# Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program: Approach to Cost-Sharing

The Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program (WRMP) mission is to deliver coordinated regional monitoring of the San Francisco Estuary's wetlands to *(1) inform science-based decision-making for wetland restoration and adaptive management and (2) increase the cost-effectiveness of permit-driven monitoring associated with wetland restoration projects*. Various agencies throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay region have agreed that the restoration and stewardship of tidal wetlands is needed to meet restoration goals and ensure a climate-resilient estuary.  The WRMP includes a monitoring site network, supports open data sharing, follows a comprehensive science framework, and communicates findings to a wide range of end users including regulators, restoration practitioners, and community members. To run the program, the WRMP depends on external funding; currently a mix of local and federal funding with local matching fund requirements. Cost-sharing with local organizations who benefit directly and indirectly from the WRMP products helps leverage additional data collection and in-depth analyses that support the region's conservation efforts and the long-term health of our tidal wetlands.

## Plan for reaching out to future cost-share partners.

For each new WRMP product (e.g., remote sensing, mapping, analysis, summary reports, data collection), the WRMP staff will decide if cost-sharing is needed and feasible, and if products to be produced under cost-share are appropriately aligned with the WRMP mission and scope. The WRMP Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and/or staff will then identify a list of 4-8 potential cost-sharing partners for each of the above products. Meetings will then occur between WRMP staff (likely the Lead Scientists) and potential partners to discuss the terms of the agreement.

## Current cost share opportunities.

There are several opportunities for cost-sharing with current WRMP products. The WRMP does not intend for cost-sharing to be a primary source of funding for program implementation, as there are inherent challenges and limitations to this approach (i.e., limited funds, unpredictability of partner needs, amongst others). Rather, the WRMP views cost-sharing as a tool to offset some of the costs of high priority and high-quality data collection.

### Cost-sharing to enhance WRMP geospatial tools.

Cost-sharing allows the WRMP to regularly update and improve important tools like the Baylands Habitat Map (BHM). The BHM provides information on the extent of regional tidal marsh, tidal flats, and diked Baylands. Updating the map at least every 5 years allows the WRMP to monitor habitat distribution and change over time and supports adaptive management. The BHM requires significant time, energy and resources to create. To accurately monitor bayland habitat change, the WRMP TAC recommends remote sensing using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) to model elevation across the SF Estuary. Currently, there is not a single standardized LiDAR dataset for the Bay.

Cost-share support in 2024/2025 will augment existing funding to support the collection of higher quality regional LiDAR data by the WRMP. As described in the WRMP geospatial standard operating procedure (WRMP SOP for Indicators 1 &3), the ideal input data for bayland habitat types involves high resolution imagery flown at low tide at a consistent season across landmark years. A single, high quality LiDAR dataset for the entire lower estuary will provide a high value data resource for the region. These tools would be useful for local governments, projects and other regional mapping efforts thereby warranting cost-sharing and coordination.

### Supporting the development of the WRMP People and Wetlands products.

In addition to mapping tidal wetland habitats, the WRMP is interested in the spatial relationships between wetlands benefits and environmental justice communities throughout the region, and the levels and demographics of involvement in wetland-related activities (e.g., shoreline recreation). To accomplish these tasks, the People and Wetlands Workgroup is developing SOPs for various forms of new monitoring and is guiding development of new informational products like maps. Cost-sharing could support this effort in several ways. For example, cost-share support could allow the WRMP to undertake efforts to take stock of public amenities (bathrooms, lighting, etc.) and their condition at wetland sites, and expand the sites and types of data collected on wetland visitation. Agencies interested in human connections and access to natural spaces may be

open to cost-sharing the development and regular updating of WRMP products related to their work.