



Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Via Video Conferencing

November 16, 2022
4:00 pm

Minutes

Attendees: Ethan Bell, *Stillwater Sciences*; Matt Keeling, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Crow White, *Cal Poly*; Jason Curtis, *Bay Foundation*; Becka Kelly, *Morro Bay Harbor Dept*; Chris Womack, *LOCS*; Jeremiah O'Brien, *Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization*; Lisen Bonnier, *Ag interest seat*; John Flaherty, *Tourism interest seat*; Suzanne Marr, *USEPA*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Melodie Grubbs, *MBNEP Staff*.

1. Introductions and Updates

- Lisen: Excited that the rain has started and hoping for a good rainy season. Some concern because some farmers are caught off guard with the start of the rainy season, which can result in erosion on their property.
- Jeremiah: Also serves on the Harbor Advisory Board.
- Jason: Representing the Bay Foundation.
- Ethan: Serves as the Executive Committee (EC) chairperson.
- Becka: With the Morro Bay Harbor Department.
- Matt: Representing the Central Coast Water Resources Control Board. Noted the large amounts of eelgrass when out on the bay.
- Chris: Serving as the alternate for Marshall Ochylski.
- Crow: Just returned from the Western Society of Naturalists conference in Oxnard, which had 650 registrants and many presentations. There were four presentations on work in Morro Bay, two on oysters and two on microplastics.
- Suzanne: Representing EPA.
- Ann: Estuary Program Assistant Director.
- Mel: Estuary Program Executive Director.

2. Public Comment

Linda Parks attended the meeting as a member of the public.

3. Agenda Revisions – None.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of August 17, 2022 EC meeting minutes.

Vote: Crow motioned to approve, Matt seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

5. **ACTION:** Recommendations on Community Project Applications (see attached)

Staff worked with community partners to develop two potential projects: a back bay phytoplankton study and a marine debris project. Staff presented an overview of the projects, budget, and schedule, as well as input from reviewers.

Crow asked about the Estuary Program staff time to be contributed to the phytoplankton project and asked if that was unusual. Staff explained that this project is a pilot project which may be expanded in the future

using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding. Based on this and our program's interest in expanding our work in this area, it made sense to partner closely on this project and utilize Estuary Program staff time. For the marine debris project, Crow asked about the possibility of including recycling receptacles. Although this would not fit within the budget of the proposed project, staff will talk to the applicant about how the need for recycling might be addressed. Becka suggested that Community Services District (CSD) staff reach out to local businesses to encourage them to provide adequate trash receptacles. Becka noted that often the local businesses will step up to help meet this type of need. Matt suggested an adopt-a-trashcan program, which has potential for expanding trashcans in that area.

Ethan commented that both projects had strong ties to the management plan actions and focused well on the mission. Both also had good match.

Jason reported that the Bay Foundation had voted to approve both projects as presented at their November meeting.

Chris recused herself from voting on the CSD project to avoid a potential conflict of interest.

Vote: Matt motioned to approve the two projects as presented. Crow seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

6. ACTION: Restoration Fund Budget Request for Fiscal Year (FY)2023 to FY2027 (see attached)

Every five years, staff develops a plan of expected spending from the Restoration Fund to support the program's work. This is non-federal funding, which is useful in leveraging other grants. The spending from FY2018 to FY2022 was presented, and approximately 45% of the requested budget was spent.

The plan describes the anticipated spending on Community Projects, Studies & Monitoring, Implementation Projects, and Land Conservation.

The group discussed potential land conservation deals. No specific deals are yet in the works.

Jason reported that the Bay Foundation had voted to approve the spend plan as presented at their November meeting.

Vote: Becka moved to approve the plan as presented. Jason seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

7. DISCUSSION: Semi-annual Report (See attached)

Staff presented the semi-annual report, which describes program activities and budget spent during the second half of FY2022. Accomplishments included closing of an easement, completion of the 2021 eelgrass map, a project developed with USGS to study tidal marsh and sea level rise, low flow drought monitoring, the State of the Bay report card analysis, numerous outreach events, and completion and approval of the BIL workplan and budget.

8. DISCUSSION: Program Highlights

- **2021 Eelgrass Map:** Staff shared the results of the 2021 mapping effort and shared our recently updated eelgrass webpage. <https://www.mbnep.org/eelgrass/>
- **Community Project Updates:** As the Camp KEEP watershed education project is unlikely to proceed, staff will explore developing an additional project for spring 2023. A potential idea is to renovate an outdoor watershed model at Monarch Grove Elementary.
- **Expanding Capacity:** We have hired three full-time staff to support our BIL work. A Monitoring Technician, Education Specialist, and Restoration Coordinator have been selected. We plan to hire additional Administrative support in the near future.

- **Administrative Updates:** The 2022 Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP) has been approved by EPA. The BIL funding application for FY2022 and FY2023 was developed and submitted to EPA. Suzanne has completed her review, and the typical turnaround time for a completed agreement is 45 days. We will be developing an equity strategy related to the BIL funding.
9. Adjourn at 5:09 p.m. to the next meeting of February 15, 2023 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.