



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

August 14, 2019  
4:00 pm

### Minutes

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**Attendees:** Tamara Anderson, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Emily Bockmon, *Cal Poly*; Bruce Gibson, *SLO County*; Jeff Heller, *City of Morro Bay*; Marshall Ochylski, *LOCSD*; Jason Curtis, *Bay Foundation*; Sam Schuchat, *California Coastal Conservancy*; John Flaherty, *Central Coast Outdoors*; Virginia Flaherty, *Central Coast Outdoors*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Lexie Bell, *MBNEP Staff*.

#### 1. Introductions and Updates

- Lexie: The National Estuary Program is part of Clean Water Act (CWA) and must be reauthorized every so many years. The program still can exist without the reauthorization, but it is easier to get funded in the appropriations process if under an authorized program. So in the House, they are working to reauthorize our legislation. There is good bipartisan support, and Congressman Carbajal is a co-sponsor. We are hopeful that it will go through this session.
- Jeff: Coastal Development permit for the Morro Bay Water Reclamation Facility came through.
- Bruce: The Los Osos Water Recycling Facility are now at 98.5% of households connected. They are working through the process of hiring a new Executive Director for the Los Osos Basin Management Committee. Bruce about to start talking to the Coastal Commission about the Local Community Plan. The Habitat Conservation Plan for Los Osos is close to being published in the federal register, likely within the next two weeks. Working to set up a meeting to get the Coastal Commission up to speed on water basin issues in Los Osos. The aquarium in Morro Bay is moving along as expected. They still have six months to reach another fundraising goal and to demonstrate that the funding commitment can be met. Might not be as committed to the site of the previous aquarium due to the amount of renovation needed. They might be looking at a site in a brand new development, but it's likely going to be too expensive. Lexie commented that the Estuary Program is poised to help on exhibits, applying for grants for exhibits, etc. She has been in communication with Christine about coordinating content, etc. to build upon each other's efforts.
- John: Tourism businesses are finding this summer to be busy but not excessively so. Hearst Castle is doing all right. The Mid-state Fair numbers were stable. Eelgrass looks like doing really well in mid-section of the bay. Anecdotally, he is seeing it come back almost everywhere it used to be.
- Marshall: There is now a new general manager for the Los Osos Communication Services District, Ron Munds. Rob Miller retiring as interim Executive Director for the Basin Management Committee. Rob will be on the utility advisory committee.
- Emily Bockmon: Emily will serve as a one-year replacement for Kristin Hardy and Crow White, who are both on sabbatical for the upcoming year. Emily is with the Marine Science program in the Chemistry Department at Cal Poly. Her work is focused on ocean acidification (OA) research. She started working on chemistry in Morro Bay last year and is busy learning more about eelgrass and oyster farming. She is excited about upcoming work in the bay.
- Tamara Anderson: Representing the CCRWQCB, she is an alternate for Jennifer Epp and has been with the Water Board for ten years, mostly on stormwater management. She will soon be moving to the Non-Point Discharge Elimination System Program. There have been two Board meetings since the last Executive Committee (EC) meeting in May. There were no agenda items directly related to this watershed. Most of the focus is on the agriculture order update. Also impacting their work is the governor's executive orders addressing climate resilient water systems and wildfire impact minimization.

- Jason Curtis: Jason is the Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs at Cuesta College and serves as the Vice President for the Bay Foundation.
- Sam Schuchat: No updates.

2. Public Comment – None presented.

3. Agenda Revisions – Approve Emily Bockmon as a one-year appointee representing the Science and Research seat.

**Vote:** Marshall motioned to approve, Bruce Gibson seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of May 8, 2019 EC meeting minutes.

**Vote:** Marshall motioned to approve, Bruce seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

5. **ACTION:** Recommend approval of Communication Plan Draft (see attached)

As part of the process to update our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), staff updated our organization's Communication Plan. In the 2015 Program Evaluation (PE) process, EPA made some recommendations for improvements to the Communication Plan. This effort incorporated those suggestions as well as results of a survey of partners on priorities for communication methods, audiences, topics, etc. The updated Communication Plan is now better aligned with our annual Workplan format.

John commented that a few charts in the appendix were hard to read, and staff will correct these before the document is finalized. There were also some questions about the different options for the mission statement, and staff clarified that those options are for different settings, not that we're trying to settle on just one of them.

Bruce recommended that the plan reference the collaboration with the Central Coast Aquarium. They will likely be a strong partner in the future for our communication work, and it might help the new facility move forward if we mention them in our plan.

**Vote:** Marshall moved to approve the draft. John seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

6. **DISCUSSION:** CCMP update process

All NEPs are required to assess their CCMP every five years. We are currently in this update process. The Communication Plan update is part of this process. We have already updated the Monitoring Plan, which was approved by EPA. We are in the midst of completing the Finance Plan and Conservation Planning Initiative.

The EPA guidance outlines the CCMP process. We feel that the effort needed falls under the category of an update (more minor) versus a revision (which is more substantial). To assist in this process, we worked with three Environmental Planning interns who created a database to track all implementation efforts and assess Action Plan (AP) progress. We incorporated the latest scientific information, eliminated completed APs, and combined APs with similar implementation actions. In total, minor edits were made to 11 APs.

We will convene the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in the fall. This is a broader group made up of interested individuals and technical experts. They will review and approve the management plan update and make recommendations. The draft will come before the EC in November with the recommendations and comments incorporated. If approved in November, the final edits, graphic design, etc. will be completed in early 2020.

This process was reviewed and approved of by Suzanne Marr. She provided some feedback on how to best document some of work, but overall she was very positive about our process.

The PE is coming up in 2020, and our goal is to get the CCMP to the approved draft or final stage in time for the PE.

## 7. **DISCUSSION:** Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve (CCER) update

The Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve is a long standing program to restore Chorro Creek to its more natural floodplain to improve habitat and reduce sediment loading from an area with major erosion issues. We participated in the original acquisition of the property, purchasing it from private ownership in 2002. We then transferred it to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) who are managing the property as an ecological reserve. We are implementing a restoration project this summer.

The project is funded by a CDFW grant for the construction work and California Coastal Conservancy grant for the revegetation. EPA funding is also supporting the effort. We took the California Coastal Conservancy on a tour when their board came to visit back in December.

The project involves grading and earthmoving to address erosion areas, laying back banks, and reducing sediment loading to the bay by changing the grade so that the creek can access the floodplain. The project involves work on 130 acres of project area.

Before work could commence, Stillwater Sciences e-fished the creek for steelhead and other fish to be relocated outside of the impact area. There was no fish mortality during the process. California red-legged frog also had to be protected. Monitoring was conducted by Meredith Hardy of the California Conservation Corps (CCC), who surveyed for frogs and removed one from the project site.

The next step was to install a temporary creek crossing section. The contractor created a coffer dam, allowing the creek to run through pipes and covering them with gravel to create a temporary crossing. The crossing is working well.

Currently grading is underway. There is an area of the creek which was bermed to prevent flooding. Some erosion was happening, so the previous landowner put in concrete to shore up a bank. Part of the restoration project involved removal of this concrete. It turns out the landowner was also burying large amounts of concrete on the property, and far more was pulled from the site than anticipated. This concrete removal effort was outside of the scope of the original project, so we worked with the landowner and contractor to adjust. The plans had called for installation of large woody debris structures with wood salvaged from onsite. But the site lacked enough large pieces of wood on the property, so we had to reduce the number installed. The additional funding will instead support concrete removal.

The grading is almost complete. When the regrading and earthmoving are completed, then the vegetation will be replanted. Erosion control seeding will take place. Willow baffles constructed by the CCC will be installed. The site did not have any protected plant species. Next the contractor will take out the creek crossing. Some of the rock on either side of creek crossing will stay in so it can be crossed by PG&E for maintenance of their infrastructure.

Tamara asked if we are maintaining a dry weather crossing, how do you revegetate both sides of the bank. The revegetation happens before taking the crossing out. The crossing will be the last thing to come out. CDFW did not want a permanent crossing, but PG&E needs to be able to cross to reach their infrastructure, so the compromise was the drive-through crossing.

We were hoping to have drone footage but were not able to connect with a drone photographer. Bruce recommended that we reach out to the county public works department as they might be able to assist.

We'll be inviting everyone can come out to see it when project is done.

**8. DISCUSSION:** Resource Legacy Fund project status

The project funded by the Resource Legacy Fund involves a partnership with the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) to develop projects with private landowners to reduce runoff and erosion. CSLRCD hosted a landowner workshop and conducted a demonstration of keyline ploughing. CSLRCD staff also conducted done a number of one-on-one site visits. We are hoping to have conceptual drawings completed by end of October, which could help us get additional grants for project implementation. The funding ends in October of this year.

**9. DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Monitoring Updates:** The bathymetry survey is nearly complete with a draft expected in late August. Bioassessment monitoring was completed in May with ten sites monitored throughout the watershed. Staff shared the report for the first year of monitoring by Dr. John Perrine's wildlife camera project (funded by a Community Project award).
- **Eelgrass Updates:** Monitoring of the 2019 eelgrass transplanting effort is being conducted by Tenera Environmental. Thus far they were seeing better survival of plants from the March planting as compared to the February planting, like due to the stormy weather that preceded and immediately followed the February work. We are in the process of working with CDFW to develop the permit for restoration work in 2020.
- **Education & Outreach Updates:** The Estuary Program's work related to eelgrass was the cover story in the Tribune on July 22. The article is available online: <https://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/environment/article232451747.html>. With a three-year grant from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust for our Mutts for the Bay program, we are purchasing bags and additional dispensers as well as developing educational materials for elementary and middle school students about the importance of picking up after pets. A new Nature Center exhibit will be installed in early fall on weather, tides, and climate change.

**10. Adjourn at 4:58 to next meeting of November 13, 2019 at 4:00 pm at the Estuary Program offices.**

**Attachments:**

- Minutes from May 8, 2019 EC meeting
- Communication Plan Draft