

Marin County Investment Pool

Key Rating Drivers

High-Quality Credit Portfolio: The Marin County Investment Pool (the pool) invests primarily in U.S. government obligations and registered money market funds rated 'AAAmmf' by Fitch Ratings or equivalent. The pool also currently invests a small amount in the Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF), a local government investment pool (LGIP) managed by California's Pooled Money Investment Board.

Liquidity Management Supports Predictable Flows: The maturity profile of the pool is managed to meet anticipated cash flow needs of pool participants. By its investment policy, the pool seeks to maintain adequate cash on hand to meet cash disbursements and payroll through maturing investments. Cash flow projections are an integral part of the overall cash management responsibilities of the pool administrator.

Low Sensitivity to Market Risk: The pool employs a cash flow-matching investment strategy to structure investment maturities to coincide with conservative expectations of draws on the portfolio. The pool has historically benefited from the highly predictable cash outflow needs of its participants, a majority of which are captive in nature. Market risk is mitigated by the duration of the pool, which typically is two years or less, as well as the predictable nature of the cash outflows of the largely captive participant base.

Stable Investor Base: The pool is managed on behalf of its participants, which are largely captive in nature and include Marin County (the county), school districts, trial courts, recreation and park districts, libraries, landfills and other special districts.

Oversight Decreases Operational Risk: Portfolio oversight and operational controls are consistent with the assigned ratings. The pool is organized and invested in accordance with the state of California government code sections 53600 and 53639, and is not registered under federal law. A treasury oversight committee reviews the pool on a regular basis.

The pool is also subject to quarterly and annual audits from external auditors.

Industry-Standard Administration and Systems: The Marin County Treasurer's Office uses appropriate systems for investment, administration, portfolio management and trading. Processes provide decision-making tools for risk analysis and investment-allocation tools.

Rating Rationale: The pool is rated 'AAAF/S1' by Fitch. The 'AAAF' Fund Credit Quality Rating reflects the investment portfolio's vulnerability to losses as a result of defaults in its bond holdings, and is based on the actual and prospective average credit quality of portfolio investments. The 'S1' Fund Market Risk Sensitivity Rating reflects the relative sensitivity of a portfolio's total return and/or net asset value to assumed changes in credit spreads and interest rates, as well as certain other market risk parameters, and reflects the effects of leverage, where applicable.

Fitch's evaluation of the pool also considers the management and operational capabilities of the Marin County Treasurer's Office and the legal and regulatory framework under which the pool operates.

Organizational Overview: The county is located in Northern California. The pool is managed by the Marin County Director of Finance on behalf of the pool participants. Participants are defined as:

- Marin County; Marin public school agencies; Marin Community College; the Marin County Office of Education; districts under the control of the county board of supervisors and autonomous/independent districts, whose treasurer is the Marin County Director of Finance; and any other districts or agencies approved by the board of supervisors and the county treasurer, using Marin County as their fiscal agent.

Pool Characteristics

Rating Type	Rating
Fund Credit Quality Rating	AAAf
Fund Market Risk Sensitivity Rating	S1
Investment Advisor	Marin County Director of Finance
Inception Date	Circa 1950
Assets (\$ Bil.)	1.56 (June 2020)

Source: Fitch Ratings.

Applicable Criteria

[Bond Fund Rating Criteria \(July 2019\)](#)

Related Research

[Fitch Affirms Marin County Investment Pool at 'AAAF/S1' \(September 2020\)](#)

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The pool's investment policies are reviewed periodically by the treasury oversight committee, consisting of representatives from Marin County, the superintendent of schools' office and school and special districts. The pool is also subject to an annual external financial audit performed by an independent certified public accounting firm in addition to a quarterly cash count verifying cash and investment balances. There are daily and monthly reconciliations of records with the custodian.

Pool Objectives and Investment Practices: The pool's primary investment objective is preservation of capital. The secondary objective is to maintain sufficient liquidity to enable participants to meet their operating requirements.

The tertiary objective of the pool is to obtain a rate of return consistent with the first two objectives.

The pool seeks to pursue its investment objectives by investing in a diversified portfolio of high-quality debt securities rated at least 'A'/F1' by Fitch or equivalent. Permitted investments include U.S. Treasury and government agency securities and state of California bonds, as well as registered warrants, bankers' acceptances, commercial paper, negotiable certificates of deposit, time deposits, medium-term notes, shares of money market funds, repurchase agreements and the LAIF. Under the pool's investment policies, the use of reverse repurchase agreements or securities lending programs is not permitted. Additionally, in accordance with Marin County's Nuclear Free Zone Ordinance No. 3502 Measure A, the county is prohibited from investing in securities or other obligations of any corporation or business entity that is a nuclear weapons contractor.

Asset Credit Quality: According to the pool's investment policy, eligible money market instruments must be rated at least 'A'/F1' by Fitch or equivalent, except for the LAIF, which is not rated.

The pool restricts concentrations in any one issuer, other than the U.S. government and its agencies, to a maximum of 5% of total assets to minimize single-issuer exposure. Repurchase agreements are entered into only with counterparties rated at least 'A'/F1' by Fitch or equivalent and are 102% collateralized by U.S. government securities.

Liquidity Management: The pool has daily access to its investments in money market funds and the LAIF to meet daily withdrawal requirements and cash outflows. In addition, the pool maintains a significant position in U.S. government agency securities, which are expected to demonstrate secondary market liquidity even during periods of market stress.

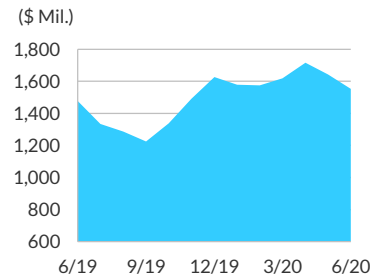
To meet liquidity targets and minimize exposure to interest rate changes, the pool uses a laddered investment strategy across a short maturity spectrum. The pool also employs a cash flow-matching investment strategy to structure investment maturities to coincide with conservative expectations of draws on the portfolio. The pool has historically benefited from the highly predictable cash outflow needs of participants. The stability of cash flow projections is based on the pool's composition, as many participants are captive in nature and thereby required to maintain funds in the county pool. The pool's anticipated redemptions include payroll and benefit payments, accounts payable, debt services and other planned expenditures.

Furthermore, no withdrawals from the pool can be made for the purposes of investing those funds outside the pool without prior approval of the Marin County Director of Finance.

An approval can be given as long as such a withdrawal does not negatively affect the interests of other participants. A notice of withdrawal is required to be made in writing at least 10 days prior to the proposed withdrawal date. A notice of withdrawal in writing of at least five business days is required for withdrawals in excess of \$250,000 for loan repayments, capital expenditures and any expenditure not in the ordinary course of operations.

Duration Management: By investment policy, the pool must maintain an average maturity of less than 540 days and is not allowed to purchase securities with maturities greater than three years. However, the director of finance may authorize the purchase of U.S. government agency obligations and U.S. Treasury obligations with final maturities of five years or less.

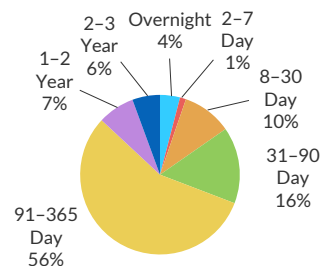
Assets Under Management



Source: Fitch Ratings, Marin County.

Maturity Distribution

(as of June 30, 2020)



Source: Marin County Investment Pool.

Operational Assessment

Service Providers

Investment Advisor	✓	Marin County Director of Finance
Auditor	✓	In accordance with the California government code, an investment oversight committee performs an annual audit. An additional treasury oversight committee is responsible for ensuring the pool's compliance with its investment policy. The committee meets twice a year and consists of five members: two school districts, one member of the county at large, one county administrator and one member from a special district.

Regulation and Governance

Governance	✓	The Marin County investment portfolio shall be subject to a process of independent review by the county's external auditors. The county's external auditors review the investment portfolio in connection with the annual county audit for compliance with the statement of investment policy pursuant to government code section 27134. The results are reported annually to the director of finance and the Marin County Treasury Oversight Committee. The treasury oversight committee shall cause an annual audit to be conducted to determine the county treasury's compliance with Article 6 of the government code. This audit may include issues relating to the structure of the investment portfolio and risk.
Control Framework	✓	Compliance controls are in place to ensure adherence with investment guidelines.

Operations

Pricing Responsibility	✓	Securities are booked at purchase price and marked-to-market monthly by the pools' custodian, Wells Fargo Bank. The treasurer's office uses real-time pricing supplied by Wells Fargo Bank, as custodian.
Technology	✓	Appropriate and integrated portfolio management system.
Back-Office Reconciliations	✓	Income apportionment to the participants is conducted on a quarterly basis after deducting the pool's expenses according to specified sections of the California government code.

Investments

Composition	✓	Permitted investments include U.S. Treasury and government agency securities, state of California bonds, registered warrants, bankers' acceptances, commercial paper, negotiable certificates of deposit, time deposits, medium-term notes, money market funds, repurchase agreements and LAIF. LAIF is the California state investment pool, managed by the state treasurer's office.
Liquidity Management	✓	By its policy, the pool maintains adequate cash on hand to meet cash disbursements and payroll through maturing investments. Cash flow projections are an integral part of the overall cash management responsibilities of the treasury division.

Disclosure and Transparency

Clear Strategy Representation	✓	The fund has a broad mandate that includes adherence to Marin County's Nuclear Freeze Ordinance Measure A, as approved by voters on Nov. 4, 1986. The county is prohibited from investing in securities or other obligations of any corporation or business entity that is a nuclear weapons contractor.
Level of Disclosure	✓	Good level of transparency: the county's website contains financial reports, investment policy and information on other policies pertinent to pool management.

✓ - Pass. ● - Attention required. ✗ - Fail.

Source: Fitch Ratings, Marin County Investment Pool.

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