

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROGRAM WETLANDS MONITORING GROUP

MEETING SUMMARY JULY 13, 2004

Attendees:

Bob Batha (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)
Andree Breaux (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)
John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)
Mike May (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Chris Potter (California Resources Agency)
Luisa Valiela (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Agenda Item #1: Introductions/Review Agenda

Andree Breaux chaired the meeting and reviewed the agenda items. Andree noted the Carol Thornton from the San Francisco Estuary Project was managing a supplemental environmental project; Carol's working with Petaluma High School on a wetlands restoration project that uses reclaimed water. Carol was seeking information on the basic elements of monitoring required for wastewater treatment wetlands. Group members suggested such information could be obtained by looking at projects in American Canyon, Arcata, and Pacifica. John Brosnan noted that items from the last Monitoring Group meeting included arranging for a presentation on Suisun Marsh issues, discussing establishment of a Wetland Tracker steering committee, and exploring monitoring plan review for the Napa Salt ponds; John noted each item was represented in the current meeting's agenda.

Agenda Item #2: WRP Report

John reviewed the action items from the June 9 Executive Council meeting, which were to summarize and then reopen the debate on DRG review of mitigation projects, investigate the WRP developing a spill response plan for wetlands, establish a December meeting date for the next Executive Council meeting, and invite the NOAA subtidal habitat goals team to present at that meeting. The coordinator and the Coordinating Committee were also to continue their pursuit of WRP long-term funding. Since June 9, John and Coordinating Committee co-chairs Mike Monroe and Chris Potter have been exploring funding options among the partner federal and state agencies; funding commitments thus far would allow the WRP to operate full-time until about November 2004.

Agenda Item #3: Review of Vegetation Mapping Protocol Workshop Summary

Josh Collins circulated a draft summary from the February vegetation mapping protocol workshop. Mike May noted Josh will be submitting a finalized version of the vegetation mapping protocol to U.S. EPA on August 30; Mike urged group members to get comments into Josh by July 30. Andree noted this protocol would be a good addition to the WRMP website (www.wrmp.org).

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Agenda Item #4: Update on Monitoring Plan Review Teams

John noted the Sonoma Baylands monitoring analysis report is still being finalized and is due for release in mid-July. Once it's complete, it will be distributed to monitoring plan review team members in advance of the Sonoma Baylands monitoring plan workshop, which is currently expected in mid-August. Andree had approached CDFG staff on the monitoring plan review teams potentially reviewing the Napa Salt ponds project. It is expected that the US ACOE will carry out most of the monitoring for all of the ponds except Ponds 1, 1A, 2, and 3, which may not be part of the USACOE project. If Congress does not authorize funding for the project, the Regional Board may amend the WDR with new monitoring requirements. CDFG has indicated they will establish a technical review team to review monitoring data. Andree referenced the vast quantities of baseline data available for the ponds (thanks to the work of John Takekawa of the USGS and funding in part by the Coastal Conservancy) and noted the Regional Board has encouraged the California Bay-Delta Authority, USGS, US FWS, California Coastal Conservancy, and California Fish and Game to fund additional monitoring at the site in order to compare the baseline data to new data based on the future restoration activities. Bob Batha noted the challenge in implementing more monitoring since this is a restoration project, with no mitigation requirements.

Relative to the South Bay ponds, Andree stated that the National Science Panel has written a report with a series of recommendations that have been reviewed by the Project Management Team. Luisa Valiela noted the South Bay mercury strategy report has been released and comments are still being accepted. Andree said the Science Board will be writing a series of "white papers" dealing with issues such as sediment supply and demand in the South Bay. Bob felt another potential project for monitoring plan review is the 450-acre American Canyon wastewater treatment project. Luisa suggested a mitigation bank near Soap Lake in the Pajaro River watershed being proposed by Wildlands. The site would contain seasonal wetlands and upland habitats. She noted the project's plan, called the "Enabling Instrument", mentions the need for a technical review team, which includes and the Corps of Engineers and other agencies. The Corps' has not yet established a mitigation banking review team for the project.

Agenda Item #5: Wetland Tracker Steering Committee

Mike May announced that the Wetland Tracker was awarded U.S. EPA grant funds, totaling \$162,000. Following up on a suggestion from the previous meeting, the group began discussing formation of a steering committee for the Wetland Tracker. Josh Collins proposed potential first tasks for the committee, which were (a) finalizing the Tracker input form for the regulatory agencies, (b) reviewing the work plan and list of local agency invitees to the National Wetlands Inventory subregional input/review workshops, and (c) assisting SFEI build the crosswalk from National Wetlands Inventory to a Bay Area lexicon of habitat types to be used in the Tracker. Mike May stated those who'd be on the steering committee: Molly Martindale, Andree Breau, Paul Jones, Josh Collins, John Brosnan, either Bob Batha or Caitlin Sweeney, and potentially Chris Potter. (Chris also suggested Ross Clark at the Coastal Commission should be included.) Mike noted this group would oversee development of the Tracker exclusively in the Bay Area. Molly is presently arranging to translate data from the Corps' database to the Tracker data sheets, to have the completed forms sent over to SFEI. Mike May had sent out the habitat

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definitions to be used in the Tracker and received comments back. At the previous meeting, Paul Jones suggested the classifications reflect the HGM model, while the Cowardin system is being used for the National Wetlands Inventory in the Bay Area. Mike noted the crosswalk between the two systems has been built, but not all the definitions used in the Goals Report have corresponding Cowardin/HGM classifications. John noted the lack of members of the public and representatives of local nonprofit organizations on the steering committee, and asked how best to include these groups? Mike Monroe felt flood control districts and Bay Trail staff should be brought in, too.

Agenda Item #6: Suisun Marsh Update

This update was postponed until the next meeting.

Agenda Item #7: Wetland Assessments Updates

Andree noted the State Water Board is holding a two-day training on compensatory mitigation and will be producing a new manual with relevant regulatory documents on CD. Andree might assist with conducting a Wetlands Ecological Assessment (WEA) at the training, where attendees might also run a California Rapid Assessment (CRAM). She also noted that testing a WEA against a CRAM is still being planned. Andree stated the Central Coast is adding Moss Landing Marine Labs, which will result in four CRAM teams across the state. She added CRAM's focus is on tidal and riparian, invertebrates, birds and plants. Mike May stated CRAM was awarded its U.S. EPA funds of over \$200,000. Josh Collins and Paul Jones will be traveling to the North Coast to assist Caltrans in using CRAM. Josh is also managing seeking financial support from NOAA coastal impact funds.

Review of Action Items

Andree reviewed the action items, which were to resolve the Wetland Tracker steering committee participation, Mike May will distribute the Tracker's habitat classifications, and Mike Monroe and Josh Collins will discuss seeking Prop 50 funds. The next meeting was set for Tuesday, September 14, at 1:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned.