



Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Via Video Conferencing

August 18, 2021
4:00 pm

Minutes

Attendees: Matt Keeling, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Crow White, *Cal Poly*; Marshall Ochylski, *LOCS*D; Jason Curtis, *Bay Foundation*; John Flaherty, *Central Coast Outdoors*; Ethan Bell, *Stillwater Sciences*; Trudy O'Brien, *Commercial fishing interest*; Bruce Gibson, *SLO County*; Chris Womack, *LOCS*D; Suzanne Marr, *USEPA*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Lexie Bell, *MBNEP Staff*.

1. Introductions and Updates

- Trudy O'Brien: Rock cod fishing is going on now. Up north there's quite a bit of albacore fishing. The Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman's Organization is working on the wind farm issue.
- John Flaherty: Seeing quite a bit of eelgrass in the bay right now. They've had to change the routes they take for kayak tours because there's so much eelgrass. They are seeing their busiest summer ever, with lots of people wanting to get outside.
- Marshall Ochylski: The Los Osos Community Services District (LOCS)D is operating as normal. They held their first in-person board meeting in August. There's been a recent issue with accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The county has a new ordinance that impacts water consumption in Los Osos. They are in the process of putting together a letter to the county on the potential impacts to the Los Osos groundwater basin.
- Jason Curtis: The July Bay Foundation meeting mainly focused on financial issues but also discussed the potential changes to the Executive Committee (EC) leadership.
- Bruce Gibson: The County reached out to ask water purveyors how want to treat ADUs. The County is seeking to reconcile local interests with state mandates. The state likes ADUs and wants them expanded. Locally there is concern about water consumption limitations. So County and purveyors are working to get on the same page to determine what kinds of ADUs should be permitted. Junior ones that are part of an existing structure might not be able to be prohibited. In other circumstances, it could involve a process that requires a purveyor deciding that want to provide extra water. So want to work closely with purveyors to determine where ADUs can be supplied. Overall development in the community has to be considered along with resiliency and reliability of water supply. Closer to seeing reconstruction of the bridge on S. Bay Blvd. Will be meeting with Lexie on it later this week. Project expected to be scheduled for 2023. Going to get the support pilings out of the channel.
- Matt Keeling: Dr. Monica Hunter, a Central Coast Water Board member, was reconfirmed today for another three-year appointment on the Water Board. Shortly after our last EC meeting in May, the San Luis Obispo Superior Court filed a settlement agreement that's been in the works since 2003 between the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and PG&E for Diablo Canyon thermal discharge violations that occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s. This is a \$5.9M settlement. The check was sent to the Bay Foundation and is being held in the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program-Groundwater Assessment Program (CCAMP-GAP) account while staff develop a funding allocation plan. The plan will be going out for public comment in the next few months and should be in front of the Board in December or early next year. The timing depends on whether the Board has a quorum in December, as the Governor's office has yet to appoint new members.
- Suzanne Marr: No updates from EPA.
- Chris Womack: Serving as the alternate on the EC for Marshall.
- Lexie Bell: Our EPA grant is a five-year grant, ending at end of September. We've asked for a no-cost six-month extension for some unspent funds. We'll start our new grant on October 1.

- Crow White: Crow will be representing Cal Poly. Fieldwork has definitely been increasing over the summer. Diving in the bay has been happening as well. In the fall, he doesn't yet know the status of research. Classes are supposed to be in person with everyone required to wear masks and be vaccinated. The Center for Coastal Marine Sciences was approached by a donor that wants to support student research. There's a request for proposals out now due at the end of the month seeking these types of projects. It's targeting hard-to-fund research projects for student work this academic year, including next summer. The funder is especially interested in under-represented minority students.
- Ethan Bell: Stillwater is getting ready to work with the Estuary Program to do pikeminnow removal work in Chorro Creek. The work will be starting in late October.

2. Public Comment – None.

3. Agenda Revisions – None presented.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of May 19, 2021 Executive Committee (EC) meeting minutes.

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

5. **ACTION:** Executive Committee Membership and Vice Chairperson Approval

Staff reviewed the members and alternates that are up for approval. This includes the following:

- Environmental Interests: Ethan Bell
- Tourism/Recreation Interests: John Flaherty is the member and Virginia Flaherty is the alternate.
- Science and Research: Kristin Hardy is retiring from the EC and as the Vice Chairperson. Dr. Crow White is the member and Dr. Emily Bockmon is the alternate.
- Local Fisheries: Trudy O'Brien is the member, and Jeremiah O'Brien is the alternate.
- At Large Government Agency: While this seat was filled for several years by the California Coastal Conservancy, due to Sam Schuchat's retirement, the organization has decided to take a hiatus from serving on the EC.

Also, the EC is in need of a new Vice Chairperson, given that Kristin Hardy has left the committee. Jason Curtis volunteered to serve as the Vice Chairperson if approved.

Vote: Bruce moved to approve the representatives and alternates and for the election of Jason Curtis as Vice Chairperson. Marshall seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

The group also discussed potential members for the At Large Government Agency seat. The local State Parks district could be a good choice as we often partner with them on projects and as they are a major landowner in the watershed. The Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) is another option, although we do regularly partner with them on funding and providing funding, so they would have to recuse themselves on some budget-related votes.

The Coastal Conservancy has expressed an interest in participating in the EC in the future. Their Executive Officer job announcement specified serving on the EC. So we would be considering a temporary member until the Coastal Conservancy is able to rejoin the committee. Suzanne liked the idea of inviting the California State Parks (CSP), as they manage so much land in the watershed. Ethan agrees that it would be a good opportunity to have more engagement with CSP. It would also be great to have increased engagement with CSLRCD, so that's worth considering. Marshall likes CSP as an option. Lexie will follow up with CSP to see if that's an option and report back by November. Hopefully we will have a proposed member for the committee to consider in November.

6. **DISCUSSION:** Potential Changes to EC Membership

The EC structure has a seat representing Agricultural Interests, but we've had a difficult time filling that seat over the past several years. We used to have an engaged landowner who was interested in the bay, but that individual decided to term off after a number of years. The Ag Commissioner for SLO County served for a while. The challenge we're finding is that those in that seat often aren't interested in all of the topics on our agendas. Staff proposed widening the type of person that could serve by broadening the seat to something like "Watershed Landowner." This could include an individual who owns land but isn't in active agriculture. So this could include public landowners like Cal Poly, County Parks & Rec, US Forest Service, Camp SLO, etc. or it could be a smaller landowner that isn't necessarily doing active agriculture but owns land in the watershed.

Matt thought it would be a good idea to expand to a broader landowner definition after exhausting the possibility of filling the Agricultural Interest seat with an agricultural stakeholder, and he recommended talking to the SLO Ag Liaison Advisory Board (ALAB) for suggestions about potential candidates for the Ag EC seat. Ethan thinks it's a reasonable approach but feels that it would be nice to the extent possible to try to prioritize having an actual ag landowner. Crow thinks having a landowner that doesn't have a very large plot or doesn't do ag, would present a somewhat limited perspective. Perhaps an organization like the Land Conservancy of SLO County could serve. They might not be a good fit as they don't own land in our watershed, only easements, and they are engaged with the ranching community in a different way. Bruce understands the dilemma and thinks the concept is a good one. He would also endorse suggesting a preference for someone in production agriculture and thinks ALAB would be a good place to start. Marshall agreed with the concept of the change but would want to see active ag as the top priority.

Staff will draft a bylaws revision that defines the seat and states a priority preference for a landowner in production ag (farming or ranching). Staff will follow up with ALAB to see if there's a good person to sit in that seat.

Jason wanted to convey that the Bay Foundation had a similar preference for an individual with ag interests, but if ultimately we need to expand it to maintain someone in the seat and keep the conversation going, that would be the most important factor. He supports updating the bylaws.

7. **DISCUSSION:** Community Project Update

Staff provided an update on the three active Community Projects. Matt asked if the results from the microplastics work would be available and in what form. He wants to share them with the State Water Resources Control Board who is coordinating a statewide effort. Staff will share results once the project is complete. The group also discussed how other NEPs are conducting microplastics work and the results would be a good topic for technology transfer in the future.

8. **DISCUSSION:** Program Evaluation Letter Update

Staff provided updates to the EC on how they are addressing the challenges presented to us in our Program Evaluation letter from EPA. EPA is updating the Program Evaluation process, which is expected to be more engaging for the EC and our other stakeholders. Staff also described efforts to reach out audiences with our education and outreach efforts, including translating our publications and social media posts into Spanish.

9. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Nature Center Update:** The Nature Center reopened on June 15 and has had a lot of visitation. It is not staffed, but signage was increased to make that clear.

- Pikeminnow Management Funding: We are very excited to receive a Prop 1 grant from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife to support our pikeminnow management effort.

10. Adjourn at 5:03 to next meeting of November 17, 2021 at 4:00 pm via video conferencing.

Attachments:

- Minutes from May 19, 2021 EC Meeting
- Program Evaluation letter status update