

Purpose of the IRWMA Beyond as a Funding Vehicle

Alternate Director Tom Trott

A.D. Trott said his first experience with IRWM was in San Luis Obispo and the agency had tons of projects that needed to be done. Every year, at budget time, staff would put in requests and very few projects would get funded. Originally, A.D. Trott thought the reasons for engaging in the IRWM was to get funding. He found that being involved was much more time consuming and difficult than he had anticipated.

However, as he stayed involved, he noticed there were a lot of other agencies like his that had the same problems and no money. Through the IRWM process, they realized some of the agencies were physically near one another and could share resources. Through the IRWM process, they began to get out of their agency silos. Even though all funding does not come through IRWM, the process enables projects to be put together in different ways and promotes working with partners.

He said this is starting to happen in the T-Stan IRWMA. He continued that even more important than getting out of agency silos, is getting out of one's mission silo as one find there are a lot of different missions represented at the table. Pre-IRWMA, those different missions have caused a lot of tension and some of the projects have fallen flat on their face because other interests were not addressed in project planning and development.

A.D. Trott said as everyone comes together, he has noticed he has stepped out of his district mission and realizes everyone's interests are tied together because of the common watersheds. His agency mission has benefited by better understanding the mission of others.

He said it is not just that knowledge is shared. It is that this broadened perspective is used to improve projects. Phoenix Lake is a great example as because of the input of the IRWMA members, the project includes more benefits and there is a much larger supportive base. A new solution was developed to meet a long-term problem.

He concluded that the IRWMA members are just barely starting to realize the benefits of getting everyone together. There are a lot of problems and not enough state money to fix it. As the IRWMA pushes forward, with very little money being offered by the state, members need to see working together in an integrated fashion as a long-term investment. As the IRWMA moves forward, there is a lot to gain by working together even if grant money is only periodically available.