
Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of November 17, 2021 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** Executive Committee Membership and Chairperson Approval

Lisen Bonnier is interested in joining the EC as the Agricultural Interests representative. Lisen is an organic farmer in the watershed. She entered into an ag easement with the Land Conservancy that we participated in. She has expressed an interest in water quality issues in the watershed and the estuary.

Ethan Bell has served as the EC Chairperson for the last two years. He has volunteered to serve a second term as Chairperson if approved.

6. **DISCUSSION:** FY2023 Workplan Ideas (see attached for Fiscal Year 2022 Workplan for reference)

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 workplan will be due to EPA in June 2022. We expected \$700,000 in funding, which was the same amount as for FY2022. Staff are still working on prioritizing specific project and capacity needs to utilize these funds effectively. At this stage, we are looking for general feedback from the EC on the broad categories of tasks that we anticipate including in the workplan and potential areas we could utilize the additional funds. Our general rule of thumb for the EPA funds is to prioritize projects and program needs that are difficult to fund with other sources and benefit the most from stable funding (examples include long-term monitoring and most staff time). Projects for possible additional funding that are listed here have already been identified as priority needs through partner communications, conservation planning, and existing efforts to secure other grant funds. We will need to narrow the list for the final workplan to meet the budget cap.

Workplan Task Categories: (Projects for possible additional funding marked with *)**Restoration and Conservation**

- Land Conservation
- Restoration Maintenance and Monitoring
- Eelgrass Restoration
- Other Restoration
- Restoration Project Development
- Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve Maintenance and Monitoring
- Aquatic Invasive Species (Pikeminnow) Management
- Pre-project planning for Hwy 1/Adobe Road fish passage barrier*
- Projects identified in the Conservation Planning Initiative to inform future restoration*

- Sea-level rise analysis (partnership with USGS)*

Monitoring and Research

- Monitoring Program Coordination
- Reporting and Analysis
- Data Management
- Quality Assurance
- Project Effectiveness Monitoring
- Eelgrass Monitoring and Research
- Partner Research Efforts
- State of the Bay Analysis and Reporting

Education and Outreach

- Communications
- Education
- Nature Center Update
- Community Partner Projects
- Other E&O Tasks: Marine Protected Area Collaborative, pumpout monitoring, etc.
- Mutts for the Bay
- State of the Bay Events

Program Administration

- Manage Committees and Partnerships
- Grants and Contracts Administration and Financial Management
- General Administration and Human Resources Management
- Tracking Implementation of the Management Plan and Workplan
- Community Projects Program

The EC should also be aware that Bipartisan Infrastructure Funding (BIF) is expected to come to each National Estuary Program (NEP) during FY2022. While we are still awaiting guidance from EPA, it appears that each program will receive approximately \$970,000 for projects that address infrastructure. Some potential ideas for our program include runoff management, waterfront armoring, salt water intrusion, etc. This funding is likely to be managed under a workplan and budget separate from the FY2023 320 grant. We're hearing that the funding is intended to be started soon, which might require revising the FY2022 workplan to include the additional work. Our current understanding is that this funding will not have a match requirement.

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

Every five years, each of the National Estuary Programs undergoes a Program Evaluation process with EPA to review how the program is doing. Continued participation in the program is contingent upon passing this process. The process culminates in a Program Evaluation letter, which lays out the noteworthy program accomplishments as well as areas for improvement. Twice a year, Estuary Program staff provides an update on the status of activities to address the challenges identified by EPA in the PE letter. The attached summary describes activities underway or planned to address these challenges. 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:** Program Highlights

- **Hiring Updates:** Riley Hine has joined the Estuary Program as our Communications & Outreach Coordinator. She has a degree in Water Resources & Sustainable Development and has worked extensively in outdoor education and curriculum development. Mike will provide an update on the Executive Director selection process.
- **Community Project Update:** The State Parks' Watershed Demonstration Station project is now complete and the station is located in the Natural History Museum to be used with student groups and other visitors. The Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District's Monarch & Pollinator habitat restoration project is nearly complete. The restoration work is complete, and the educational sign is currently being manufactured for installation. Dr. Nikki Adams' Microplastics Monitoring Project is continuing their monthly monitoring. The project timeline has been extended until the fall because of delays in getting the monitoring started due to COVID.
- **Restoration Project Highlight:** The Estuary Program is partnering with Army Guard National Base Camp San Luis Obispo (Camp SLO) to complete stormwater improvement designs on the base in an area with continual sediment erosion. The Water Board is also funding similar stormwater designs for other nearby roads sites. Channels at the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve (CCER) had flows during December for a number of days. The site changed further, with additional sediment deposited. Some plants were lost, although we are still meeting the plant survival targets for the project. A small grant will start this fall looking at the potential for native oyster aquaculture for restoration and eventual commercial sales in Morro Bay, Elkhorn Slough, and Tomales Bay.

9. Adjourn to next meeting of May 18, 2022 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.

Attachments:

- Minutes from November 17, 2021 EC meeting
- PE letter status
- FY2022 Workplan