

Appendix 1: Regulatory Alignment

The WRMP charter states, “The WRMP will improve wetland restoration project success by putting in place regional-scale monitoring to increase the impact, utility, quality, cost effectiveness, consistency, and application of permit-driven monitoring to inform science-based decision-making.” To realize this vision, WRMP program staff are working to identify opportunities to support effective and efficient permit-driven wetland monitoring and to design regional wetland data collection so that it can inform decision-making, including at regulatory agencies.

The WRMP enlisted the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) to assist in advancing regulatory agency alignment and monitoring recommendations by conducting a regulatory needs assessment, drafting and refining findings, and finally, developing recommendations for a Regulatory Engagement Strategic Roadmap, to map out key decision points, define roles and responsibilities, and identify approaches, commitments, and next steps. CBI’s work on this goes through June 2023.

As a first step, CBI conducted a [Regulatory Needs Assessment](#) through focus groups and interviews with regulatory agency staff and restoration project practitioners, which was completed in June 2023. The Regulatory Needs Assessment identified ways in which current permit-driven monitoring does and does not meet the needs of regulatory agencies, and pinpointed opportunities for the WRMP to meet some of those needs while providing regional efficiencies. The Regulatory Needs Assessment found widespread agency interest in, and WRMP opportunities for, improving data consistency, quality, and sharing of project-based monitoring data, thereby contributing to better science and information to inform stewardship and adaptive management for conserving, restoring, and enhancing the San Francisco Bay’s wetlands.

The Regulatory Needs Assessment also found that some regulatory agencies are skeptical about the potential for substitution of site-based permit driven monitoring with WRMP regional monitoring in the short term. Some agencies expressed that some permit-driven, site-specific monitoring is essential for ensuring that wetland restoration projects achieve their intended goals, comply with all relevant regulations, and avoid negative impacts to listed species and water quality. Regional data are unlikely to be able to provide this level of information.

The WRMP SOPs outline a suite of methods for data collection that may eventually facilitate standardized data collection and regional analysis. The WRMP may select all or part of the SOPs for monitoring activities in the region or at a site, based on the monitoring plan and available funding. It is important to note that the WRMP SOPs in their entirety are not immediately

suitable for adoption by regulatory agencies to be written into permit monitoring requirements. If regulatory agencies were to require all the monitoring procedures in the SOPs to be written into permits, it would increase rather than reduce the current permit-driven monitoring required of project implementers. Ongoing discussion between the WRMP and regulatory agencies will clarify whether specific portions of the SOPs may be suitable for meeting permit-driven monitoring requirements while also providing relevant data for regional analysis.

Most regulatory agencies:

- Agreed that current permit-driven monitoring faces challenges in data consistency, comparability, quality, and sharing, and that it did not necessarily serve the needs of regional scientific understanding.
- Welcomed the addition of regional-scale science and topic-specific SOPs to better inform understanding of tidal wetlands.
- Were generally open to suggestions on more standardized sampling protocols and monitoring methodologies as well as opportunities for better data sharing, as long as the WRMP could ensure high quality of data and address proprietary data issues.

The WRMP Regulatory Engagement Strategic Roadmap will be complete by June 2024.