



Integrated Regional Water Management Planning in California: Developing Institutions for Collective Action

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Integrated Regional Water Management in California is one of the most prominent institutional mechanisms being used to encourage cooperation in fragmented water management contexts. Our analysis of the Bay Area IRWMP finds mixed success; the Bay Area IRWMP did not increase collaboration or integration, but did build networks and trust necessary for the further evolution of cooperation and identified projects consistent with stakeholder priorities.

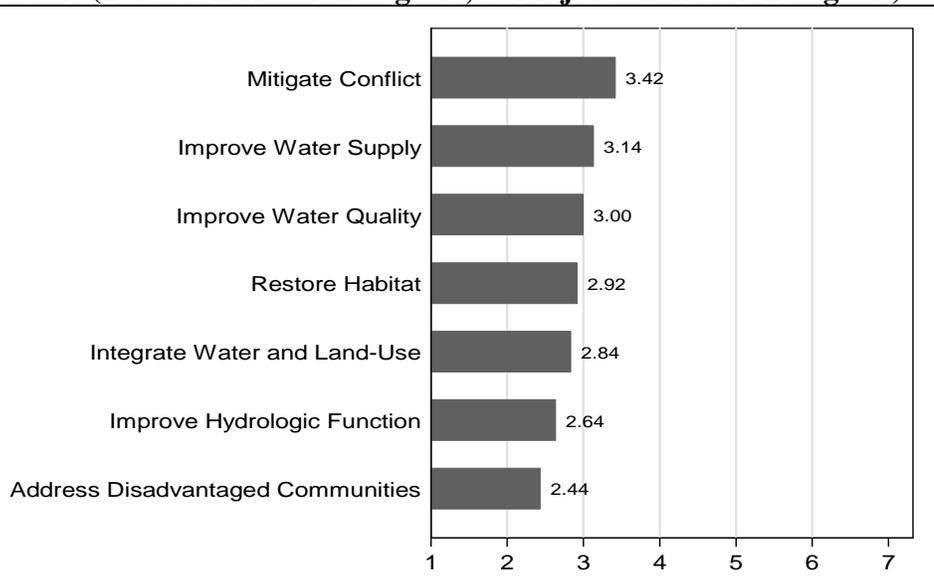
The goal of this project is to use theories of institutions and collective action to understand the factors contributing to the effectiveness of Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (IRWMP) in California. IRWMP provides state grant funding to local stakeholders to develop integrated regional water management plans. These plans are designed to encourage cooperation and integration within the fragmented institutional setting that has traditionally characterized water management in California.

The research focused on the Bay Area IRWMP, and used personal interviews of key participants, a quantitative survey of over 200 stakeholders, and analysis of priority water projects. We evaluate the effectiveness of IRWMP by focusing on three questions: levels of collaboration/participation, integration, and project effectiveness. Data collection was completed in June 2008, and our preliminary analysis finds mixed support for the effectiveness of IRWMP. Stakeholders are generally dissatisfied with the process, especially

the role of the state government. Participation in IRWMP does not appear to increase overall levels of collaboration. Integration mainly occurs within functional domains such as water supply and flood control, and there is little integration with ecological issues. Environmentalists and watershed groups believe that IRWMP is not fair to their interests.

On the other hand, stakeholders indicate that the IRWMP has increased levels of trust and policy networks, which may be critical to future water management decisions. It may be too early to expect widespread increases in integration and collaboration;

Figure 1: Perceived IRWMP Contribution to Water Management Goals (1=No contribution to goals; 7=Major contribution to goals)



building an initial basis may be enough for now. Furthermore, the distribution of priority projects that emerged from the IRWMP process is relatively consistent with stakeholders' issue priorities. However, the actual money available for implementing these projects was heavily skewed towards previously existing projects from water supply and flood management sectors.

Figure 2: Perceived IRWMP Success at Integration of Watershed Functions (1=No change in integration; 7=Much greater integration)

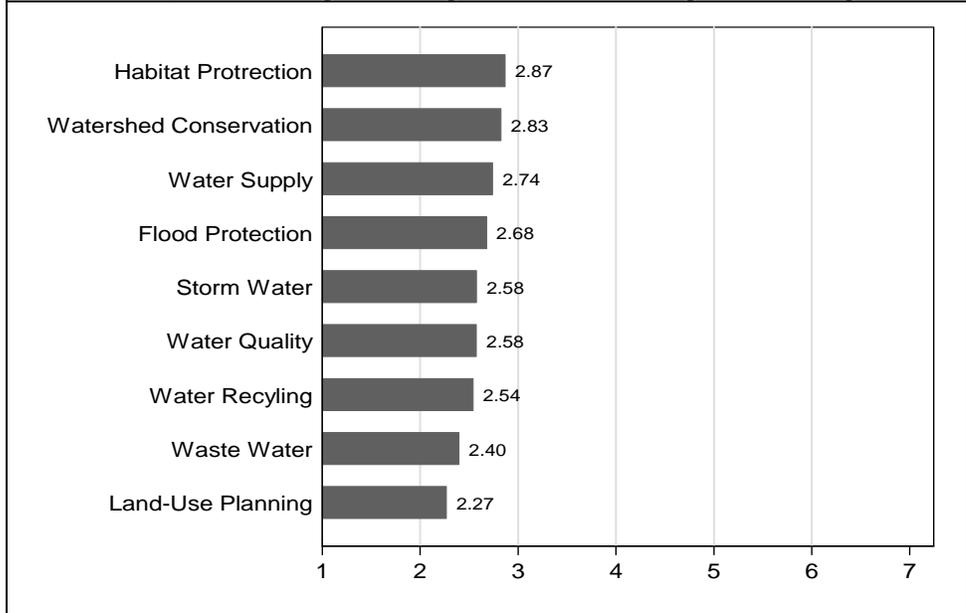


Table 1: Reasons for IRWM Failures and Successes	
<i>Negative Views on IRWM</i>	
State guidelines for IRWM were clear and understandable.	2.77
State guidelines for IRWM were sufficiently flexible to accommodate regional differences	2.77
IRWM was too time consuming	4.79
My participation in IRWM had a large influence on decisions.	2.25
IRWMP was controlled by narrow interests.	4.42
<i>Positive Views on IRWM</i>	
IRWM has helped me network with other stakeholders.	4.4
IRWM has improved the level of collaboration among Bay Area stakeholders.	4.6
Note: Responses provided on a Likert scale where 1= strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.	

Publications

Lucas, Lippert. "An Assessment of Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (IRWMP) in the San Francisco Bay Area." UC Davis Master's Thesis, 2008.

Professional Presentations

Lubell, Mark, and Lucas Lippert. "Integrated Regional Water Management: Collaboration or Politics as Usual?" Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, Canada, 2009.

Lubell, Mark. "Water Management in an Ecology of Games." Harvard Networks in Political Science Conference, Cambridge, MA, 2009

Collaborative Efforts

In-kind contributions came from DWR staff, plus over 20 Bay Area IRWMP stakeholders who were interviewed for development of the quantitative survey.

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