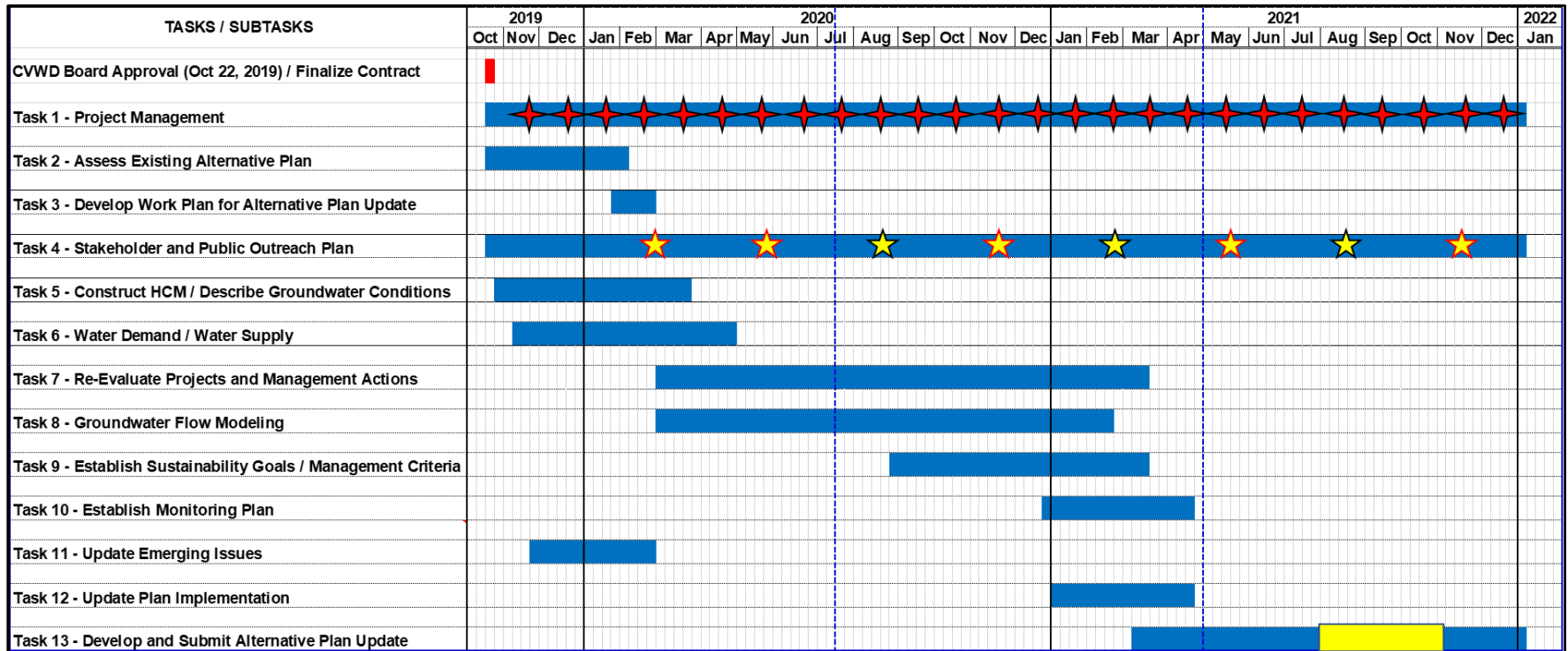
5. INPUT FROM DIVERSE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

5.1 Purpose

The goal of diverse outreach is to identify and obtain input from groups that may be otherwise limited from participating in the Alternative Plan Update process and implementation. Various reasons exist which limit participation in regional water planning efforts, such as financial or language constraints. Previous outreach efforts through the Coachella IRWM Program have identified water-related concerns facing groups with limited voice in water management efforts. Diverse outreach for input to the Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update will build on previous efforts from the Coachella Valley IRWM program and CVWD's Disadvantaged Community Infrastructure Task Force.

Targeted outreach to diverse populations within the Indio Subbasin will be conducted to ensure that the technical assumptions and approach used in the planning effort are understood. This outreach includes directed email communications inviting these groups to attend up to eight quarterly public workshops (described in Section 7 Outreach Methods below).

Figure 1: 2022 Indio Subbasin Alternative Plan Update Schedule



- ★ GSA Meeting
- ★ Public Workshop
- ★ Public Workshop & Targeted Tribal Outreach
- █ Public Review of Draft Alternative Plan

5.2 Participants

Communities targeted for diverse outreach include disadvantaged communities (DACs) and environmental justice (EJ) organizations. DACs are defined by DWR as census geographies with an annual Median Household Income (MHI) of less than 80% of the statewide MHI. EJ is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and environmental of environmental laws.” Outreach to organizations also involved with EJ issues ensures that water management activities implemented under the Alternative Plan implementation do not unduly burden DACs.

Numerous local and State-wide DACs and EJ organizations will be targeted during outreach for the Alternative Plan, including but not limited to:

- Clean Water Action
- Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment
- Desert Edge Community Council
- El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center
- Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW)
- Inland Congregation United for Change (ICUC)
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Representative from Assemblyman Garcia
- Pueblo Unido Community Development Corporation
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation

5.3 Coachella Valley EJ Enforcement Task Force (regional Water Quality Control Board)Public Comments

Public comments will be accepted both verbally and in writing, and will be considered in development of the Alternative Plan Update. A comment matrix will be maintained by the GSAs throughout the planning process to track and incorporate, as appropriate, comments received on the Alternative Plan Update.

5.4 Community Meetings

GSA members are available to speak at existing community meetings regarding SGMA and the Alternative Plan Update, as requested by and based on the interest of stakeholders. If a GSA member is present at a community meeting, they can provide a SGMA Update as available.

6. TRIBAL OUTREACH AND COORDINATION

6.1 Purpose

The goal of engaging the Coachella Valley’s tribal governments is to better understand their critical water resources issues and needs. An Indio Subbasin Tribe and Groundwater Sustainability Agency Workgroup (Tribal Workgroup) was established in 2017 and has existed for several years through submittal and DWR approval of the Alternative Plan. During the Alternative Plan Update, the GSAs seek to continue to discuss major water-related concerns facing the tribes and ensure regional water management efforts, such as the long-term implementation of the Alternative Plan Update, are responsive to those needs.

Targeted outreach to the tribes within the Indio Subbasin will be conducted to ensure that the technical assumptions and approach used in the planning effort are understood. This outreach includes up to five semi-annual meetings with tribal representatives through the existing Tribal Workgroup and will occur on the same day as the public workshops (described in Section 7 Outreach Methods below).

6.2 Participants

Tribal participants will be contacted based on input from Tribal Workgroup members and the GSA partners. The following six Native American tribes in the region will be targeted during outreach for the Alternative Plan Update process:

- Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Augustine Band of Mission Indians
- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- Morongo Band of Mission Indians
- Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians

Additionally, meetings will include the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, a current member of the Tribal Workgroup, and may include representatives from other tribal coordinating agencies or groups.

7. OUTREACH METHODS

The GSAs believe that public access is critical to the success of the Alternative Plan Update process. The GSAs have taken a strategic approach to public outreach. The following tactics have been implemented to achieve successful outreach:

- Developed an initial Communication Plan that can be executed by any combination of agency staff or consultants.
- Refined the timeline for the Alternative Plan Update process in such a way that appropriate dates for notification of public meetings, workshops, etc. can be documented and addressed in a logical and orderly manner.
- Determined methods for the dissemination of information for public review and for public input (e.g. email and website).

The following tactics will be used moving forward, during the planning process, to achieve greater community participation where possible:

- Provide outreach documents in both English and Spanish to accommodate the primary languages of community members.
- During planning/preparation for public workshops, make suggestions for schedule or format that allow for greater public participation.
- Apprise the members at each meeting, and sooner if necessary, as to the issues and needs for supporting public outreach.

The public will be notified of public workshops via email and website, given specific contact information for questions or comments, and given sufficient time to review materials prior to or after workshops.

7.1 Public Workshops

Eight public workshops will be held on a quarterly basis. The public workshops are intended to inform stakeholders and the general public of the Alternative Plan Update progress, solicit data and information to support planning and analysis for the Subbasin, and seek input on key decisions made throughout the planning process. Public workshops to address the Plan Update will include outreach to the participants listed above. The GSAs recognize the need and importance of public participation and will work diligently to make sure that not only are stakeholders and participants listened to, but that their valuable advice helps create an effective groundwater management plan update for the region.

Public workshops will generally be held within the Indio Subbasin during regular business hours; however, select workshops and meetings may be held outside of normal business hours to accommodate the participation of stakeholders and the general public. Select after-hours workshops may focus on educating community members about the Indio Subbasin, its groundwater conditions, and the effectiveness of historical management strategies. As appropriate, meeting locations will rotate throughout the valley to ensure broad and fair participation by members of the local public, including areas of the valley that are predominantly DACs and EJs. Any changes to the location and time of public workshops will be considered to allow for meeting flexibility, as needed. Translation headsets for all public workshops will be provided by CVWD. In addition, GSAs can be available to present about SGMA at community meetings, at the request of community organizations.

7.2 Website

Establishing a bilingual (English and Spanish) Alternative Plan website will be a key component of the regional outreach. The website will house information about SGMA, the Alternative Plan Update process, GSA partners (CVWD, CWA, DWA, and IWA), public meetings, project reports and studies, and groundwater data and information. It will also provide options for contacting the GSAs – via email, writing, or in person.

The website (www.IndioSubbasinSGMA.org) will be developed with landing pages including a general overview of SGMA, ways to get involved, information about the Alternative Plan Update (including links to completed deliverables and workshop materials), and the GSAs' contact information. Each page of the website will include an opportunity to sign-up for project emails. Landing pages will be also be available in Spanish at <http://www.indiosubbasinsgma.org/espanol/>.

7.3 Fact Sheets & Flyers

A bilingual (English and Spanish) Fact Sheet will be developed to explain the purpose and regulatory requirements for Alternative Plans, as well as how the 2010 CVWMP serves as the basis for the Alternative Plan Update. Additional handouts or flyers for the Alternative Plan Update will be created and distributed to stakeholders as the need presents itself. These flyers may summarize work underway for the Plan Update or to document key decisions made during the planning process. All outreach documents will be produced in English and Spanish. The Alternative Plan Update will be made available in both print and electronic format in English.

7.4 Correspondence

An electronic mailing list of stakeholders and interested parties, and any special subgroups, will be maintained and updated throughout the Alternative Plan Update. E-mail notices, the primary method of communication, will be sent to announce the availability of new materials on Alternative Plan Update on the website, project milestones, and workshop dates. Press releases will also be used as a method of

correspondence. Announcements will be distributed in English with Spanish translation in the same message.

7.5 Social Media

GSA partners will utilize existing social media channels (CVWD, DWA, and IWA Facebook and Twitter accounts) to spread updates on the Alternative Plan Update to the general public. CWA may post through the City of Coachella Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. This may include announcements prior to public workshops or the availability of new materials on the Alternative Plan Update on the website.

8. PUBLIC ACCESS TO DATA

Existing and future data associated with the planning process, as included in the Alternative Plan Update, will be made available to the public through the public workshop series. Project maps and data tables will be presented and reviewed with stakeholders in order to garner input and feedback. Groundwater modeling assumptions and results will be presented to stakeholders during the workshop series.

APPENDIX A: INDIO SUBBASIN STAKEHOLDER LIST

Agency	Stakeholder List
CVRWMG	
Coachella Valley Water District	✓
Coachella Water Authority	✓
Desert Water Agency	✓
Indio Water Authority	✓
Mission Springs Water District	✓
Valley Sanitary District	✓
Cities	
City of Cathedral City	✓
City of Coachella	✓
City of Desert Hot Springs	✓
City of Indian Wells	✓
City of Rancho Mirage	✓
City of Palm Desert	✓
City of Palm Springs	✓
County of Riverside	
Coachella Valley Economic Partnership	✓
Riverside County Transportation and Land Management Agency	✓
Riverside County Department of Environmental Health	✓
Riverside County Economic Development Agency	✓
Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District	✓
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez's office	✓
Supervisor Chuck Washington's office	✓
Community Councils	
Desert Edge Community Council	✓
Elected Officials	
Congressman Raul Ruiz (36th Dist.)	✓
State Senator Mike Morrell (23rd Dist.)	✓
State Senator Ben Hueso (40th Dist.)	✓
Assemblyman Chad Mayes (42nd Dist.)	✓
Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia (56th Dist.)	✓
Resource Agencies	
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	✓
California Department of Water Resources	✓
Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board	✓
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs	✓
Special Interests	
Clean Water Action	✓
Coachella Valley Association of Governments	✓
Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control	✓
Desert Recreation District	✓
Friends of the Desert Mountains	✓
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability	✓
Tribes	
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians	✓
Augustine Band of Mission Indians	✓
Cabazon Band of Mission Indians	✓
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	✓
Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians	✓

Agency	Stakeholder List
Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians	✓
Academia	
California State University San Bernardino	✓
Loma Linda University	✓
Other Water/Wastewater Entities	
Myoma Dunes Mutual Water Company	✓
Salton Community Services District	✓
Private Pumpers and Large Irrigators	
Agricultural pumpers	✓
Home Owners' Associations	✓
Golf courses	✓
Nurseries	✓
Disadvantaged Community Organizations	
Clean Water Action	✓
Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment	✓
Desert Edge Community Council	✓
El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center	✓
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water	✓
Inland Congregation United for Change	✓
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability	✓
Pueblo Unido CDC	✓
Rural Community Assistance Corporation	✓