

## **Quality of Life Funding Strategy**

Water Quality Planning Framework

*Includes WQWG feedback from meeting held 4.20.10*

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### **Water Quality Working Group Planning Framework, Quality of Life Funding Strategy**

The purpose of this planning framework is to identify water quality objectives that are appropriate to address in this funding strategy, and help provide a course of action for the working group to utilize during this process. Using the planning framework will help achieve the following outcomes: to define regional goals and objectives, develop a regional cost estimate for consideration by SANDAG, discuss alternative funding mechanisms, and rank and prioritize programs and projects associated with reaching regional water quality goals. The planning framework is intended to be a living document and subject to modification as the WQWG moves forward during the funding strategy process.

### **Background**

In 2004, the SANDAG Board of Directors adopted the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), a long term planning framework for the region. The Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy (IRIS) is a component of the RCP developed in response to the need to manage demand for infrastructure services as the region continues to grow. The IRIS provides a framework for better integrating long-range planning with short-term capital expenditures for key region-serving infrastructure areas. Of the eight areas of regional infrastructure analyzed and reported upon in the IRIS, three areas were found not to have a regional dedicated and sustainable funding source. Those three areas included habitat conservation, shoreline preservation and stormwater management. In addition to the RCP and IRIS, the *TransNet* Extension Ordinance passed in late 2004 included an obligation to “act on additional regional funding measures (a ballot measure and/or other secure funding commitments) to meet long-term requirements for implementing habitat conservation plans in the San Diego region.” The current deadline outlined in the *TransNet* Extension Ordinance for meeting this commitment is November 2012. To determine how best to meet these regional needs, SANDAG created the Quality of Life Ad Hoc Steering Committee in 2007 to begin a regional dialogue on funding priorities and mechanisms.

Since that time regional dialogue on the funding strategy has continued. Independent third-party polling and community mapping processes performed in 2009 revealed that water quality is not only an important regional issue, but nearly everyone asked has a different concept or understanding for what constitutes “water quality”. Beginning with the original framework created by the County for SANDAG, the following framework has been established by the WQWG. It is intended to be used as an aid in the development of regional goals and objectives, development of a regional cost estimate, ranking and prioritization criteria for projects and programs specifically to address water quality issues in the region, and to support the effort to report these findings to SANDAG Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) for the Water Quality Working Group.

### **Planning Framework**

This framework includes Guiding Principles, a Program Mission and Long-term Goal and Specific Program Focus Objectives for this funding strategy. Furthermore, the framework identifies the types of programs and projects that may be developed or enhanced to achieve water quality, not only to meet jurisdictional requirements (regulatory compliance) but taking into consideration other objectives as well, including environmental, groundwater protection and other ancillary benefits.

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The WQWG identified the following principles to help guide the development of this planning framework:

#### Guiding Principles:

- Focus on protecting water quality, but acknowledge that programs and projects may provide other benefits
- Focus on water quality programs and projects that lack an existing, dedicated, sustainable funding source.
- Focus on programs or projects that are regional in nature and/or are most effectively implemented at the regional or watershed basis, but acknowledge that local/jurisdictional programs and projects can contribute to regional solutions.
- Acknowledge that “Beneficial Uses” (i.e., as defined by the Federal Clean Water Act) are a useful construct for defining needs.
- Acknowledge that when considering programs/projects eligible for funding, it is appropriate to aim to achieve an equitable distribution throughout the region.

#### **Water Quality Element Program Mission:**

To enhance and preserve the region’s quality of life through the restoration and protection of the quality of our surface water and groundwater from polluted runoff.

#### **Overall Long-Term Water Quality Element Goal:**

Protection and restoration of beneficial uses of local water bodies, watersheds, and aquifers from polluted runoff.

#### **Specific Program Focus Objectives:**

##### **Tier 1 Objectives - Surface Water Quality / Runoff Management**

1. Support the implementation of watershed-based programs and projects that achieve cost effective solutions for regional water quality issues.
  - Protect coastal waters such as bays, beaches, and estuaries from polluted runoff
  - Protect reservoirs from polluted runoff
  - Protect aquifers from polluted runoff
  - Enhance biota and habitat through creek and wetlands restoration
2. Support jurisdictional water quality programs and projects such as monitoring, education, enforcement, and source control.
  - Expand regional monitoring efforts for a more efficient and comprehensive program.
  - Expand coordinated regional education and outreach program to create a more robust program
  - Support special source studies that identify the sources of pollution, impacts and the steps needed to address them.

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Examples of potential program and projects may include:

- Purchase of land for water quality treatment
- Conversion of hardened channels to natural
- Removal of invasive species
- Trash capture
- Retrofit of existing development with Low Impact Development (LID)
- Design and build structural treatment control BMPs
- Reservoir watersheds protection and management

### Tier 2 Objectives – Ancillary Benefits

The primary scope of water quality needs identified for the purposes of the Quality of Life Funding Strategy are aimed first and foremost at demonstrable and significant improvements to water quality. Other programs and/or projects that can augment water supply, restore habitat, amend or include community enhancements such as parks or trails that provide multiple benefits, in addition to water quality, are included in the Tier 2 Objectives, entitled Ancillary Benefits.

The WQWG recognizes that these Ancillary Benefits should be justified on a cost-benefit basis and would be appropriate as they are complementary to and synergistic with other Quality of Life elements. Three categories of ancillary benefits have been identified, including:

1. Habitat Restoration
2. Community Enhancement
3. Water Supply Augmentation

Examples of potential programs and projects for ancillary benefits include:

- Creation of natural areas and trails in association with water quality projects
- Purchase, preservation and protection of lands to protect watersheds.
- Purchase of land adjacent to existing flood control channels for the purpose of constructing/ retrofitting multipurpose solutions including
  - flood control,
  - stormwater retention/treatment facilities,
  - treatment wetlands,
  - parks, trails, bike paths, and
  - riparian habitat restoration.
- Repaving of parking lots with pervious pavements, creating / implementing rain gardens and other LID applications (LID)
- Rain barrels to facilitate stormwater / condensation capture.
- Support of pilot projects that use captured and treated stormwater to augment irrigation on a localized scale, in combination with utilization of gray water.