



Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of February 19, 2020 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **INFORMATION:** Due to staff confusion over the dates when terms and chairperson terms ended, staff failed to include Kristin Hardy's re-election to the Vice Chairperson position in the vote at the February meeting. We followed up with the EC with an e-vote. All EC members responded, and all voted 'yes' for Kristin's re-election as Vice Chairperson. Her term runs through February 2022.
6. **ACTION:** Recommend approval of Fiscal Year 2021 Workplan (see attached)

The principal funding source for the Estuary Program operations is the annual EPA grant. For Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), current budget projections indicate funding of \$662,500. We apply annually in the spring 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 Estuary Program while also complying with EPA guidelines for such funding. Staff has developed a workplan that largely continues our major ongoing tasks through the next fiscal year. The only new task is aquatic invasive species management and is primarily focused on pikeminnow efforts.

Staff recommends that the EC approve the proposed Workplan.

7. **ACTION:** Community Project Reorganization (see attached)

The Community Project Program is a valuable tool for connecting with program partners and has been impactful over the years. However, the program has been challenging to administer. Recipients often lack the expertise and infrastructure to manage projects, which results in a large amount of staff involvement to ensure a successful project. Staff would like to revamp the program to continue to engage partners while lessening the load on staff. Staff developed a proposal to reorganize the program, incorporating feedback from the EC and Bay Foundation. The main points are as follows:

- Staff will reach out to partners and the community to solicit ideas and then work with applicants to develop a Concept Proposal, which has a brief description, schedule, and budget.
- Staff will review Concept Proposals to ensure eligibility.
- Staff will solicit Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) review of proposals.
- If TAC approves, staff will conduct a capacity review with applicant to ensure they can successfully manage project.
- If the applicant has the capacity, then the Concept Proposal will go before the Bay Foundation and EC for their review, proposed changes, and approval.
- If approved, staff works with applicant on the contract, scope of work, and schedule.

- We propose an annual budget of \$15,000 with a maximum award amount of \$10,000. There would be two rounds of funding/year. If we choose to award all funding in the first round, then no other applications would be solicited for the year. Or if numerous promising applications were submitted in the first round, staff could opt to develop those submitted applications in the second round rather than soliciting new applications. This proposed annual budget would require an amendment to the current Restoration Fund spending plan, which allocates \$10,000 per year for community projects. Alternatively, other sources of funding could be committed to provide the additional \$5,000.

The proposed changes would allow staff more time to work closely with applicants to ensure successful projects. The current approach is very time intensive, but not strategic in how that time is spent.

Staff recommends approving the proposed changes.

8. DISCUSSION: Presentation of Semi-annual Report (see attached)

Twice a year, the Estuary Program submits a semi-annual report to EPA, which provides the program status on the budget and tasks laid out in our workplan. This report covers our work for the first half of FY20, which is October 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020. The report summarizes the budget status and workplan task progress.

At this point in the five-year grant cycle, we've expended 81% of our current 320 grant (started in FY17), with a remainder of approximately \$476,158. The Estuary Program has met 199% of its match requirement for the cumulative grant with cash match and estimated current in-kind contributions (at approximately \$5,030,455).

9. DISCUSSION: Program Evaluation Update

Staff have been preparing for the Program Evaluation (PE). A package of information was submitted to EPA by the March 16 deadline. A visit from the EPA PE committee had been set for mid-July. However, due to the current pandemic situation, EPA has decided to cancel the in-person summer visit. Instead, we will create a virtual site visit for EPA so that they can get a glimpse of recent projects and hear partners' perspectives on collaborating with the National Estuary Program.

Staff will spend the spring and early summer preparing for the virtual site visit and will be reaching out to partners like the EC members for their participation and feedback.

10. DISCUSSION: COVID-19 Policies

In response to the public health crisis, Estuary Program staff began working at home just prior to the implementation of the statewide shelter-at-home policy. Staff have adapted quickly to the situation and have been able to working efficiently and effectively, connecting regularly via Zoom and conference calls. Staff who need to come to the office minimize their time there and coordinate their visits with other staff to ensure that only one person is there at a time.

With permission of the County's Emergency Operations Center, the Estuary Program staff continue to conduct the highest priority monitoring during the shelter-at-home order. This work is only conducted when it can be done safely, following the guidance from the county. The monitoring includes eelgrass, bay bacteria, pressure transducers, flow, and nutrient monitoring. Volunteer monitoring has been suspended for the time being. The Estuary Program is pleased that the most crucial data sets will not have a data gap.

11. DISCUSSION: Program Highlights

- **Eelgrass update:** Staff has been busy with eelgrass work in 2020. Three rounds of intertidal eelgrass planting took place in February and March of 2020. Tenera conducted two rounds of planting via SCUBA in May, planting at deeper depths than past work that was conducted on foot during low tides. Staff, with the help of Tenera, will continue to monitor restoration success. The fall 2019 baywide eelgrass map has been completed. The eelgrass acreage from the November 2019 flight is 77.5 acres.
- **SOTB update:** The State of the Bay 2020 public events are well underway, and we hosted Science Explorations evening talks in January on eelgrass and in March on estuary health. When the pandemic necessitated a halt to all in-person events, we began working hard to convert the remaining events to remote events, including an online trivia night and a webinar format science talk event. A poetry contest was held and a remote poetry reading is being planned. Staff completed development of a [webpage](#) with additional content that didn't fit in the printed version of the report. They also created videos for each indicator question from the report to provide an alternate way for the public to learn about the report card results.

12. Adjourn to next meeting of August 19, 2020 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.

Attachments:

- Minutes from February 19, 2020 EC meeting
- Community Projects Reorganization Proposal
- FY21 Workplan
- FY20 Semi-annual report