



**Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Via Video Conferencing**

**May 19, 2021
4:00 pm**

Minutes

Attendees: Matt Keeling, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Crow White, *Cal Poly*; Marshall Ochylski, *LOCSD*; Jason Curtis, *Bay Foundation*; John Flaherty, *Central Coast Outdoors*; Ethan Bell, *Stillwater Sciences*; Becka Kelly, *Morro Bay Harbor Department*; Dawn Addis, *City of Morro Bay*; Trudy O'Brien, *Commercial fishing interest*; Bruce Gibson, *SLO County*; Suzanne Marr, *USEPA*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Lexie Bell, *MBNEP Staff*.

1. Introductions and Updates

- Jason Curtis: The Bay Foundation approved the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Workplan as presented by staff at their meeting last week.
- Dawn Addis: The Morro Bay City Council is working on the treatment plant in Morro Bay and on their long-term vision. Work is currently ongoing on next year's budget, and things are looking good for the first time in a while.
- Becka Kelly: The dredge is in town at the harbor entrance, until June 1. The city did a lot of projects at the Rock parking lot, putting bumpers in, etc. They demolished a derelict boat yesterday, the fourth since January. This was supported by funding from a Division of Boating & Waterways grant from the state. Sea lions are out in full force in the bay, so the city is spending time putting up electric fencing and barriers to keep them from damaging infrastructure and boats.
- Marshall Ochylski: No updates from the Los Osos Community Services District (LOCSD).
- Matt Keeling: On April 15, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB) unanimously approved the revised Agricultural Order (called 4.0 since it's the fourth iteration). It contains more substantive requirements for nitrogen loading, setting numeric targets and limits for nitrogen application and discharge. It has a 30-year schedule with different aspects phased in over time. The goal is to improve water quality for both surface waters and groundwater. It focuses on achieving the receiving water objectives in the basin plan, total maximum daily load regulations, etc. One aspect that was removed from the proposed order was establishing riparian area setback requirements. The Board asked staff to revisit that requirement in the future.
- John Flaherty: Central Coast Outdoors has been very busy, with lots of people out on the water.
- Crow White: Cal Poly is transitioning to more in person research opportunities.
- Bruce Gibson: Nothing to report specific to Morro Bay.
- Suzanne Marr: Nothing to report specific to Morro Bay.
- Lexie Bell: Program volunteers have just started up monitoring recently.
- Ann Kitajima: No additional updates.
- Ethan Bell: Been spending time out on the bay, and the eelgrass is looking great.

2. Public Comment

Richard Sadowski and Brom Webb of the Morro Bay Air Monitoring (MBEAM) program attended to provide members with an update on their project. MBEAM recently presented a one-year report to the Morro Bay City Council. The group received a grant from the city in 2019 to purchase a handheld air monitoring device. They monitored CO₂ at ten locations around the estuary for a year. They detected average levels higher than the safe limits and higher than the global average. In the fall, the group started collaborating with Dr. Emily Bockmon's class. The students monitored carbon in estuary waters at six

locations while MBEAM monitored ten air quality locations. They are seeking funding to continue their work, including monitoring and educating people about Blue Carbon.

3. Agenda Revisions – None presented.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of February 17, 2021 Executive Committee (EC) meeting minutes.

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

5. **ACTION:** Recommend approval of the Fiscal Year 2022 Workplan (see attached)

An annual workplan is required by EPA as part of our grant application. Our grant funding is set by the congressional budget passed in the prior year. This year we are expecting to receive \$700k, a 5.5% increase from the prior year. It is unusual and exciting to have an increase. In February, we held discussions with the EC, the Bay Foundation, and staff to set priorities for the additional funding. The additional funding will support staff for Education & Outreach (E&O), pikeminnow management, and the Highway 1 Adobe Rd fish passage barrier project. It will also support State of the Bay analysis for the report card and event planning for 2023.

A few items discussed in February were not included in our budget. Ocean acidification work will be funded by a Coastal Watersheds Grant award. Sea level rise (SLR) related work was also something discussed in February. We are partnered with the US Geologic Survey (USGS) on a grant application to conduct modeling on SLR in the bay. We are awaiting a decision on that funding. We also made a change in how we plan to staff eelgrass restoration. We had discussed a tech position to increase capacity for restoration and monitoring. But after staff deliberation, we decided a tech position was difficult to manage because most of the need would occur during low tides at specific time periods but with little work in between those times. As we have been working well contracting with Tenera Environmental, we decided to use that avenue to increase eelgrass capacity, rather than hiring staff.

Matt commented that a lot of funding is used for staff time and that we use it to leverage other funding for project support. Lexie commented that 320 funding gives us the stability to go out and get funding for different projects. The structure of the workplan is somewhat dictated by the EPA Funding Guidance, so that's why certain topics are emphasized or things are formatted as they are. Suzanne commented that Morro Bay is known for doing a great workplan with clear descriptions and good budgeting. Ethan thought it looked great, with a nice balance between the key program areas.

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

6. **DISCUSSION:** Semi-annual report (see attached)

Staff presented the budget status at the mid-point of FY2021. We have thus far earned nearly double the required amount of match. Ethan commented that this demonstrates the strength of the Estuary Program's relationships with partners.

7. **DISCUSSION:** Pikeminnow Management Update

Following four years of pikeminnow management in the Chorro Creek subwatershed, we partnered with Stillwater Sciences to analyze and summarize collected data. The analysis found that the ratio of steelhead to pikeminnow was greater than 1:1, which favors steelhead success. The success of pikeminnow management efforts opens the way for other efforts including fish passage barrier removal and floodplain restoration. The full report is [available on our website](#).

8. **DISCUSSION:** Association of National Estuary Program (ANEP) Highlights

We are part of a national network of NEPs. We're very active on national stage right now, reaching out to congress people to remind them of the work that we do and our funding needs. Staff met with Representative Carbajal and his staff. His office was interested in monarch butterfly habitat restoration and excited to learn about our Community Project with the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District. The California NEP directors met with Senate staff members. The California NEPs like to meet together to help demonstrate the value of the NEP to coastal waters and how we work collaboratively. This year and next year Lexie is serving as chair of ANEP, so she's been helping with outreach to Congress and to plan the EPA meetings. The meeting this spring is being held virtually, with topics including environmental justice and climate change, nutrients, coastal zone management integration with NEPs, and EPA business. In the fall, the meeting will be held in Tampa Bay.

9. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve Drone Imagery:** The drone footage provides a nice demonstration of progress at the site.
- **Bioassessment Update:** We recently completed a successful spring monitoring season, and data will be shared with the group when it is completed this fall.
- **Harold J. Miossi Trust Support for Mutts for the Bay:** The Miossi Trust has increased their grant to the Estuary Program to help make up shortfalls in the city of Morro Bay's budget, enabling us to keep all dispensers fully stocked.
- **Poetry Contest:** The contest deadline has been extended to May 24, so please help spread the word.
- **Community Project Update:** Staff presented updates on the three active Community Projects.

10. Adjourn at 4:53. Motion by Matt, seconded by Bruce. All in favor. Adjourn to next meeting of August 19, 2021 at 4:00 pm via video conferencing.

Attachments:

- Minutes from February 17, 2021 EC Meeting
- FY2022 Workplan
- Semi-annual Report