



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

February 19, 2020
4:00 pm

Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of November 20, 2019 Executive Committee (EC) minutes
5. **ACTION:** Election of EC Chair and Vice Chair and Approval of Members

According to the EC bylaws, the Chair and Vice Chair are elected from among the EC members. Each term shall be two years, and no one shall serve more than two consecutive terms as Chair or Vice Chair. Elections shall be held in February of even numbered years.

Jennifer has served as the Chair since February 2018 and this will be her last meeting. The Water Board has selected Matt Keeling to serve on the EC with Tamara Anderson continuing as the alternate. While the Vice-Chair position has historically gone on to serve as Chair, the current Vice Chair, Kristin Hardy, is currently on leave from Cal Poly for six more months. Thus, we are seeking a new Chair with Kristin continuing as the Vice Chair. Ethan is interested in serving as Chair if he is elected by the EC during this meeting, but he is flexible in when or if he serves. Thus, there is still an opportunity for other members to express interest in serving as Chair prior to a vote. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair nominations would need to be approved by the EC at this meeting.

Additionally, a few of the seats lack alternates. As Kristin Hardy and her alternate, Crowe White, are both out on leave this year, Emily Bockmon is temporarily serving as Kristin's replacement. As Emily already knows that she will be unable to attend some of the meetings this year, Cal Poly has identified an alternate, Alexis Pasulka of Cal Poly's Biology Department. Additionally, the Recreation and Tourism seat has not had an alternate for a while. Virginia Flaherty is interested in serving as an alternate. Both alternates would need to be approved by the EC during this meeting.

6. **DISCUSSION:** FY2021 Workplan Input – See attachment

As staff begins work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Workplan, we started out by identifying our new or expanded efforts for the year, prioritization of those efforts, and the allocation of funding.

We are soliciting input from the EC to review and provide feedback on these efforts. They are as follows:

- Pikeminnow management: \$10k to \$20k
- Eelgrass transplanting: \$10k
- Habitat Suitability Model: TBD
- Studies identified in Conservation Planning Initiative: TBD

These are in order of staff's prioritization, from highest to lowest. The dollar amounts are estimated or still need to be determined. The FY2020 workplan has been provided as a reference.

7. DISCUSSION: FY2018 to 2022 Restoration Fund Spending Summary – See attachment

In February 2017, the Bay Foundation and Executive Committee approved a five-year spending plan for the Restoration Fund for \$600,000. The total amounts spent through and percent of overall allocation was as follows:

- Community Projects: \$22,093 (44% of five-year total)
- Studies and Monitoring: \$52,841 (47% of five-year total)
- Implementation: \$0 (0% of five-year total)
- Land Conservation: \$0 (0% of five-year total)

Other Restoration Fund spending included the annual \$10,000 allocation in the EPA workplan for FY2019 for restoration, none of which was spent. For FY2020, the \$10,000 that was allotted in the workplan for restoration has not yet been spent.

8. DISCUSSION: Program Evaluation Update

Estuary Program staff began working with our Environmental Planning Intern to prepare for the upcoming Program Evaluation (PE). EPA created a guidance document that outlines the PE process, including what materials must be submitted. Staff are working to compile the information and the documents required for the PE, with a due date of mid-March. The process involves a site visit by regional and headquarter EPA staff, and this has been scheduled for July 15 and 16. We hope that committee members will be available to participate in the visit, in particular because EPA likes to have an understanding of how the Management Committee both contributes to and benefits from the Estuary Program. We will be sending out more information as the site visit itinerary evolves, and we hope that you will be able to join us.

9. DISCUSSION: Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Update

The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) update process continues. Since our last update, we are now working on the following steps:

- The Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) reviewed the proposed edits to the CCMP and provided comments. Edits were made based on these comments.
- The updated edits were sent to Suzanne Marr for her review and approval.
- A graphic designer is finalizing the updated document and ancillary documents.
- Staff is finalizing the subplans that accompany the CCMP, which are the Monitoring Plan, the Finance Plan, the Conservation Planning Initiative, and the Communications Plan. At this time, the Monitoring Plan and Communications Plan have been completed and the remaining two plans are in draft format.

The remaining steps in the process are as follows:

- Finalize the Finance Plan.
- Submit the CCMP update and subplans to EPA Headquarters for their review and approval.
- Share the updated plan with partners.

10. DISCUSSION: Community Project Revamp Discussion

While a valuable tool for connecting with program partners, the Community Project program has been challenging to administer. Recipients often lack the expertise and infrastructure to manage contracts, pay invoices, etc., resulting in a large amount of staff time to help the projects be successful. Staff are interested in discussing ways to change the program so that we can continue to engage partners but can lessen the load on staff. After some discussion, staff has come up with a few suggestions:

- Offer funding of more than \$5,000 for the right projects, rather than a \$5,000 maximum.
- Offer this funding opportunity only once a year rather than twice a year.
- Create a list of “qualifying partners” that we would work with to develop projects of interest to us.

We feel that changes such as these would reduce the burden on staff to administer the program while improving the project results.

11. DISCUSSION: Program Highlights

- **Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve Update:** Progress at CCER is ongoing. Planting has largely been completed. Rain events and scheduling issues with the CCC slowed down planting in December. Only a few sycamores remain to be planted in April. Willow stakes will be planted along the channel edge. Stormwater monitoring is going well and permit requirements for that are nearly complete. Staff are working on outreach plans, geomorphology and flow monitoring, and plant monitoring.
- **Eelgrass Efforts:** The first round of eelgrass transplanting took place in early February, with two additional efforts planned for later in the winter and spring. The work is funded by the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP) grant that we recently received which provides two years of funding for eelgrass work. The Monitoring team is also hard at work, gathering field data to groundtruth the multi-spectral imagery that was collected late last year. The 2019 baywide eelgrass map should be completed this spring.
- **Sea Grant Project:** The Sea Grant project with Cal Poly is now wrapping up. We hosted a partners meeting on December 6 to share the research results of the work. We held a public science talk on January 23 to share the results with a general public audience. We are now submitting our final report and are plan on working with Cal Poly and other partners on identifying next steps and future funding opportunities. The team is planning on publishing at least one paper with the results, which are expected out later this year.
- **E&O Updates:** The 2020 State of the Bay report is now complete! We are now putting the finishing touches on additional report content that will be available via our website. We have events planned throughout the spring, including two more evening science talks, hikes, paddles, a poetry contest, and a trivia night. We hope you'll join us for these events. For more information, visit <https://www.mbnep.org/events/> Staff also taking the show on the road and will present findings to service clubs, organizations, and other groups. If you know of a group that would like a State of the Bay presentation at an upcoming meeting this spring, please let staff know.

12. Adjourn to next meeting of May 20, 2020 at 4:00 pm at the Estuary Program offices.

Attachments:

- Minutes from November 20, 2019 EC meeting
- FY2020 Workplan
- Restoration Funding Spending Plan (approved August 2017)