

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROGRAM  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**MEETING SUMMARY  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2003**

**Attendees:**

John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)  
Mike Connor (San Francisco Estuary Institute)  
Cindy Darling (California Bay-Delta Authority)  
Arthur Feinstein (Golden Gate Audubon Society)  
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)  
Steve McAdam (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)  
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)  
Barbara Salzman (Marin Audubon Society)  
Luisa Valiela (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)  
Bruce Wolfe (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)

**1. Introductions**

Mike Monroe chaired the meeting and opened with a roundtable of introductions. Mike asked for any announcements. Cindy Darling stated Bay Area water agencies are currently established an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) working group to work towards development of an IRWMP. Primary participants are the region's water agencies, stormwater agencies and sanitation districts, but the working group also includes the San Francisco Estuary Project, the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture and the Wetlands Restoration Program. The end product of the working group's efforts will be a collaborative plan that integrates all the plans of the participants; the aggregate plan will include the Habitat Goals Report. Under Prop 50, regions that create an IRWMP will be able to apply for \$500 million made available under Chapter 8 of the proposition. DWR and the State Board will manage the funds. John Brosnan reminded the committee the group is very early on in the process. Cindy noted the effort would assist in achieving greater collaboration and coordination among the agencies as they seek to ensure increased reliability in lieu of operation of so many different systems; issues to be solved through the process include water supply reliability, water quality and environmental water (e.g., restoration). The plan needs to be complete by 2007. Once complete, the Prop 50 funds can be spent on any number of projects, including habitat projects. Cindy noted this process should allow for better coordination of groundwater and water recycling projects, as well. **In order to provide more insight into this process, John will distribute the Bay Area Water Agencies Coalition (BAWAC) letter to the Coordinating Committee.**

**2. July 18 Coordinating Committee Meeting Summary**

John Brosnan reviewed the significant action item from the previous meeting, which was to initiate preliminary outreach to directors and managers outside of the WRP and assess interest in the planned permitting workshop. John noted this issue would be extensively discussed under agenda item #6. John also noted that since the last Coordinating Committee meeting,

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Paul Jones had suggested (via email) that the Committee address the issue of the Joint Venture project tracking system and the potential it raises for duplication of efforts, referring to SFEI's Wetland Tracker. John said this item was not formally agendaized as no other Committee members made a similar recommendation. John stated he attended the recent Joint Venture meeting that presented the possible design of the database; John said the proposed tracking system would be much larger and more comprehensive than any other such system that existed regionally. He and Mike Monroe had discussed this issue prior to this morning's meeting and felt the topic may warrant discussion in a subcommittee environment. John then sought input from the Committee. Luisa Valiela felt this topic should be discussed. Molly Martindale stated it would be premature to talk about the issue, as the future of the Joint Venture tracking system had yet to be determined. Mike Monroe noted that as public money was being spent on development of tracking systems, discussing the potential for duplication was good public policy. Arthur Feinstein felt taking advantage of existing tools and systems made sense. Mike reiterated addressing this in some capacity would be beneficial. Molly noted the Monitoring Group was a good place to begin this discussion but noted that building the Wetland Tracker would require a funded, full-time staff person (as is needed in maintaining the Corps' project tracking database). Molly noted that John coordinates with the Joint Venture and he should let the Committee know when the database takes on a more concrete form. Mike Connor felt someone should be addressing the potential for two parallel tracks and felt a subcommittee would be helpful. Barbara Salzman noted the Joint Venture is addressing its needs right now and the Restoration Program, namely the Monitoring Group, should outline its needs. **Arthur noted that once the Monitoring Group determined its needs, those interests could be communicated through John.** Arthur felt that knowing information on creek projects will be necessary and wanted to see such info folded into the Wetland Tracker; such information is critical for adequately addressing cumulative impacts under CEQA. Mike Connor felt that maintenance of the Joint Venture database as well as the Wetland Tracker will be critical to either's success.

### **3. WRP Group Reports**

**Public Outreach.** John noted he will present a poster on the Wetlands Restoration Program at the October 2003 State of the Estuary conference and will give a similar oral presentation at the H2O Conference in Long Beach. John also noted a draft logo was being distributed and asked for feedback from Committee members.

**Design Review Group (DRG).** John stated the Marin Audubon Society's Bahia Tidal Restoration project Letter of Review was completed in August. John said the current project before the DRG was the Napa Plant Site restoration, presented by the California Department of Fish and Game at the September DRG meeting. A draft of the Letter of Review has already been distributed to the Design Review Team members. John noted potential upcoming projects, including Pond A4 and Cullinan Ranch. Steve McAdam suggested Inner Bair Island and said Clyde Morris and Molly Martindale could serve as good contacts. Molly noted there is a technical advisory team being established for the project. John also mentioned the DRG's geographic scope issue, which would be discussed later in the meeting.

**Wetlands Monitoring Group.** Molly Martindale briefed the group on the last Wetlands Monitoring Group meeting. She noted the group has discussed holding a tidal datum

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reckoning workshop based on recently released, updated tidal benchmarks. Molly stated the workshop would be more practical than theoretical. Concluding the highlights from the last meeting, Molly highlighted the wetland project information transmittal form presentation, Andree's Breaux's WRAP discussion, Stuart Siegel's IRWM monitoring comparison of restored and natural sites and Josh Collins' review of CRAM, for which field testing gets underway on October 2 and 3. Molly added the group will be preparing a "wish list" of what it wants the group and the WRP to do and that list will come from its next meeting, which is October 27th at 1 PM. Molly noted that the editing of the monitoring vegetation protocol she and John were to work on is still underway. Molly noted that Andree Breaux has been cleared by her advisors to take over the role of chair on the Monitoring Group. Molly sent a memo to the group conveying this information and responses from group members has been extremely positive. Molly will open the next Monitoring Group meeting and turn over the chair to Andree at that time. Mike Monroe thanked Molly for her service as the Monitoring Group chair.

**4. Geographic Boundary of the Design Review Group/WRP**

John stated Jennifer Vick of the National Park Service (NPS) has twice inquired about DRG review for the NPS Redwood Creek restoration project at Muir Beach, Marin County. This project lies outside of the WRP geographic boundary, in the coastal zone. This is not the only proponent who has requested DRG review for a project outside of the boundary. The DRG has discussed this and is seeking guidance from the Coordinating Committee. Options discussed at the recent DRG meeting include: (1) stating the DRG will not review these projects because of their location, (2) stating the DRG would review them, yet not pay its reviewers to perform the review, (3) stating the DRG would review the project as it does normally, only in the event that no other projects are seeking DRG review at the time, and (4) asking the proponent to pay for the Design Review Team participants' time. NPS is interested in taking advantage of an existing peer-review body. John stated his recommendation was to go with option (4) and sought input from the Committee on how to address this issue.

Molly and Barbara felt that so long as no other project was in line for DRG review, (4) is a good option. Steve felt the approach should have three steps to allowing the DRG review such a project: that it's no cost to the WRP, that John has time to manage the Letter of Review for the project and the project's review does not delay a bay project. Barbara felt this project would benefit from review based outside of west Marin County. **Mike Monroe stated that since it is outside of the geographic scope and, thus, there could exist some potential for political fallout by reviewing it, such an action should be cleared with the Executive Council first.**

**5. Review of the Coordinator's Workplan**

John the Coordinator's 2003-2004 Workplan to the Coordinating Committee along with an attachment; the attachment was the sum of all feedback received on the Workplan. John noted the Restoration Program has no strategic plan and he wanted to outline some goals and objectives within his purview to focus on over the coming year. John asked the Committee members for their impressions of what should be done with the Workplan document. Molly noted that some objectives and some suggestions that had come in were not reflective of John's role; Molly felt those should be selected out. She felt the Workplan should reflect the things John can do over what the Restoration Program and its committees are doing/should do. Steve

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echoed this and suggested only adding what John could personally accomplish. Molly suggested summarizing submitted feedback by topic area, as opposed to by who provided the comment. Mike Connor suggested adding an annual summary of the DRG, which had been agreed to in the past; John noted this would be done under the Annual Report outlined in the Wetlands Restoration Program's Charter of Working Principles. Bruce Wolfe felt the Workplan outlined what John could do for the Restoration Program, so in essence thereby outlining what the Program could do. Mike Connor suggested adding a summary in the Annual Report of the quantity of projects reviewed, acres affected by WRP review, etc. **John will incorporate the pertinent suggestions and recirculate this document among the Committee.**

**6. Planning for WRP Workshops**

John discussed the planned Permitting Workshop with the Committee members at their July meeting. As it was envisioned at that time, the workshop would be held to demonstrate to project proponents the realistic, staff-level constraints on permit processing (such as funding, varying levels of staff expertise, etc.). At that time, he was instructed to conduct initial outreach to managers and directors outside of the WRP and gather feedback to refine the scope of the workshop. Since that time, John collected feedback from Briggs Nisbet (Save the Bay), Barbara Salzman, Heather Gustafson and Ellen Johnck (Bay Planning Coalition) and Arthur Feinstein. John and Mike Monroe also presented the initial workshop ideas to the LTMS Management Committee, which is comprised of four Executive Council members. John provided a brief overview of the feedback received, which included the majority of interest in holding the event and in holding it on a weekday, produced several questions to be answered at the workshop and resulted in several potential projects to review. John said the LTMS feedback was that workshop participants should not undertake role-playing as part of the exercise.

Mike Monroe noted this workshop was born from reactions fielded at a DRG meeting in spring of 2003. Molly felt the goals should be illuminating how regulatory managers process permits and demonstrating who makes permit decisions. Molly stated that several people who function in the project proponent role have certain ideas about how the process works and that, sometimes, those ideas are not necessarily realistic. Molly noted there are differences among the abilities of project managers and she recognized project proponents would likely benefit from hearing from those managers who process permits everyday. Luisa wanted to make sure that proponents don't get a negative message and wind up leaving the workshop on a despondent note. Steve felt this workshop would be most useful and relevant if it focused on wetlands restoration permitting and that through that focus a broader insight would become known; he stressed focusing on how regulators resolve wetland issues. Cindy felt this could be a useful avenue for agencies getting suggestions out to project proponents, as those suggestions can assist proponents in knowing how to comment. Mike Connor recommended focusing a day on the essentials of how to apply for permits, get feedback and then plan another day based on that input. **Mike Monroe felt the group needs to get a better grasp on who the audience should be, whether or not this should be focused on wetlands restoration, and what can be reasonably accomplished in one day.**

Molly felt the workshop needed to focus on the period of time between permit application submission and approval of the permit. Arthur suggested using Molly's suggested focus and recommended inviting legislative aides to attend the event. Steve felt that Molly's suggested

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focus could come out in any workshop. Luisa noted that if aides will be in attendance, then the Executive Council should be apprized of the workshop; she stressed the workshop should avoid any semblance of regulators "venting". Molly reiterated the benefit from sharing regulators' points of view of the permitting process. **John then asked for volunteers for a committee to establish the workshop in greater detail; Molly Martindale, Steve McAdam, Luisa Valiela and Bruce Wolfe volunteered.**

John presented the tentative plans for the Restoration Program to host a half-day workshop to premiere the San Francisco Estuary Institute's Wetland Tracker ([www.wetlandtracker.org](http://www.wetlandtracker.org)). John said he would conduct outreach to estimate attendance of the workshop while finalizing the workshop's location; he is seeking a venue that can accommodate approximately 25 people, has a live internet connection for the presentation and is affordable to procure for a half-day. **Molly said she would check availability of space at the Corps office in San Francisco. Mike Connor suggested John solicit some questions to be answered from potential participants and use that feedback to establish the agenda.**

**7. Overview of potential state agency staff level reductions**

Steve McAdam noted BCDC received 75% of its funds from the state General Fund in the last fiscal year; as a result of the state's budget crisis, the agency was asked to prepare a plan that eliminated 16% of its General Fund and 12% of all other incoming funds spending. Steve noted that due to timing issues with how the percent cuts are applied to the fiscal year, the actual staff level cuts were greater than the 16% and 12% requested reductions. Essentially, BCDC has lost 25% of its General Fund funded workload and, under the best-case scenario, has lost 7 of 40 positions. Five people have already been laid off and another five or six people may be let go. BCDC has been asked to prepare plans for another 20% reduction in staff size by July 2004. BCDC has asked California Resources Agency Secretary Nichols that the agency not be subject to further staff cuts, as the agency is currently pared back to 1977 staff levels.

Bruce Wolfe said he saw benefits and consequences in the situation facing the Regional Boards. He said the San Francisco Bay region (Region 2) was able to transfer position vacancies from the Sacramento regional board, which staved off lay-offs. At present, all vacancies are now used up. A current plan calls for staff reductions of 12 Region 2 positions if there is no compromise from current union negotiations. Student position funding is also being lost, which will affect the workforce that oversees most database maintenance at Region 2. Yet, at present, it looks like Region 2 will avoid layoffs for the current fiscal year. The Board must also prepare for a 20% General Fund reduction for the next fiscal year. Relative to other state agencies, the Regional Board benefits from its greater reliance on fees; this has cut Region 2's reliance on the General Fund to 20%. Bruce noted how recent grant monies available from Propositions 13, 40 and 50 require grant managers at the Regional Board and that funding for those management positions is minimal. Bruce also noted that fees for wetland restoration projects are going to be rolled back to \$500.

Cindy Darling noted the California Bay-Delta Authority has been asked to prepare a 20% reduction plan, as well, and staff will have to be cut. Such changes are slowing the release of Proposition 50 funds due to decreasing staff levels. Bruce noted Carl Wilcox has said the California Department of Fish and Game will likely lose about 8 positions, mostly from their

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game warden staff. Mike Connor noted that fees that pay for the state's SWAMP program are also increasing, which could translate into a cut in Regional Monitoring Program for trace substances funding.

**8. Planning for next Executive Council meeting**

Mike Monroe asked what the Committee felt about planning for the next Executive Council meeting, bearing in mind potential issues that could be brought before that group. Bruce felt January or February 2004 would be good timing; he noted a February meeting would likely feature timely Napa-Sonoma marsh and South Bay Salt Pond items. Molly suggested an email go to Council members with options, particularly on the geographic boundary issue with the DRG. Arthur suggested making sure there's something good to show to the agency administrators; he felt the Restoration Program can play an important role in wetlands restoration "boosterism". Mike Connor suggested options for Council agenda development could include funding constraints for the future of the Restoration Program, sediment management in the bay, and what constraints prevent us from reaching the [Habitat Goals Report] Goals.

**9. Public Comment**

No comments were forthcoming.

**10. Wrap-up/Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting date was set for Friday, December 5. Mike Monroe adjourned the meeting.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- In order to provide more insight into the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan working group process, John will distribute the Bay Area Water Agencies Coalition (BAWAC) letter to the Coordinating Committee.
- Regarding the discussion on the Joint Venture tracking system, the Monitoring Group should determine its "wish list" for what it wants to do and those interests could be communicated back to the Joint Venture through John.
- John will communicate with Executive Council members about the DRG review of projects outside of the geographic boundary.
- John will revise the Coordinator's Workplan based on feedback received, incorporate that feedback as appropriate and circulate it to the Coordinating Committee.
- Regarding the permitting workshop, Mike Monroe felt the group needs to get a better grasp on who the audience should be, whether or not this should be focused on wetlands restoration, and what can be reasonably accomplished in one day. Molly Martindale, Steve McAdam, Luisa Valiela and Bruce Wolfe volunteered to participate on more intensive planning for the event.
- Molly is to check on space for the Wetland Tracker workshop at the Corps' office; John will conduct outreach to assess the number and interest of potential participants.