



Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
MBNEP Office

May 11, 2016
4:00 pm

Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of February 10, 2016 minutes
5. **ACTION:** Recommendations on Community Grant Applications.

Summary: There are three pending community grant applications this round: equipment purchases for the Central Coast State Parks Association (CCSPA) SeaLife Stewards program, funding for the Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization (MBCFO) for a Feasibility Study for a boatyard and haulout facility, and funding for Central Coast Salmon Enhancement (CCSE) to reimburse expenses for developing a proposal to support green infrastructure and storm/rain water catchment. The CCSPA application was reviewed by the Education & Outreach (E&O) Working Group and the other two applications were reviewed by the Technical Working Group (TWG). For the CCSPA application, the E&O Working Group recommended funding the request for equipment for the SeaLife Steward docent program. For the Feasibility Study for the boat haulout facility, the TWG supported the project but had questions regarding coordination of funding with the city. For the green infrastructure and stormwater management project, the TWG supported the concept of the project but was concerned about competitiveness of the application in the Prop 1 funding pool, adequacy of the proposed budget, and coordination of the project with the landowner, Camp San Luis Obispo. Staff concurs with the working groups' recommendations, as discussed further below.

Project: SeaLife Stewards

Applicant: Central Coast State Parks Association

Request: \$3,260

Matching Funds: \$3,850

Total Budget: \$7,110

Summary: This request will purchase equipment for SeaLife Stewards, which are roving Morro Bay State Park volunteers in kayaks who will provide interpretation and marine wildlife identification to recreational bay users. Their aim is to protect wildlife through friendly and informal interactions with kayakers, boaters, paddlers, divers, swimmers and surfers. They will also conduct citizen science to understand what types of interactions cause disturbances to wildlife and to set a baseline for the disturbance rate for comparison to rates at the end of the season. This will allow an assessment of effectiveness of the program. Equipment to be purchased includes kayaks, paddles, kayak storage racks, dock boxes, and miscellaneous safety items.

Recommendations: The E&O Working Group reviewed the grant application and recommended approval. They had some questions and concerns. They wanted to be sure that the volunteers were trained to be diplomatic and not approach recreational boaters with an attitude of enforcement; they wanted to know

more about the training materials; they wanted the program to build relationships with local recreational rental businesses; and they wanted to make sure that the docents would look official (i.e., a special hat or flag on the kayak) but not like an enforcement agent. State Park employees that are running the training have already received this feedback and have worked to emphasize a friendly, interpretive approach. The disturbance data collection is very informational purposes only, not enforcement. Staff concurs with this recommendation.

Project: Morro Bay Boatyard and Haulout Facility

Applicant: Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization

Request: \$5,000

Matching Funds: \$50,000 (committed by the city toward the feasibility study)

Total Budget: \$55,000

Summary: The Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization (MBCFO), as part of the Harbor Advisory Board's Marine Facility Ad Hoc Committee, has been working toward the goal of establishing a boatyard facility in Morro Bay to implement best management practices for safe and clean vessel maintenance. The city is considering allocating property for the facility at a location across the street just south of the South T-pier. The MBCFO obtained grant funding to help complete the initial demand study. This community grant request is to support the next step in the process, which is the Financial Feasibility Analysis, which examines construction, capital improvement, and ongoing operating costs versus potential income to determine the financial viability of the project. The \$5,000 request is to partially offset the cost of this Financial Feasibility Study. Since submittal of the application, the city has committed \$50,000 to the Feasibility Study.

Recommendations: The TWG reviewed the grant application and recommended funding the project. However, they had questions about how these funds would be coordinated with those committed by the city. Staff agrees with this recommendation.

Project: Proposal Development Support for Green Infrastructure and Storm/Rain Water Catchment

Applicant: Central Coast Salmon Enhancement

Request: \$5,000

Matching Funds: \$8,585

Total Budget: \$13,585

Summary: The proposed project requests funds to support developing and submitting the pre-application for a Prop 1 Stormwater Grant to support stormwater management on the Camp San Luis Obispo Army National Guard (CSLO) facility. Central Coast Salmon Enhancement (CCSE) submitted the pre-application to the state by the April 15 deadline. CCSE seeks funding to retroactively reimburse CCSE and Sierra Watershed Progressive, the design consultant, for their upfront time. If the pre-application is successful, then CCSE will create a full-application, which would be due July 8. The final selection would be announced in October.

Recommendations: The TWG reviewed the grant application and supports the concept of the project but had concerns in a few areas. These concerns included the competitiveness of the grant application process, whether the proposed budget was adequate, and how closely the effort was being coordinated with CSLO. Staff is in concurrence with these issues.

6. **ACTION:** Recommend Approval of FY 17 Workplan and CWA 320 Grant Application (see attached)

Summary: The principal funding source for MBNEP operations is the annual Clean Water Act (CWA) 320 grant administered through the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). For Fiscal Year (FY) 17, Congress has authorized sufficient funding to grant \$600,000 for each of the various programs, including the MBNEP. This is a level funding with last year's allocation. US EPA also made funds available through a competitive application process, and MBNEP was awarded an additional \$30,500 for eelgrass monitoring and research. This brings the workplan total budget for FY17 to \$630,500. Annually, in the spring, we apply for the next fiscal year's funding. As part of the application, we are required to prepare a proposed workplan that addresses the programmatic needs of the MBNEP while also complying with US EPA guidelines for such funding. Staff has developed a workplan that largely continues our major ongoing tasks through the next fiscal year. New tasks include a Conservation and Restoration Project Development task and the Nature Center Update task.

Staff recommends that the EC approve the proposed workplan.

7. **Discussion:** Potential funding and monitoring efforts for Eelgrass – Status and Next Steps

The Estuary Program continues to collaborate with partners to study the causes for the precipitous decline in eelgrass in the bay. This effort includes applying for funding and working with partners in their funding and research efforts. Potential and on-going efforts in this area can be summarized as follows:

- US EPA awarded the Estuary Program a \$30,500 grant to conduct bay-wide mapping of eelgrass beds using sidescan sonar and to groundtruth the map. The funding is available in FY17, and the map is expected to be completed in the Fall of 2017.
- The Estuary Program applied for Duck Stamp funding to support monitoring of eelgrass restoration beds. The grant is for monitoring during the Summer and Fall of 2016. If monitoring indicates restoration success, then a second phase of the project would begin for small scale restoration, including transplanting, seed dispersal, and habitat creation. The project budget is \$21,000. We expect to be notified on the status of the grant application in early June.
- Cal Poly faculty Ryan Walter submitted a proposal to an internal Cal Poly grant program for \$14,000 to support monitoring and analysis of water quality data to better understand eelgrass decline. The research examines historic water quality and environmental data over the course of the eelgrass decline and characterizes existing bay hydrodynamics and physical forces across spatial gradients in eelgrass survival. Ryan is awaiting a funding decision on the project.
- Cal Poly lecturer Jennifer O'Leary submitted a proposal to an internal Cal Poly grant program for \$14,000 to support fish trawling in the estuary, in order to better understand how the loss of eelgrass habitat has impacted fish populations. Jennifer is awaiting a funding decision on the project.
- Cal Poly professor Jenn Yost submitted a proposal to an internal Cal Poly grant program to support a study of eelgrass genetics in different regions of the bay. Understanding the genetics will inform the restoration efforts, since if genetics differ greatly between different regions, eelgrass transplanting between these regions is less likely to be successful. Jenn is awaiting a funding decision on the project.
- Cal Poly faculty member Brian Paavo has conducted some preliminary sediment coring in different regions of the bay, as part of the effort to understand eelgrass decline. The effort requires additional financial support in order to continue.
- Cal Poly students are embarking on various projects related to eelgrass health. An undergraduate student is reviewing historic documents related to eelgrass to determine changes in conditions that might have contributed to the decline. A masters student will be conducting

outplanting experiments along with water quality monitoring to understand water quality impacts on outplanting success.

8. Discussion: Presentation of US EPA Semi-annual Report

Twice a year, the Estuary Program submits a semi-annual report to US EPA, which provides the program status on the budget and the tasks laid out in our workplan. The latest semi-annual report contains a summary for the first half of FY16, from October 1, 2015 through March 31, 2016. As of March 2016, 79% or \$256,073 of the 320 funds from the grant that began in FY12 have been spent. \$608,017 remains to be spent prior to September 30. The Estuary Program has met 87% of its match requirement, with \$1,689,500 earned through March 31.

9. Adjourn to next meeting of August 10, 2016 at 4 p.m. at the MBNEP offices.

Attachments:

1. February 2016 EC meeting minutes were sent via email
2. FY17 Workplan
3. Community grant applications
4. US EPA Semi-annual report