



Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Estuary Program offices, Morro Bay, CA

August 23, 2017
4:00 pm

Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of May 10, 2017 Executive Committee minutes
5. **ACTION:** Recommendation on Community Grant Application (see attached)

In the spring round of Community Grant application review, the committees decided to delay a decision on the Sea Otter Savvy application to install signage to promote sea otter stewardship by scuba divers in Morro Bay. The committees were in support of the goal of the effort but wanted to see other approaches other than signage. Estuary Program staff has worked with the applicant to revise the proposal for review by the committees.

In FY16, the \$5,000 request from the city of Morro Bay for the Boat Haulout Facility feasibility study was not needed and was never awarded. To date in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, one \$5,000 grant was awarded to support the documentary video by Simo Nylander, and one \$3,500 grant was awarded to State Parks for plover signage. Thus, the program has up to \$6,500 remaining in funds for the FY17 grant cycle. Any funds that are not awarded can be rolled over into the FY18 grant cycle.

Project: Promoting Sea Otter Stewardship in Scuba Divers in Morro Harbor
Applicant: Sea Otter Savvy, California State Parks, and California Department of Fish & Wildlife

Request: \$5,000
Matching Funds: \$126
Total Budget: \$5,126

Summary: Sea Otter Savvy uses a science-based approach to conduct an outreach and education program to reduce human-caused disturbance to sea otters in California. The program's monitoring has indicated that disturbances to resting sea otters by scuba divers at Target Rock are all too frequent. According to Sea Otter Savvy, while similar disturbances have not been observed at Coleman Beach, the proximity of popular diving sites to sea otter resting locations make disturbance likely.

Sea Otter Savvy feels that it already has mechanisms in place to work with kayak, paddleboard, and other boat rental locations. Thus, they opted not to address these populations in this proposed project. Instead, they are proposing to compile a handout on waterproof paper. It would have an underwater map on one side that contains tips for local diving, areas where divers should exercise care due to the presence of wildlife, and other relevant information. The other side of the handout would include some wildlife ID information, safety information, navigation information, and tips on interacting responsibly with wildlife. It would also include disclaimer language reminding divers to check the weather and tides. The project would also involve development of an action plan to reach out to divers with this handout and other information. Potential pathways to reach divers include contacting dive shops in Morro Bay,

San Luis Obispo, and in the Central Valley; identifying local dive organizations through which to share information; and presenting at the annual Depth Perceptions diver education event held each year at the PG&E Energy Education Center. Sea Otter Savvy would conduct regular check-in with dive shop staff to distribute materials and establish contact with new staff.

Recommendation: This applicant worked closely with Estuary Program staff to develop the revised proposal, which answers the types of questions brought up by the E&O Working Group and other committees during the review process in May. The effort ties in strongly to Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP) Action Plans and goals. Based on these revisions and the need to address this source of disturbance to local otters, staff recommends funding this proposed project. The Implementation Committee voted at their August 10 meeting to approve the grant application, with the added condition that the content developed for the handout be reviewed by Estuary Program staff.

6. DISCUSSION: Education & Outreach Updates

State of the Bay: The Estuary Program had a successful State of the Bay (SOTB) month in April. Events included a series of scientific talks, a DogFest event, a poetry contest and reading, an art show, a bay-friendly gardening event, and numerous informative hikes and walks led by partners such as ECOSLO and the Central Coast State Parks Association docents. In total, 928 people participated in SOTB events. Local media shared SOTB messages through 10 articles reaching a varied audience across multiple publications. Estuary Program staff will continue to give presentations in the community on the results of the environmental report card through October. This series of SOTB talks has already reached an additional 100 people.

Speaker Series: The Estuary Program will be hosting a speaker series throughout the year to bring in outside experts to present on various topics of interest relevant to our work and our partners' work. The series is based on the success of this year's SOTB talk events. The first will be an eelgrass-themed event on Thursday, October 12 from 6 to 8 p.m. This event will include presentations from the Estuary Program, Dr. Jenn Yost of Cal Poly, and John Roser. A talk on February 8 will focus on climate impacts, and Dr. Karen Thorne of USGS will be speaking about the results of her study of California coast tidal marshes and projected impacts from sea level rise. A third talk will be held on June 7 on a topic to be determined. All events will take place at the SLO Botanical Garden in the Oak Glen Pavilion at 3450 Dairy Creek Road, San Luis Obispo. Events are free and open to the public.

***Of Marshes and Morros* Film Screening:** A Community Grant supported the development of this award-winning documentary short film by local filmmaker Simo Nylander. You'll recognize many familiar faces who graciously agreed to be interviewed for the piece. We'll be hosting a screening for our partners on Thursday, September 14, at 6 p.m. at the SLO Botanical Garden. The event will be free and we'll be sending out invitations in August.

7. DISCUSSION: CCMP Evaluation

In our FY2018 Workplan, a new task was created to assess the EPA guidance as well as the current version of the CCMP to determine areas to expand or update. We will also be creating a plan for updating the CCMP. In FY2019, we will be conducting the update, which will include identifying five-year focus areas and working toward measurable objectives. We will be looking to folks like the EC members for their input as we embark on this process.

8. Adjourn to next meeting of November 8, 2017 at 4:00 pm at the Estuary Program offices.

Attachments:

1. Draft minutes for May 10, 2017 EC meeting
2. Revised Community Grant application for Sea Otter Savvy