San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Restoration Program/ Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program

Meeting Notes
October 1, 2002

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)
Josh Collins (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Paul Jones (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Karl Malamud-Roam (Contra Costa Mosquito Vector Control District)
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
Michael May (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Stuart Siegel (Wetlands and Water Resources)

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Paul Jones (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) chaired the meeting and called it to order. He introduced John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program) to the group and then reviewed the agenda.

2. Focus Teams Updates/Filling Focus Team Vacancies Discussion

Michael May (San Francisco Estuary Institute) stated that he has submitted the CALFED proposal for data management. He said that he would like to use an Access database/data management system as a demonstration for the proposal. The goal of the proposal is to have a special Access database that maintains read-only files that can be called up and copied to/by outside sources. This allows SFEI to retain the central copy in an unaltered format. Michael also stated that public access to these files is key and will receive a lot of attention.

Andree Breaux (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board) said that she has received more revised protocols for the mammals and herps group. However, she stated, the group remains in limbo without definite protocols and objectives for the future. She suggested filling vacancies only after new objectives have been established.

Paul stated that direction on this should be forthcoming from the Executive Council in that they should provide some motivation as well as monies for these projects. He suggested that their direction on this issue is critical. Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) added that the Monitoring group needs to focus on specific actions, not the Executive Council.

Stuart Siegel (Wetlands and Water Resources) mentioned the CALFED proposals and the update for the physical processes team. He stated that, from three weeks ago, the P.I.'s will request a user website from SFEI that shares information and that anyone can have access to. He went on to add that the process team has not met for some time. He said that a clear and defined mission statement is needed and that these issues need to be resolved with the larger

group. On another note, he added that CALFED funding has not yet been forthcoming, but that contracts could come in April/May under optimal circumstances. In the interim, the only actions will consist of site selection efforts, which will encompass six sites.

Josh Collins (San Francisco Estuary Institute) stated that the focus teams do have some conceptual models and protocols at this time. The group is now moving towards development of rapid assessment protocols. Currently, they have a quasi-Rapid Assessment Method from the biogeochemistry team that focuses on mercury concentrations in clapper rails. The next batch of funding will be used to field test this method. This will achieve an assessment of habitat and lead to a contamination exposure index. Methods will include sampling amphipods and shore crabs. This will assist in determining contaminant levels further up the respective channels.

In terms of GIS, there are two protocols being developed. One will measure channel density and one will overlay U.S. Census data with watershed boundary maps. EMAP is currently developing a methodology for random selection of sampling sites and a protocol for how to use aerial photographs for vegetation mapping. EMAP fieldwork is presently ongoing. The deadline for the development of the next round of protocols, from the Section 104 grant, will be in March 2003. Josh went on to state that the EMAP work will go the website for field imaging.

The group took a brief break.

Upon return, Paul asked the group what they thought of the rapid assessment method. He stated that, as it stands, it is not meant to address wildlife, but meant to suggest what should be at a site upon receiving a certain score. Paul stated that Mike Sellors of the Golden Gate Audubon Society has written a paper on a rapid assessment method that uses only two variables: vegetation and elevation. Paul asked the group for their thoughts on the method.

Andree stated that the method is worthwhile and that she would like to see this developed for use with mammals and reptiles as well. She stated that the assessment should list more information to err on the side of leaving the interpretation to the reviewer of the results.

Molly stated that birds would be too variable to include in this method. Paul noted that tide and season create this variability. Josh added that it would be helpful to get Jenna Sokail and Lynn Trulio into the Monitoring group to make a presentation. Karl Malamud-Roam (Contra Costa Mosquito Vector Control District) pointed out that what appears to be consistent in terms of applying consistency to the assessment method is not always what intuitively appears to be such. Molly then stated that the assessment method could be adjusted for habitat types within California, and Josh added that this approach could be incorporated to determine what expected results – based on habitat type – would be.

3. West Nile Virus Presentation

Karl presented the recent knowledge and policy surrounding the threat of West Nile virus in California. So far, there have been over 100 deaths in the United States this year. Next Thursday, there will be a congressional hearing on the Clean Water Act and mosquito control. The central question in the debate is whether municipal stormwater provisions should be delayed indefinitely in order to evaluate their impact on public health.

West Nile was first identified in Uganda in the 1930s and an outbreak has generally occurred every twenty years. The current outbreak happening in the United States is in line with the natural cycle of the disease. However, the current strain of the virus is different from previous strains. Although similar to St. Louis encephalitis, the two viruses are not the same.

New York City saw the first appearance in this country in 1999, yet now seems to be left behind. There are five traditional indictors of West Nile presence – they are (1) wild birds infected, (2) domesticated birds infected, (3) horses infected, (4) mosquito populations infected, and (5) humans infected. More that anything else, this is a bird-based disease. The virus itself has to strike a middle ground in its virulence, in that it cannot be so strong that it kills a host before a mosquito can pick it up and carry it onto another organism, and it has to be strong enough so that there is enough of the virus in the blood so that a mosquito can transmit it to the next organism. It does appear that mosquitoes cannot pick up the virus from one person and pass it onto another person. People deemed most susceptible to West Nile virus are those in their sixties. Children are not known to be susceptible to this particular strain. In terms of California, there has been no detection of the virus in birds, horses, or mosquito populations, and that the three cases this year were from people exposes to places or goods from outside of the state. The questions then arise: How do we, as wetlands managers, address public concerns? What can we expect in California?

The two species of concern are *Culix pipiens* and *Culix tarsalis*. *C. pipiens* can tolerate exceedingly low water quality, while *C. tarsalis* relies more on habitats. Neither species is usually able to tolerate salt marshes, although *tarsalis* can exist around freshwater inputs to salt marshes. The implication for public health then focuses on detention basin design. Designs should ensure that water does not hold in one place for more than two days to prevent the mosquitoes from completing their growth cycle between the stages of eggs laid through flying away. Problems could arise from such practices as duck clubs, where there is overlap between duck hunting season (and associated flooding of these duck habitats) and the mosquito growing season, which ends November 1. Possible pesticide control options include Malathion and Pyrethroids, which can indirectly impact other invertebrates. The use of larvacides would come first, and then adulticides in the event that the first application is not optimally successful.

4. WRMP Memo to the Executive Council

Paul briefly stated that the memo, as prepared, to the Executive Council of the Wetlands Restoration Program. He stated that the memo presents steps and tangible, short-term goals. The group suggested that the memo should present a comprehensive vision in addition to outlining the short-term goals. Although some group members were equivocal on whether to present this item at the upcoming Executive Council meeting, the group sentiments seemed to support doing so. The group agreed that the database suggested should be started and the memo should state that we are "continuing" to develop these items with EMAP, indicators, and collection of data. These efforts are occurring to populate the system with data that is necessary right now. **ACTION ITEM:** WRMP group members to review the memo and provide feedback to Paul within a week.

5. Update on Crissy Field and Montezuma Projects

Josh briefly summarized the status of these projects. The contract for Crissy Field has come through for the development of monitoring protocols and a contractor list has been requested. The review of these methods will have a 45-day turnaround.

For Montezuma, the informational packet is being distributed to TRT members this week.

In terms of EMAP and Section 104, these should be presented to the Executive Council. Funding remains a question at this time. The best way to avoid future mistakes is to look to the central repository.

6. Meeting Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned.

Summary of Action Items:

- WRMP group members to review the memo and provide feedback to Paul within a week.