



Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Via videoconferencing

May 20, 2020
4:00 pm

Minutes

Attendees: Tamara Anderson, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Tim Duff, *California Coastal Conservancy*; John Flaherty, *Central Coast Outdoors*; Trudy O'Brien, *Central Coast Women for Fisheries*; Becka Kelly, *Morro Bay Harbor Department*; Bruce Gibson, *SLO County*; Ethan Bell, *Stilkwater Sciences*; Marshall Ochylski, *Los Osos Community Services District*; Emily Bockmon, *Cal Poly*; Suzanne Marr, *USEPA*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Lexie Bell, *MBNEP Staff*.

1. Introductions and Updates

- Suzanne: All working at home at EPA. New grant guidance is coming out soon. If we as a grantee need additional time for reports or getting in grant applications because of COVID, let Suzanne know and be sure to document the reason for the requested extension. EPA won't be visiting in July for the Program Evaluation, and staff are hoping to get out to the NEPs when they can.
- Becka: The dredge Yaquina is back in the harbor and working until June 2. Only the north end of the harbor entrance is being dredged this year. The activity resulted in cloudier water but otherwise no impacts so far. They are noticing a lot of trash issues on the Embarcadero and trash getting into the bay. The waterfront area needs some bay and beach cleanups. The city put bigger dumpsters out, and in the future there will likely be less takeout food with restaurants opening soon. The Tidelands launch ramp and Rock parking lot are now open again. They are expecting a busy Memorial Day weekend.
- Bruce: The County is concerned about the impact of crowds and visitors on public health. The County has put in place orders to limit hotel occupancy to 50%. They are seeing trash problems, in Cayucos especially, so they are trying to deal with it. The County was get granted approval to proceed further into Stage 2 – in-restaurant dining and in-store retail can restart subject to many conditions. The County's capacity to deal with disease is good and cases are low, so it's looking good if everyone follows restrictions. Stage 2 starts now, per the State's criteria. The timing for Phase 3 is unknown and is probably still weeks away. Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused a large budget deficit. They are waiting to hear more details.
- Emily: Cal Poly has been teaching virtually, and now has three weeks left in the quarter. The biggest impact for Morro Bay is that Cal Poly will not have any students on campus this summer doing research as the school is forbidding all research from all departments. This may impact work planned for Morro Bay. There are some exceptions through school to do work with Dr. Ryan Walter (also of Cal Poly) in Morro Bay. They will be maintaining bay sensors and taking samples, so that data set is not threatened. To enhance students' experiences, they might do some professional development with environmental professionals. Status of fall quarter is unknown. They will likely to be able to do research in some capacity. They have replaced Jennifer O'Leary with Kevin Johnson. He is an oyster specialist and is interested in physiology related to acidification, warming, etc. He already knows our local oyster farmers and will be starting this summer.
- John: Currently guided tours are not allowed to operate. There are limited kayak rentals going on. We are have tourism happening in the area, mostly from within the state.
- Marshall: No updates.
- Tamara: Matt is our Executive Officer. Thea Tryon is Assistant Executive Officer. Since the February Executive Committee (EC) meeting, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB) held one board meeting in March. The early May meeting was cancelled. CCRWQCB reached a settlement agreement for effluent limit violations at California Men's

Colony Wastewater Treatment Plant (CMC WWTP) through its expedited payment program. CCRWQCB released for public comment the proposed settlement agreement with CMC related to collection system spills in 2015 and 2017. CMC has agreed to do a project and pay a fine as part of the agreement. At the Board meeting next week, staff will recommend reissuing the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the facility. An extra Board meeting was originally scheduled to address items related to the Agricultural (Ag) order. But due to COVID, they ended up removing the Ag order items from those agendas and extending the public comment period. The first virtual board meeting will be held next month. Suzanne asked how the Board decides how an entity like the CMC decides what their supplemental environmental project (SEP) will be. Tamara said now they have streamlined processes, and there are only a couple of more general funding pots that folks contribute to. She was not exactly sure of the process for determining which one. The projects funded are not necessarily directly related to the violation that took place. The CMC's project may not be a SEP. They will be replacing many of their manhole covers with smart manhole covers to get better data to help prevent spills in the future.

- Tim: Just outside the watershed, the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) is working with the city of Morro Bay to acquire sandy beach lots (Dog Beach) as part of the Toro Creek acquisitions. The County did take ownership of Lot 1 of the Toro Creek set of parcels a month ago. Lexie will give an update on the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve (CCER) related activities using SCC funding. They are working on designs for the Los Osos Creek project with the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD).
- Trudy: Rock cod and salmon season both opened May 1. It had looked like there would be some salmon here but due to the wind and no restaurant market, it's been a challenge. Fishermen are sell off their boats, but it's hard to coordinate with customers because it's not a steady supply. Folks are getting ready to go north for albacore next month. Hopefully the fish come in and the wind stops blowing.
- Lexie: At this stage in the CCER project, we are primarily using SCC funding since we are in the planting phase. Almost all plants have been installed and are doing well. A few sycamores are left to install a little bit later. The site looks really great. We just completed a drone flight of the site, similar to the one we did earlier in the construction. We will share it soon with the group. The California Conservation Corps (CCC) is still working hard on maintaining plants and weeding around them. The weeds have come up quite a bit, especially in the upper areas of the project site. The graded channel areas are not as weedy. The last bits of rain were helpful but irrigation is out there if we need it. We have a focus on trash in our social media for the month. We have a campaign called Every Day for the Bay to encourage people to pick up when they're out walking the neighborhood, etc. On the restoration side, there are quite a few grant opportunities, so we're working on determining where to focus our attention.
- Ethan: The late rainfall helped lower water temperatures and increase flows in local creeks. The red tide came in a lot earlier this year than usual and seems pretty strong. Eelgrass is doing really well this year, with big patches in the back bay towards Shark Inlet.

2. Public Comment – None presented.

3. Agenda Revisions – None presented.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of February 19, 2020 EC meeting minutes (see attached)

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

5. **INFORMATION:** Staff explained the reason for the e-vote following the February meeting. The e-vote approved Kristin Hardy to serve another term as Vice Chair, with a term running through February 2022.

6. **ACTION:** Recommend approval of Fiscal Year 2021 Workplan (see attached)

Staff presented the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 workplan which outlines the tasks for the upcoming year. The

largest changes from the FY2020 workplan were the addition of a task addressing aquatic invasive management and the removal of the State of the Bay, Program Evaluation (PE), and Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP) update as those three projects have been completed.

Vote: Marshall moves to approve. Emily seconds. All in favor. None opposed.

7. ACTION: Community Project Reorganization (see attached)

This item was first discussed at the February EC meeting. We consider this to be a valuable program. Some recent projects are the Cal Poly wildlife camera project and eelgrass wasting disease work done by Cuesta College. But these projects require a lot of staff time to manage since many partners are small scale groups who are unused to managing funding. While this program allows us to support projects that implement CCMP actions by partners, the way the program is currently structured does not allow us a lot of opportunity to shape the projects from the start. So with this reorganization, we are trying to address this and change the process to allow opportunity for staff to meet with partner groups to talk through and develop project ideas. Part of the process will involve determining how much support a partner will need to guide them as they develop a concept proposal to be reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committees (TAC). The next step is to assess our capacity level needed for the project. Then when the project comes to the EC, we can present all information including their concept proposal, feedback from the TAC, and the capacity needs of the potential partner. These steps help us determine how many projects we can take on. This will be a more effective way to assess needs and make sure projects are beneficial and have a good technical background.

Another change to the program includes an increase in the amount of funding to \$15,000 per year and to increase the maximum funding amount to \$10,000. This would allow a wider diversity of projects to be funded. At the May Bay Foundation Board meeting, they were supportive of the proposal and approved it. The group discussed whether to hold a second round of proposals each year, and the recommendation was to assess how many active projects we have, if there were promising applications that have not yet been funded, etc. Based on this information, we would come back to the Bay Foundation and EC regarding whether a second round of projects would be solicited during the year. We feel that it's important to have this feedback loop and to not run a second round if we don't have the capacity for it. Suzanne likes that we assess partner capacity so we determine how much work it will be to proceed.

Ethan likes the flow diagram in the proposal. He commented that staff is soliciting ideas, not projects, so we should change the first box in the flow diagram. We are not only looking for fully developed projects but are also willing to discuss ideas to help develop projects. Emily sees the potential for more applications and expressed that the front end work could be more effort than we are expecting. There might be a need for amendment to the budget if we're more successful than we expect.

Vote: Becka moves to approve. John seconds. Marshall asked for clarification that they are voting on the proposal not as presented, but as amended. All in favor. None opposed.

8. DISCUSSION: FY2020 Semi-annual Report (see attached)

Staff presented the highlights from the first six months of FY2020 as well as a summary of the budget status.

9. DISCUSSION: Program Evaluation Update

This PE process is a requirement for NEPs who must pass the review to remain in the program. We put a lot of work into this effort. We have already submitted a large packet of information. EPA will not be holding any in-person site visits for five-year program reviews this year. Thus, we are developing a virtual site visit experience to give EPA a good idea of our work. We intend to have opportunities for

EC members to participate in this virtual visit. We will likely have a Q&A session where EPA can interact with EC members as well as some brief interviews with a few of you to capture some common themes such as how the program functions, the engagement of stakeholders, etc. We will also provide highlights from tours that we would have held had EPA attended in person, such as CCER video/photos, etc.

10. **DISCUSSION:** COVID-19 Policies

We are complying with the shelter-at-home order but did work with the County (thanks to Bruce) to coordinate with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to get permission to continue monitoring. We find that we are able to continue to collect data while adhering to safety guidelines. We are not using any volunteers at this time, only staff members are out in the field. Our monitoring is usually able to be conducted solo and if working in a group, staff are careful to follow safety protocols. Karissa Willits, our safety officer, is working hard to keep everyone safe in the field. E&O is able to conduct their work remotely and online. This might need to continue for the fall for fieldtrips, etc. As the County continues to open up, we are exploring the possibility of being able to utilize our office more, but for now we are still prioritizing staying at home for everyone and only using the office for necessary tasks.

11. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Eelgrass:** Eelgrass transplanting was completed this winter and spring utilizing intertidal planting as well as SCUBA for subtidal planting. We continue to work with the contractor on finalizing the baywide eelgrass map, as they appear to have greatly over-estimated eelgrass presence. We expect a completed map by early summer.
- **State of the Bay Updates:** The SOTB 2020 public events are nearly complete. Three evening science talks were held, with the last one shared remotely rather than in person. Staff completed a website with additional content beyond what was included in the printed report. The website also includes brief videos with highlights for each indicator question.

12. Adjourn at 4:58 to next meeting of August 19, 2020 at 4:00 pm via remote videoconferencing.

Attachments:

- Minutes from February 19, 2020 EC meeting
- FY2021 Workplan
- FY20 Semi-annual Report
- Community Projects Reorganization Proposal