

**San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Restoration Program  
Management Group**

**October 22, 2002  
Draft Meeting Summary**

**Attendees –**

Marcia Brockbank (San Francisco Estuary Project)  
John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)  
Nadine Hitchcock (State Coastal Conservancy)  
Mike Hoover (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)  
Amy Hutzler (State Coastal Conservancy)  
Paul Jones (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)  
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)  
Steve McAdam (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)  
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)  
Chris Potter (California Resources Agency)  
Carl Wilcox (California Department of Fish and Game)  
Bruce Wolfe (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)

**1. Introductions/Review Agenda**

Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) chaired the meeting and called it to order. Mike reviewed the agenda items and initiated Announcements.

Mike Hoover (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) stated that he would like to see a brief discussion of Spartina on the agenda.

Nadine Hitchcock (State Coastal Conservancy) said that she'd received a call informing her that the Dixon Ranch land parcel is for sale. The location, which was the site of a previous hunting club, presents a potential restoration opportunity.

Bruce Wolfe (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board) stated that the Regional Board has 133 staff and is now budgeted to have only 124. However, the state has promised no layoffs in lieu of the budget situation. The state is asking agencies to prioritize their programs instead. On another issue, Loretta Barsamian of the Regional Board is planning a field trip of the Napa/Sonoma Salt Ponds with State Board Member Katz for sometime in early November.

Carl Wilcox (California Department of Fish and Game) provided an update on the Hamilton site. At present, justification needs to be provided to the governor that no risk will be assumed by the state in the land transfer. Due to past issues, DTSC is proceeding cautiously on this effort to ensure that there will be no toxics issues that arise following the transfer of the land. The insurance policy for this transfer is in place. The project is through all of its CERCLA issues but certain low-level pesticide hotspots remain. These sites are to be capped with dredged material. Carl also mentioned that he would like to provide an update on the Pond A4 restoration and Mike Monroe moved to make that discussion item number 3a on the agenda.

Steve McAdam (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission) shared that the BCDC Commissioners adopted last week new wetlands mitigation policies and policies governing recreation at former military bases. He also added that BCDC is updating its stormwater management policies and one of the commissioners is particularly interested in the effects of endocrine disruptors.

Marcia Brockbank (San Francisco Estuary Project) states that she'd just returned from the National Estuary Conference in Maryland. She learned that Congress appropriated between 4 and 5 million dollars to the national program over last year, which means that the program's level of funding would not decrease. She said the SFEP budget is close to \$500,000 this year. On another note, SFEP received 30 proposals for its small grants program.

Paul Jones (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) stated that 43 pre-proposals were received for the FY2003 Wetlands Programs Grants.

Amy Hutzel (State Coastal Conservancy) shared that the Napa Marsh EIR is scheduled to come out at year's end and an informational meeting may be planned for the second week of December. The Chief's report will likely come in May 2003.

Chris Potter (California Resources Agency) reminded the group of the upcoming CalEPA and Resources Agency conference in Santa Barbara, the California and the World Ocean Conference happening next week. Further information is available at the either agency's websites.

Mike Monroe informed the group that the Design Review Group will be working with Ann Buell of the Coastal Conservancy to provide input to the development of a Tidal Restoration Handbook. The relationship of the DRG and the peer reviewers already in place for the project is still being worked on.

## **2. September 24, 2002 Management Group Meeting Notes Review**

John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program) suggested that due to the time constraints of some members' schedules that this item be incorporated into later agenda items. Mike Monroe agreed and proceeded to introduce item 3.

## **3. Restoration Program's Role in South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Management Structure**

Mike Monroe introduced Nadine Hitchcock. Nadine began by stating that the South Bay Salt Ponds Management Structure and technical process are still under development. At this point in time, the focus is on determining the project needs (such as flood control, public access, technical data). She said there will be groups formed to tackle issues of public access, flood control, restoration, etc. These groups are open to whichever qualified individuals would like to participate on them. The Conservancy's mandate is to achieve a scientifically-sound and publicly supported project within five years and funding from the foundations will be linked to specific milestones. For these reasons, the Conservancy needs to maintain control of meeting agendas, the project schedule and other project management functions.

Nadine felt there are two reasons for confusion about the role of the Restoration Program in the salt pond restoration project planning process. First, the Conservancy has not clearly identified who will be doing specific tasks because we need to be sure that those entities conducting work are fully able to complete it effectively and within budget and project schedules. The Design Review group and Monitoring Program are not up and running. Second, the WRP is not fully established, the purposes and functions have not been agreed to verbally or in a signed Working Agreement. In addition, tasks must be agreed upon and contractors selected jointly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Fish and Game using the required competitive bid process. Nadine said based on how the Design Review group is being structured, it will not necessarily fit all the needs of the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration planning process.

Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) asked Nadine point out the barriers to having the WRP Executive Council act as the Executive Council to the South Bay Ponds project management structure. Molly also asked Nadine to articulate those barriers/issues to the Executive Council. Nadine responded that the a WRP Executive Council could act as the multi-agency Executive Advisory Steering Committee for the project but that a Project Executive Council consisting of heads of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Conservancy, would exist as well and have the final decision-making authority. Carl added that any significant issues that arose during the South Bay Salt Ponds project would come to the WRP Management Group. Sponsor members from the Management Group would then present those issues to the Executive Council and form subcommittees as necessary to address issues, i.e., for permitting issues.

Paul Jones then expressed that Cargill could become the driver for the WRP as a whole. Mike Monroe suggested that the Executive Council should act as the Steering Committee but details need to be ironed out so that the Council can be timely and effective. Mike added the need to be flexible and let this process evolve. Carl concurred stating that the Service, the Department, and the Conservancy will have an MOU that spells out these relationships.

Paul questioned whether \$2 million per year in technical studies (for the salt pond project) would overlap with the work of the WRP Monitoring Group. Nadine stated that it was premature to assume there will be overlap and we will be looking and models for science and technical review to ensure we establish a process that results in the highest quality process, one of the models we are looking at is CAL-FED's science review. Carl added that the funds available are not that much over the interim five-year planning period. He agreed to [John, please check with Carl here...I'm not sure this is accurate but don't want to misrepresent him] that going to the Executive Council with consensus over the South Bay Ponds Structure in developing the Monitoring Group. He stated that we need the monitoring programs, as they exist, now, and on a rapid-assessment basis.

Mike Monroe asked Nadine if she would be comfortable with a Management Group recommendation to the Executive Council that it act as the advisory steering committee. Nadine said yes in concept, as long as we can review and approve the language of the recommendation.

### **3a. Pond A4 Management Structure**

Carl reviewed recent discussions with Amy Hutzal, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the City of San Jose, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In considering the long-term and interim management structures for the area, the question has come up of whether to roll the Pond A4, Guadalupe, and Alviso ponds planning into the larger planning efforts. What additional issues (such as addressing the mitigation timelines of the projects) would need to be addressed? To make up for the time lag with the mitigation projects, there may be potential to add some ponds to the restoration effort. At present, there is \$4-5 million budgeted for planning and \$11 million for restoration of the A4 ponds, some of which would be offset by incorporation into the larger planning process. What would happen to that remaining money? The Bay could benefit from this influx of additional dollars.

Molly stated that this issue is something that the [regulatory] project managers should discuss before moving forward. Carl wanted to understand the required process needed to surface these issues at the Management Group. Mike Hoover suggested that phone calls be made to the project managers before this moves to the Executive Council. Carl suggested that we raise the issue to the Council but tell them that we will bring this issue to their attention if the situation develops to a point that their attention is necessary. **ACTION ITEM:** Molly to arrange a meeting of the A4 project managers to further discuss these ideas (names listed include Molly Martindale, Mike Monroe, Paul Amato, Carl Wilcox, Bob Batha, Amy Hutzal, and Mark Littlefield).

Bruce suggested that the South Bay Watershed Management Initiative should become part of this group.

On a related note, Mike Monroe provided a brief update on the Spartina project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will take the federal lead role and the Conservancy as the state lead agency in the project and EIS/EIR process. Mike informed the group that Peggy Olofson would be presenting the project at the Executive Council meeting. Paul suggested that debate about the issue is good and that Peggy should be prepared for some debate on this. Mike said he will ask her to be objective on this issue. Mike Hoover noted that the debate can affect the Purpose and Need of the environmental documents and Paul added that the role of NEPA and CEQA is to fully disclose what is known about the issues.

#### **4. WRP Group Reports**

**Design Review Group.** John provided a brief update on the DRG's upcoming review of the Breuner Marsh Mitigation Bank. The meeting will take place at the Regional Board office, in Room 12, Second Floor, from 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. The meeting will feature a presentation by Jeff Olberding about the project. This is the pilot project of the DRG. On another note, the RFQ for paid DRG members has been posted to the website and initial calls from recipients have been enthusiastic. The RFQ was distributed to over 75 people via email and regular mail. Molly asked if there is a hydrologist on the review team. John said that Michelle Orr or Philip Williams Associates has been invited to participate.

**Monitoring Group.** Paul began with a review of his slides that he plans to present to the Executive Council to solicit their support for a Monitoring Group and its requisite functions within the WRP. The brief slides included the framed question, the recommendation, the

elements of the monitoring system (i.e., what it will do), costs, benefits, and funding approaches and options. He also will include some slides with data (different pieces of data from the EcoAtlas, such as Spartina distribution, clapper rail habitat, etc.) to demonstrate what is expected of a data management system. **ACTION ITEM:** Paul to email PowerPoint presentation to group on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and group to respond with feedback.

The memo that will be given to the Executive Council will now have no options and simply recommend a phased approach. Mike then asked the group what we want to present to the Executive Council if all we seek are “yes” answers. Bruce wanted to ensure that the Council adopt the Working Agreement before this presentation, which would imply their commitment to a Monitoring Group beforehand. Carl suggested that a funding option could be costs worked into large-scale restoration projects. Mike Hoover pointed out that there are Monitoring requirements tied into the South Bay Salt Ponds Restorations, so, in theory, many agencies are already on board with Monitoring.

Carl suggested that for the Executive Council’s approval, we should hone in on what information we want to obtain from monitoring. Paul reiterated that this monitoring plan, as presented, is not a panacea and should not be construed that way; it is just the first step in the right direction. This allows for adaptive management in the future. Mike Monroe wanted pose the question of who would be best to manage this task. Paul stated that although this should be integrated into the Regional Monitoring Program for Trace Substances (at the San Francisco Estuary Institute), the “who” remains open-ended. Steve asked why not to recommend SFEI. Amy replied that if the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration were the subject, the Conservancy would have to receive three proposals in a competitive process.

Mike Monroe wanted to get a perspective from those Management Group members who deal regularly with commissions. Bruce said that we should show the Council that we have a model and share that it is doable and not unreasonable. Steve felt that we should say how much we think it will cost and point out who we think might be the best fit, but that we need to further investigate those options and come back to them. Marcia thought we should share what we think we should do and frame the outcome with the incorporation of expecting adaptive management. Mike summarized, saying that we should ask two questions that will yield “yes” answers: (1) Do you want a monitoring program? Do you want to task us to go off and formulate options and recommendations?

## **5. Final Working Agreement Update**

Mike mentioned that Working Agreement changes have been completed and copies are being sent to Alexis Strauss (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) and Mary Nichols (California Resources Agency) for review. John, Mike, Chris, Mary and Alexis will confer on this before the Executive Council meeting. **ACTION ITEM:** John to email the Working Agreement to everyone for one final review.

Molly raised the issue that we have yet to include the section on “closed sessions” in the Working Agreement, as directed by the Executive Council. Steve added that we do not need to add this in, and that doing so may be detrimental. **ACTION ITEM:** John to obtain legal justification for not including “closed session” language and report that back to the Executive

Council. Molly then added that she would like the words “Facilitated Permitting” removed from the Working Agreement. **ACTION ITEM:** John to remove “Facilitated Permitting” language from Working Agreement.

## **6. Science Advisory Group Discussion**

Mike advised the group that the Monitoring group and the Design Review Group have been incorporated into one body, the Science Advisory Group, following discussions at Design Review Group meetings. However, in the future, the Management Group will have to officially designate heads of the Science Advisory Group, which may be people who sit on both component groups.

## **7. Restoration Program Image/Outreach**

John briefly presented the new webpage (<http://www.sfwetlands.ca.gov/home.html>) and showed group members what can be expected of the site. He asked the group for feedback as to what might have been left out of the site’s design. John then handed out sample logos for the Restoration Program. After some deliberation, the group seemed to favor two styles and John will work with Debbi Nichols of the San Francisco Estuary Project on finalizing those.

## **8. Review of Executive Council Meeting Agenda**

Mike shared with the group his recent meeting experience with Will Travis (BCDC) and Loretta Barsamian. Will and Loretta had suggested a change in format for the Executive Council agenda that would entail more detailed items and brief issues papers as attachments. Examples were provided to John. Marcia wanted to make sure that all issue papers has a consistent format. Loretta also suggested that John act as an Executive Director at the meetings in his relation to the Executive Council, by verbally prepping the presentations and discussions to better frame the issues. These changes have been incorporated into the next agenda.

## **9. Wrap-up/Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be a joint November/December meeting (due to holiday schedule conflicts) and is scheduled for Friday, December 6th, all day. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to occur at the Fish and Wildlife Service facility at Mare Island, in Vallejo. **ACTION ITEM:** John to canvas Sacramento-based Management Group members for their availability and then establish the exact meeting time. The meeting was adjourned.

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Molly to arrange a meeting of the A4 project managers.
- Paul to email PowerPoint presentation to group on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and group to respond with feedback.
- John to email the Working Agreement to everyone for one final review.
- John to obtain legal justification for not including “closed session” language and report that back to the Executive Council.
- John to remove “Facilitated Permitting” language from Working Agreement.

- John to canvas Sacramento-based Management Group members for their availability and then establish the exact meeting time.