

Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project Stakeholder Assessment Summary

*County of Monterey
Board of Supervisors Meeting
September 16, 2025*

Support Provided By



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

Services Provided By:



David M. Ceppos
Public Policy Mediation and Facilitation

Assessment Summary Outline

- **Process**
- **Findings**
- **Analysis**
- **Considerations**

Assessment Process

- Interviews conducted December 2024 to February 2025 with Staff, Leadership and Directors of:
 - Monterey County Water Resources Association (WRA)
 - Monterey One Water (M1W)
 - Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA)
- Total Staff /Leadership Interviewed - 16 (3 group interviews)
- Total Directors Interviewed - 14 (Individual interviews. 5 from each Agency with 1 Director unable to participate)
- Standard Questions / Confidential Discussions

Assessment Findings (1)

M1W and WRA Roles /Responsibilities on CSIP - Staff / Directors generally understand roles.

- Differing perspectives:
 - Responsibilities when challenges emerge
 - CSIP customer(s)
 - Public perception of roles and responsibilities
- Concerns about:
 - Funding methods
 - Perceived agency allegiances

Assessment Findings (2)

GSA Roles / Reliance on CSIP - Diverse perspectives by Staff and Directors about GSA.

- Stay out of CSIP; No GSA impact or role
- Acquire funding to support work by others
- Lead regional discussions on improvements
- Increase public awareness
- Be fully engaged due to role on seawater intrusion risk and sustainability requirement

Assessment Findings (3)

WRA/M1W Organizational Relationships - Majority of Staff and Directors have shared concerns.

- Few common goal(s) / Key divergent motives
- Competition not partnership
- GSA creates unfunded mandates for WRA
- Past relationships more effective when there was embedded institutional Staff knowledge

Assessment Findings (4)

Current CSIP Functionality - Majority of Staff and Directors have shared concerns.

- Deferred maintenance
- Minimized financial investments
- Annual costs

Assessment Findings (5)

Current / Future CSIP Challenges: OPERATIONAL - Staff and Directors have shared perspectives BUT differing views on causes.

CSIP operations are not effectively managed:

- Lack of shared organizational values and mission
- Lack of vision about who is served and why
- Lack of effective communication
- Lack of effective fiscal oversight/management
- Staff silos

Assessment Findings (6)

Current / Future CSIP Challenges: FINANCIAL - Staff and Directors have shared perspectives BUT differing views on causes/solutions.

CSIP funding structure does not work:

- Unrealistic public expectations on costs
- Unresolvable challenges to fund acquisition / use
 - Fosters distrust
 - Fosters belief in Conflict of Interest

Assessment Findings (7)

Current / Future CSIP Challenges: GOVERNANCE - Staff and Directors have shared perspectives AND generally common views on causes.

- COI reported at all Boards. Perceived as:
 - Somewhat inevitable in a “representative democracy”
 - Damaging and untenable for long term decision making and constituent confidence

Assessment Findings (8)

Perceived Public/Political Opinion about CSIP

- Strong concerns about management / prioritization of water availability
- No cohesive regional vision
- M1W and WRA each think they are the “go to” for problem solving. Neither is perceived as trusted
- Limited public awareness and outreach

Assessment Analysis (1)

- Updates to the historic Agreement are important but not addressing other factors for improvement
- The agencies have inevitable and appropriate differences (i.e. missions, values, funding, roles)
- These differences are not faults. They are the “white noise” of regional resource management by multiple agencies

Assessment Analysis (2)

- CSIP is a shared responsibility but agencies don't speak in terms of a shared decision space or shared governance for CSIP
- Individual agency “sovereignty” can coexist with shared decision space and governance for CSIP
- Shared decision space for CSIP will not happen organically. It must result from mutual, proactive initiatives

Assessment Analysis (3)

- M1W, WRA and GSA have a mutual benefit from accurate public awareness and understanding of CSIP
- M1W and WRA have no methods of succession to foster staff with mutual understanding of CSIP
- Lack of succession planning creates “us and them” behavior by Staff

Considerations

- **Create shared CSIP governance structure**
- **Develop mutual staff succession approach**
- **Prepare mutual CSIP Outreach Plan**



David M. Ceppos
Public Policy Mediation and Facilitation

916-539-0350

dmceppos@gmail.com