



Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Via Video Conferencing

February 15, 2022
4:00 pm

Minutes

Attendees: Ethan Bell, *Stillwater Sciences*; Matt Keeling, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Crow White, *Cal Poly*; Bill Henry, *Bay Foundation*; Becka Kelly, *Morro Bay Harbor Dept*; Lisen Bonnier, *Ag interest seat*; John Flaherty, *Tourism interest seat*; Zara Landrum, *City of Morro Bay*; Bruce Gibson, *SLO County*; Blake Fixler, *SLO County*; Suzanne Marr, *USEPA*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Melodie Grubbs, *MBNEP Staff*.

1. Introductions and Updates

- Lisen: Ag representative. We had quite a bit of rain and are seeing many different management styles throughout the watershed right now.
- John: Recreation and Tourism representative. Winter has been pretty slow out on the bay, especially due to all of the rainy weather and flooding. The Winter Bird Festival happens annually on MLK weekend, but had stormy weather so many fieldtrips were canceled.
- Bruce: SLO County representative. A lot has been going on organizationally with the county Board of Supervisors. The results of the 2022 election led to redrawing of district boundaries and impacted the county's ability to provide services. The Estuary Program is not in the second supervisorial district, but Bruce is more than happy to continue to participate in the Executive Committee (EC) as the primary representative as well on the Los Osos Basin Management Committee. In the meantime, the second district picked up San Miguel, Atascadero, the wineries on west side of Highway 101, etc. That coupled with a role he has as the Vice President of the State Association of Counties are why his time has been so limited. In the near future we'll be more likely to see Blake at the meetings. Next year he will be serving as the President of the State Association of Counties, which will again limit his time for other commitments like the EC. We can always reach him through Blake. In County news, the rains and flooding are big issues. There will be continuing conversations as we come to terms with climate change driving more intense storms and the need for management of creek channels. There is the tension between wanting to manage for flow versus for habitat. We need to figure out a way to maximize flow in creeks while still protecting habitat. Expect legislation and conversation around what we're going to do to prevent what we saw in Morro Bay with the extraordinary flows that flooded roadways and businesses. Ethan commented that flood control and habitat protection are not mutually exclusive
- Matt: Central Coast Water Board representative, and the Executive Officer. They are anticipating changes to come in response to recent storm events. With respect to stream management, there is a fire safety component as well. Homeless encampments in riparian areas can be flood risks. One positive outcome of the storms is that seeing gravel and rock substrate that are ideal for steelhead. The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB) had to divert staff resources to flood incident response and follow-up. They received many calls during storms, and the staff told people to do what they needed to do to address immediate public safety. The 401 certification process is going to be impacted, with a long list of post-flood response actions needed. A significant number of wastewater treatment plants were inundated in region – Guadalupe, San Ardo, Chualar, Salinas. The Water Board is starting to talk to municipalities about helping them move out of flood prone areas. They are working with the Office of Emergency Services, FEMA, etc. to get money out. At the Board meeting tomorrow and Friday, the Board will be considering a regional equity resolution affirming the CCRWQCB's commitment to equity. On Friday there will be a tour of the Los Osos Water Reclamation Facility for the board, staff, and members of the community.
- Becka: City of Morro Bay Harbor Department rep. Morro Bay has a new harbor director. There's a new boat going into service soon. They are hosting an Open House on February 20 to introduce the Harbor Director and the new boat. Expecting to have dredging in the bay in May, probably lasting a month.

Also hosting a half Ironman in that same time period and are expecting 2,000 athletes swimming in the bay, biking to San Simeon, and running on the waterfront. The Embarcadero will be closed to car traffic on Saturday, May 20. The city is still assessing impacts from the storm including revetments, storm drains, sinkholes, and infrastructure along the Embarcadero like seawalls. Becka will be attending tsunami preparedness workshop soon.

- Zara: City of Morro Bay rep. Zara is a newly elected city council member in Morro Bay. She is replacing Dawn Addis.
- Crow: Science and Research rep and a Cal Poly professor. Updates from Cal Poly include Dr. Stefan Talke's project to build and test inexpensive tide gauge sensors in Morro Bay. He now has 18 months of hourly data. The work was featured in an article in Mustang News. Dr. Talke also has a student doing work on a thermal budget in Morro Bay, including heat coming in from atmosphere and exchanging with the ocean. This project will be written up soon. He is starting new projects evaluating tidal prism in Morro Bay and how climate change would affect that.
- Suzanne: USEPA rep, Project Officer for the Estuary Program grant. Working with us on a Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) grant agreement amendment needed to address subawards given to fed agencies. At EPA a lot of funding coming out from BIL and IRA, so might see more opportunities coming through. Please share funding opportunities with partners.
- Bill: Bay Foundation president, and filling in for Jason Curtis representing the Bay Foundation. The Bay Foundation is doing well. Coming up on one-year with the Estuary Program for Mel.
- Blake: Supervisor Gibson's alternate. Mostly focused on county side of the storms and preparing for the new election cycle.
- Ethan: Chair of EC and Environmental Interest seat rep.
- Ann: Estuary Program Assistant Director.
- Mel: Estuary Program Executive Director.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Agenda Revisions – None.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of November 16, 2022 EC meeting minutes.

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

5. **ACTION:** EC Bylaw Approval (see attached)

Staff presented the proposed changes to the EC bylaws.

Lisen commented that she could see the need for the proposed changes but wanted to be sure that information from the Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) be shared with the EC. Guest speakers have presented to the group before and that is definitely an option in the future.

Matt was not opposed to no longer having the EC approve TAC members, but he want to make sure that it was not a missed opportunity to have an extra set of eyes and ears on the potential candidates. The EC members have many connections within the community and could provide some valuable input. It would be an opportunity to discuss members but not necessarily vote. Asked that staff update the EC periodically on membership. There might be need for confidentiality, so rather than an open discussion, staff could annually share a membership list with the EC and members could provide comments to staff.

Mel noted that we have many new projects with the BIL funding, such as the equity strategy and climate change projects. We are going to want a variety of members who can share different perspectives. We also need to streamline how information comes to the EC, and staff seems like the best conduit.

Becka commented that after being on the Implementation Committee (IC) for a long time, it made sense to shift toward a TAC structure with a more specialized knowledge base. She agrees with Matt that it would be a good idea to have an opportunity once a year to provide feedback in case members have different contacts that could help. Staff noted our appreciation for all of the time Becka participated in the EC, and Becka said she enjoyed being a part of it.

Ethan said that it seemed like the current structure relied a lot on staff having those technical conversations with TACs and passing the info along and that it's been working well. The changes as proposed feel like they would be effective. The approach emphasizes the importance of having good staff. If there's a time when it feels like the interface isn't effective, then something else could be considered.

Zara asked how IC members were chosen. There was a list of partner organizations, and it was a combination of staff working with a partner to identify a representative or the partner organization appointing someone.

Mel comments that with climate change and sea level rise projects, it's an opportunity to bring in more folks like USGS, Sea Grant, etc. with a regional and wider perspective.

Vote: Matt made motion, John seconded. All in favor. None opposed

6. DISCUSSION: Workplan discussion (see attached)

Staff had begun working to prepare two workplans, for BIL and for 320. We just found out that we have until fall to finalize the BIL workplan.

For our 320 funding, we are continuing to see strong bipartisan support and are expecting \$850,000 in 320 funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. We are expecting \$917,000 in BIL funding for FY2024.

For our 320 workplan, we are mostly planning for business as usual. Some projects are now complete and won't be included for FY2024: eelgrass restoration and State of the Bay analysis and event planning. We are adding a task on Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP) performance measures, which we'll need to develop for the next CCMP update in five years.

For BIL funding, efforts include Capacity Building (hire E&O support), Monitoring (TMDL project, bay phytoplankton, expanded agriculture monitoring), Restoration (sea level rise monitoring/analysis, easement for flooded property, lower Chorro flooding assessment, historical ecology work, estuarine fish monitoring, and stormwater management planning). For stormwater management, there are many potential projects. This year we're focusing on compiling info on the status of projects, what is needed, etc. Next year we want to move into implementation or obtaining funding for implementation. For the Water Infrastructure task, we're planning additional work with the Los Osos Community Services District. For E&O, we plan to begin developing a Community Project with local tribes.

Becka commented on how busy we are.

Lisen noted that she appreciate the work and wanted more detail on the ag monitoring work. We will share results with Lisen on sediment analysis.

Matt mentioned the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program (CCAMP) efforts across the region. That data goes into the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN). The data are used to compare site conditions to water quality criteria protective of aquatic health, habitat, etc. They use the data to identify waterbodies that are impaired so that can prioritize assessments and development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) to reduce impairments to get them within acceptable ranges.

Crow asked for more detail on the performance measures for CCMP. Mel responded that we're trying to be as quantitative as possible with the metrics. The idea is to look at our strategic plan and think about it as a five-year implementation plan. The big goals in CCMP could serve as a blueprint moving forward on how to actually select and prioritize projects.

Ethan sees the process as that monitoring and science direct our actions, including the development of the Workplan. So for example, eelgrass restoration is not a priority for next year because of monitoring that indicated that our eelgrass acreage goal had been achieved.

Zara asked about stormwater projects. Mel talked about identifying partner efforts and determining where our funding can be most effective since it's expensive work. The Surf Street project is likely going to be a priority. We're trying to move into the planning and design phase and hopefully implement by the end of the BIL funding. Storm impacts may result in changes to potential projects. We'd been talking to the County about a project at El Chorro Regional Park but it's now likely not going to move forward because County funding is needed for storm related repairs.

7. DISCUSSION: Program Evaluation Letter Update (See attached)

Mel elaborated on how we are building capacity in community education efforts, including developing teacher training opportunities and partnering with Cal Poly. In particular, there will be a new course on environmental literacy in the catalog offered by Cal Poly's College of Science & Math, and we will be one of the community partners for field trips and seminars.

Matt commented on water rights changes that Cal Poly would need to make to divert surface flows into rainwater catchment tanks during the wet season for use in the dry season. The State Water Resources Control Board Division of Water Rights is really busy right now with drought-related projects. They are also in the process of developing a new water rights database. If we have trouble getting a response from them, Matt might be able to put us in contact with someone. As for translation of E&O materials into Chinese, Matt asked if we'd chosen a specific dialect. The Water Board realized in working with Chinese growers in the northern part of region that this group tended to be Mandarin speakers. Mel responded that we are the fiscal sponsor of the SLO Marine Protected Area Collaboration (SLOMPAC) and that this type of project will be informed by the SLOMPAC experience and knowledge on the region and also on the state level, so we are confident that we will receive good input from the group in choosing the correct dialect. Suzanne asked if messaging focused on collecting on the shore fishing and gathering, and Mel said it would be targeted appropriately.

8. DISCUSSION: Program Highlights

- **Community Projects:** Crow asked about recycling in the Baywood area. Ann spoke to Ron Munds about this, and he said that in his experience recycling bins had minimal useful recyclables in them and mostly contained trash. Because the businesses provide recycling, the CSD feels that there is existing adequate recycling in the area.
- **Expanding Capacity:** We are developing a job announcement for an administrative support position and hoping to start hiring in the next month. We've had a lot of changes around the office with three new full-time staff coming on board.
- **Admin Update:** We received the final BIL grant agreement in January 2023, so we can begin billing spending that started Nov 1, 2022. Our annual financial audit will be wrapping up this week. The Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) meeting will be held this spring in DC. We are working with a consultant to develop the equity strategy associated with the BIL funding and will be presenting it at the May meeting. We might reach out individually to stakeholders. With the newer EPA guidance, we need to amend the BIL workplan. The amendment will not change the scope or budget but rather shift certain projects from a contractual category to a subaward category. This is in relation to updated guidance from EPA on sole sourcing, procurement, etc. A heads up that the workplan amendment process requires approval by the EC. We will be sending around an updated

workplan for review, and we will need an e-vote on it. Suzanne commented that we're trying to do this ASAP since the grants office is so busy with all of the funding coming through. Suzanne wanted to know how the Morro Bay Water Reclamation Facility is doing. Matt responded that it is up and running. During the recent storms there was flooding at the old treatment plant facility. The pump station worked properly in the storm. An unveiling of the facility is planned for next Thursday. Matt will send the group the notice that he received. Matt thinks Morro Bay's is the first plant in the state to be moved out of the region of coastal inundation.

9. Adjourned at 5:09 p.m. to the next meeting of May 17, 2023 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.