

Morro Bay National Estuary Program  
EPA Program Evaluation Status  
for 2020

This memo provides the status of the required actions outlined in the Program Evaluation (PE) letter from the 2015 review by EPA.

**CCMP Update**

Status: Ongoing

Planning for the update has been written into the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Workplan. The tasks planned for this year include:

- Advertise for and hire an intern to assist with the update process. This person will analyze the 2012 version of the report, review the latest EPA guidance on CCMP updates, and assess Estuary Program progress toward completing Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) action plans. This position will be filled before the end of the year, and it will run throughout the winter quarter of 2018.
- Continue with the conservation planning work, which will inform the CCMP update process.
- Begin defining measurable objectives. Determine what expertise is needed to help create them and create a draft timeline. Develop list of water quality parameters related to the priority issues. Determine if we have alternative measurable targets. Determine what type of support is needed to develop these objectives. CCMP update will be completed in 2020. An involved public process is not likely required since we are updating the plan rather than doing a complete revision as we did in 2012.

**Communication Plan Updates**

Status: Completed

The Communications and Outreach Coordinator regularly updates the plan with the program's positions on topical issues. That way, this resource is available for staff who deal with these types of inquiries from the public and from partners. The Executive Director meets regularly with the Communications and Outreach Coordinator to keep this plan up to date.

**Accomplishments on Website**

Status: Nearly completed

EPA wanted to see more readily accessible information on the website about the program's accomplishments. The updated website content has been developed, and we are currently developing the presentation for the web pages. This task is expected to be completed by the summer of 2018.

**Conservation Planning**

Status: Ongoing

EPA wanted to see completion of a conservation plan that establishes restoration and protection numeric targets and identifies and/or proposes habitat protection and restoration activities that are tied to the CCMP Action Plans. The Restoration Projects Manager has a rough timeframe planned. We are in

the process of convening a Technical Advisory Committee to review the plan. We expect to complete a draft document in the fall of 2018.

### **Evaluation of Monitoring Program**

Status: Completed, with annual updates

EPA encouraged the program to continue its ongoing evaluation of the Monitoring Program for both ambient conditions and project results. The Monitoring Program recently conducted a review of the monitoring sites and protocols to create an annual monitoring workplan. This internal document lays out the types of monitoring and sites for the upcoming year. This gives staff an overview of both their workload as well as a good birds' eye view of what we have planned for the year. The data is collected to assess programmatic and environmental results in the long-term. We feel that recent changes to our program allow us to do this. We plan to update the monitoring workplan for 2019.

### **Sharing Environmental Results**

Status: Ongoing

EPA encouraged the Estuary Program to continue to capture and publicly-display these tangible results for stakeholders and supporters to view. The program is currently achieving this through many avenues, including the newsletter, the weekly blog, scientific presentations, and the State of the Bay (SOTB) report card. In addition to these efforts, we hosted a month of SOTB events throughout April 2017. We followed that up with several presentations of the report card results to various public service clubs and organizations. This effort reached numerous members of the general public as well as partner organizations. Through the SOTB efforts to date, nearly 1,200 individuals were reached in person at events and presentations; an estimated 4,900 people were reached via radio and television interviews and presentations; and an estimated 1,500 people were reached via blog posts and social media related to the events.

Additionally, the Estuary Program developed a Science Explorations talk series for this year. Our first event was an eelgrass-focused talk in October, which presented the latest results on the monitoring and research efforts on eelgrass in Morro Bay. Over 40 community members attended, and the response from the event was very positive. We had been asked for events focused on research and the research process, and this event seemed to fit very well with that. Additional events are planned focused on climate change in February and otters in June.

### **Expand the Workplan**

Status: Completed

EPA asked that we expand the format of the Workplan to include more details on our activities. We did this for the 2018 Workplan, and we will repeat this for the 2019 Workplan.

### **Climate Vulnerability Assessment**

Status: Completed

The Estuary Program completed a Climate Vulnerability Assessment, per EPA's guidance. The completed document is available on our program website, and we have shared the results via blog posts, presentations, posters, social media, and our website.

### **Develop a Monitoring Plan**

Status: Completed, with annual updates

EPA wanted to see a Monitoring Plan, separate from the program Quality Assurance Project Plan, that met the latest CCMP guidance. The Estuary Program created such a document and submitted it to our Regional Project Manager in September 2017 for her review. She approved the draft and forwarded it to EPA Headquarters for their review. We are awaiting their comments and plan to update the document on an annual basis.

### **Eelgrass Acreage Goal**

Status: Ongoing

EPA wants to see long-term numeric eelgrass goals to provide a roadmap for restoration efforts. The Estuary Program has been working towards this. We partnered with Cal Poly, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW), the city of Morro Bay, and others to research the causes and study the impacts of the decline of this seagrass in the last decade. With grants from CDFW and NOAA, the Estuary Program furthered these research, monitoring, and restoration efforts. We conducted two rounds of experimental eelgrass planting in March and July of 2017. We are also conducting an eelgrass seed collection and planting effort. The results of these efforts were very useful in determining future restoration efforts. We received an additional NOAA grant for eelgrass monitoring and restoration for 2017 through 2018, and we will continue to seek additional funding. These efforts also help us work toward the end goal of numeric targets for eelgrass restoration.

### **Partnering with the CSLRCD**

Status: Ongoing

EPA wants to see us continue to work with the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) on projects to reduce sediment and nutrients in the watershed. We partnered with the CSLRCD on two recent projects to reduce sediment. These efforts were a roads erosion prevention project to treat rural roads in the upper watershed and a bank stabilization project on a private ranch. We are involved in efforts to manage stormwater in the watershed, which align with CSLRCD efforts. We supported the CSLRCD effort to review designs for a wetland restoration project that would address both sediment and nutrients. We expect to continue to be involved with that project as it progresses.