

Plumas County News



Members of the Regional Water Management Group and consultants instrumental in the 2016 revision of the Upper Feather River Water Management Plan. Photo by Lynn Campbell, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Money is available for local water projects

📅 February 13, 2017 👤 Steve Wathen, Staff Writer



Plumas County Planning and Building Services Director Randy Wilson said that simply by being in the region's water management plan gives Plumas County water projects a leg up in applying for millions of dollars in future funding from the state of California.

In an interview on Feb. 1, Wilson pointed out that 80 Plumas County water projects have been listed in the updated plan so far, with a solicitation for more proposals to probably go out this spring.

The original "Upper Feather River Integrated Water Management (IRWM) Plan" was finished in 2005. The revised, updated IRWM plan was finished last December.

The revised water management plan is still the only IRWM plan in California that complies with Proposition 1, passed by the voters in 2014.

This puts Plumas County at the head of the line for funding from Prop. 1.

Prop. 1 authorized \$510 million in funding for projects that set regional priorities for water infrastructure; help adapt water systems to climate change, flooding and drought; improve water conservation and water self-reliance; and reduce reliance on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for water.

Prop. 1 also provided for involvement of tribal and economically disadvantaged communities in the planning process. Rural counties often lack the capacity to develop water management plans.

Approximately \$1.7 million was set aside in Prop. 1 to help tribal and economically disadvantaged communities determine their water project needs.

Various state agencies, including the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy will be given a certain amount of Prop. 1 money to fund local and regional water projects.

Those agencies will then decide which of the projects submitted, from Plumas County and elsewhere, will get funding based upon legislative guidelines.

Upper Feather River Regional Water Management Group

The Upper Feather River Regional Water Management Group was the group responsible for updating the Upper Feather River IRWM Plan.

The management group consists of representatives from Sierra and Plumas county government and special districts, as well as a representative from the Maidu Tribe and Plumas National Forest.

The Upper Feather River watershed ends above Lake Oroville, which serves as the boundary between the Upper and Lower Feather River.

Most of the Upper Feather River Watershed is within Plumas and Sierra counties. However, a small portion of the Upper Feather River watershed is located within Butte County.

The management group may add a government representative from Butte County in the near future.

Wilson and the planning department were intimately involved in helping to revise the Upper Feather IRWM plan.

Water projects in the plan

The 80 projects in the updated plan were not prioritized, one over the other. In fact, the projects were submitted early in the

process, before a lot of the chapters of the plan were even drafted.

Should a state funding agency require that the management group prioritize water projects for submission, the management group will be able to do that.

Wilson noted that one of the benefits of working on the 2016 IRWM plan was bringing together many stakeholders to discuss the watershed in its entirety.

Wilson also pointed out, "A lot of water needs in the county have barely been touched."

For example, municipal water pipes in Chester are aging and in need of replacement. Other water distribution systems need to be geographically extended.

Wilson looks forward to working with the management group and other organizations in the future to identify other water projects in the county.

For more information on the Upper Feather River IRWM Plan, you can go to featherriver.org/ufr-irwm-plan.

Sidebar

History of regional water planning process

In 2002, Prop. 50, the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act was passed and the Upper Feather River Region was awarded \$7 million to implement water projects.

In 2005, The Upper Feather River Integrated Regional Water Management Plan was finished.

In 2006, voters approved Prop. 84 that contained \$1 billion in funding for regional water planning, water system improvements, flood protection, flood cleanup and protection of groundwater. Standards for IRWM plans were also strengthened.

In 2014, the Upper Feather River Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) began the process of updating the 2005 IRWM Plan using \$679,000 in funds from Prop. 84.

Later in 2014, Prop. 1 was passed and Prop. 1 funding guidelines were incorporated into the revision of the Upper Feather River IRWM Plan.

December, 2016, the Upper Feather River IRWM Plan update was finished and adopted by Plumas and Sierra boards of supervisors.