



## Morro Bay National Estuary Program

Implementation Committee Quarterly Meeting  
Windows on the Water - 699 Embarcadero, Morro Bay

February 4, 2016  
12:00 pm

### DRAFT Minutes

---

**Attendees:** John Sayers, *CA State Parks*; Vince Cicero, *CA State Parks*; Melody Fountain, *Los Padres National Forest*; Cathy Martin, *County of San Luis Obispo*; Mike Anderson, *CCC*; Mark Barnett, *NRCD*; Michaela Koenig, *CalTrans District 5*; Tom Edell, *CalTrans District 5*; Lexie Bell, *MBNEP Staff*; Jen Nix, *MBNEP Staff*; Cynthia Milhem, *MBNEP Staff*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*.

#### 1. Introductions and Updates

- **Mike Anderson** – Cap Ivy removal is ongoing on Chorro Creek. They also participated in the Morro Bay Creek Clean Up.
- **John Sayers** – State Parks will soon be burning brush piles in the area. Right now they are dealing with weed issues. He recently attended a discussion of the invasive action plan and mentioned seven high priority weeds for eradication.
- **Jen Nix** – The Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve is in its design phase, and we are currently getting an extension from CDFW for the work. On eelgrass, we are partnering with Cal Poly to guide us in our monitoring efforts. We are trying to collect baseline data on existing beds with a focus on water quality data to help understand the decline.
- **Cathy Martin** – She is a new staff engineer with the Water Resources/Public Works Division.
- **Melody Fountain** – PG&E is taking the lead on the com site roads, repairing the road from 101 to the furthest site. There are no plans for the road beyond the towers – it will likely be decommissioned.
- **Vince Cicero** – State Parks is conducting some fuel and forestry management on Black Hill for safety reasons and to create a healthier community. They want to do some work on the edge of Montana de Oro.
- **Michaela Koenig** – Michaela will be replacing Tom when he retires in about a month.
- **Tom Edell** – CalTrans is keeping an eye on the veldt grass on Highway 1. They hope to spray twice - before it goes to seed and then after. The plan is for CDFW to spray on CCER, so they are trying to coordinate these two efforts. A letter of support from the Estuary Program was helpful in the past on this same effort.

2. **Public Comment** – None presented.

3. **Agenda Revisions** – None presented.

4. **ACTION: Consider Approval of November 18, 2015 minutes**

**Vote:** Tom Edell motioned to approve, Mark Barnett seconded. Unanimous in favor.



## **5. Discussion: EPA Program Evaluation Update**

The EPA prepared a draft letter summarizing the results of the recent 5-year program evaluation. The draft letter highlighted strengths and challenges for the program and confirmed that the Estuary Program passed the evaluation. The letter acknowledged our good work in outreach and public involvement, restoration, and capacity building. Areas for us to focus on in the next five years included climate change, monitoring, eelgrass restoration, and nutrient and sediment reductions.

The final letter will be shared with the Implementation Committee once it is received. Currently, EPA headquarters staff is waiting for approval and final signature before sending the final version.

The discussion included the variability in the letters from EPA based on who is conducting the review. The process is one of the few opportunities for EPA to direct us. The letters have become more prescriptive over time as EPA recognizes the value of the non-regulatory NEP approach. EPA seems to be adding to what they want us to do. Vince asked how efforts by partners could be captured and reported to EPA. We discussed holding a regular knowledge transfer, which could be used to develop numeric targets for things like invasives removal.

## **6. Presentation: 2015 Annual Report Review**

Estuary Program staff highlighted results from projects in 2015, including the Road Erosion Prevention Project, Give a Day for the Bay, and Monitoring Program activities.

Jen Nix presented a summary on the roads project. The project has addressed 47 sites on 10.42 miles of roads in the watershed. PG&E is doing additional work on Forest Service property using our permits. It has been a busy construction season with work on Cal Poly and Camp SLO property. Project activities include increased culvert sizes, armored fill outsloping, and rolling dips. The project will prevent approximately 9,260 cubic yards of sediment from entering our creeks, as calculated by our consultant, PWA. The effort focused on the highest priority sites that were located lowest in the watershed. In the future, there could be possibly be work for CCC crews. Remedial construction will be finished up in the spring.

Lexie Bell presented an overview of Give a Day for the Bay, which was an effort that helped publicize partner volunteer events. There were ten events hosted by six partners that attracted 192 volunteers who donated 572 hours of their time.

Ann Kitajima presented highlights of the monitoring program activities. In 2015, 38 volunteers donated a total of 785 hours for monitoring in the watershed and estuary. Volunteers and staff conducted 244 creek water quality visits, 107 bay water quality visits, 367 bacteria site visits, and seven bioassessment surveys. A portion of the year was spent on data management and analysis. A comprehensive data summary report was completed and is available on our website at <http://www.mbnep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2015-Data-Summary-Report.pdf> Some highlights from the report included



California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) analysis of the Walters Creek Phase II Restoration Project. The CRAM scores from 2008 immediately following construction as compared to data collected in 2015 showed modest improvements in habitat and hydrology metrics. Monitoring and analysis has been conducted on San Luisito Creek to show the efficacy of riparian fencing. At a site highly impacted by cattle, there was a 550% decrease in bacteria concentrations following the installation of riparian fencing. When cattle are present at the site (i.e., gates are left open for weed abatement), bacteria increases by 90% as compared to times when cattle are excluded from the creek. Monitoring also demonstrated lower water temperatures at the bottom of the project area as compared to the top of the project area. We are also monitoring the Los Osos seeps for nitrate levels, in anticipation of the Los Osos Wastewater Project coming online in 2016. Initial data shows a median nitrate as N concentration of around 17 mg/L at some of the freshwater seep sites.

#### **7. Discussion: 2017 Workplan Input – See 2016 Workplan**

Estuary Program staff will be preparing the 2017 Workplan over the next few months and presenting it for consideration at the May committee meetings. Current budget projections indicate level funding at \$600,000. Some current (2016) workplan tasks will continue (see 2016 workplan document for details):

- Land Conservation – seeking easements around Camp SLO
- Freshwater Flow – potential conservation projects in the Chorro Valley with Trout Unlimited
- Restoration Maintenance and Monitoring
- Conservation Planning – to prioritize projects in the watershed
- Other Restoration
- Eelgrass Monitoring
- Monitoring Program Coordination
- Monitoring Program Reporting and Analysis
- Monitoring Program Data Management
- Monitoring Program Quality Assurance
- Communications – website, blog, social media
- Education
- Community Grants
- Other E&O Tasks
- Manage Committees and Build Partnerships
- Grants and Contracts Administration and Financial Management
- General Administration and Human Resources Management
- Tracking Implementation of the Management Plan and Workplan

New tasks that may be initiated in 2017 include:

- Next Steps on the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve – seeking implementation funding
- Stormwater Management Project Planning
- Nature Center Update – effort to update content



The IC brought up a few additional issues or opportunities that we might want to consider:

- Vince recommended connecting with the Natural History Museum, because he thought they might also be considering updating some of their exhibits.
- Mike recommended coordinating with Meredith Hardy on funding opportunities. SLOSI sent a letter out to try to work with CDFW.
- State Parks is hoping to work more with CDFW on projects and funding in Morro Bay watershed.
- The Estuary Program has been trying to address pike minnow, including inventorying, but CDFW does not want to fund any projects. We are looking at other smaller pots of money. The IC as a whole seemed interested in pike minnow as an issue in the watershed.
- The Water Board might be interested in rangeland management and another paired watershed study. There might be potential to work on this at Camp SLO, due to overgrazing by a leasee.

Input was appreciated from the Implementation Committee about projects or partnerships to consider including in the 2017 workplan.

**8. Adjourned at 1:30 pm to next meeting of May 5, 2016 at 12:00 pm at Windows on the Water.**

**Attachments sent with Staff Report:**

- 1. November IC meeting minutes**