



Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of August 19, 2020 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** Recommendations on Community Project Applications (see attached)

There are three Community Project applications for our consideration in this round. They are a Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) effort to restore monarch and pollinator habitat, a Creek Lands Conservation (CLC) effort to map plant diversity in Chorro Flats, and Dr. Nikki Adams' project to conduct microplastics monitoring in the estuary.

We have a total of \$15,000 to distribute for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. The maximum amount for a project is \$10,000.

The project details can be found in the attached document *Community Project Applications for Fall 2020, Summary of Projects, Technical Review, and Staff Recommendations*.

6. **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 budgets and tasks laid out in our workplan. This report covers our work for the second half of FY2020, which is from April 1 through September 30, 2020. We have expended 93% of our current 320 grant and met 208% of our match requirement for the cumulative grant that started in FY2017.

7. **DISCUSSION:** Program Evaluation (PE) update (see attached)

As reported in October, our final Program Evaluation (PE) letter is complete. The letter includes EPA's opinion on our program's strengths and areas for improvements. Noted strengths include outreach and public involvement, assessment and monitoring, and conservation projects that address water quality and living resources. Challenges for us to address include reporting measurable outcomes from projects, completing our CCMP update, expanding outreach to a more diverse audience, and addressing water reuse and hazard mitigation.

8. **DISCUSSION:** 2019 Baywide Eelgrass Map

In November 2019, Ocean Imaging (OI) conducted a flight to conduct multi-spectral imagery of the bay at low tide. The imagery collected in 2019 was of higher resolution than in previous years, which OI believed would allow for more accurate eelgrass identification. Over the course of the year, we have worked with OI to finalize the eelgrass map. The high resolution imagery presented challenges in the

identification, in particular because there were higher than normal amounts of macroalgae present in the bay during the time of image acquisition.

During the same timeframe as the OI flight, Cal Poly conducted drone flights of the bay at low tide and captured imagery using a 20MP true color camera. Eelgrass was identified manually and a baywide eelgrass map and acreage number were compiled. In reviewing both maps, it appears that Cal Poly slightly under-identified eelgrass in a few locations while OI over-identified eelgrass in others.

For 2020, we will partner with Cal Poly to conduct a drone flight of the bay and create a baywide eelgrass map. Due to the cost, the multi-spectral mapping effort with OI is only conducted every two to three years.

9. DISCUSSION: Program Highlights

- **Upcoming Virtual Fundraise – Beats for the Bay!** Generous donors to the Estuary Program have offered to sponsor a virtual fundraiser and match all donations up to \$20,000. The event will take place on **November 19 from 6-8pm** and include a livestreaming performance from local band Upside Ska and an encore showing of the award-winning documentary about our program, *Of Marshes and Morros* by local filmmaker Simo Nylander. Please join us and help spread the word! We will share a flyer with the event link when it is ready
- **Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve Update:** It's been a year since the floodplain at CCER was constructed. The floodplain is now heavily vegetated in all disturbed areas. Existing native plantings (~1,000) are doing well. There are still a small number of native plantings (e.g., CA rose) and willow stakes that will be planted this winter, once more rain comes. The CCC are onsite every other week for watering, weeding, and maintenance of plant cages. We hope winter rains will activate the side channels this year, and monitoring equipment is set up to track frequency of flows. This brief video shows aerial drone imagery of the project site: <https://youtu.be/yLnRLZThxf0>.
- **Nature Center update:** Although the Nature Center is currently closed due to the public health situation, we've taken advantage of this opportunity to update some of the exhibits and online content. Our latest update is on the information accompanying the Habitat Mural. We are updating the panels that provide information on habitat types and common plant species, as well as highlight research, restoration, and stewardship actions. These panels should be installed early in 2021. We are also designing an interactive steelhead life cycle display.
- **2020 Bioassessment Results:** We recently received the results from the 2020 bioassessment monitoring season. For the most part, numbers were on par with historic scores, although we did see an improvement in 2020 on middle Chorro Creek.

10. Adjourn to next meeting of February 17, 2021 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.

Attachments:

- Minutes from August 19, 2020 EC meeting
- Summary of Community Project Applications for Fall 2020
- Semi-annual Report
- PE Letter