



**Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Estuary Program Offices, Morro Bay, CA
and via Video Conference Call**

**August 16, 2023
4:00 pm**

Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of May 17, 2023 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** EC Chair and Vice Chair Election

EC officers positions of Chair and Vice Chair and elected by the EC at the first meeting of even-numbered years or as needed. Officer terms are for two years, and officers may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

Jason's two-year term as Vice Chair ends in August 2023. This is his first term, so he is eligible to serve a second term. Ethan's term as Chair ends in February 2024, and as this is his second consecutive term, he is not eligible to continue as Chair at this time (although he could serve again in the future). We thank him for four years of service as Chair!

Typically the Vice Chair steps up to serve as Chair when the position becomes vacant. Jason has expressed an interest in moving to the Chair position when Ethan's term has ended.

If Jason is approved as Chair in February 2024, then at that point the committee will need a new Vice Chair. Staff's preference is to re-elect Jason in August to continue as Vice Chair from now until February 2024. At the February meeting, we would like to hold Chair and Vice Chair elections, as this would put the two officer positions on the same cycle and make future elections simpler to manage.

Staff reached out to Becka, and she is interested in serving as Vice Chair, although this won't come up for a full discussion and voting until the February 2024 meeting.

Staff recommend holding Vice Chair elections.

6. **DISCUSSION:** EC Membership

The Government-at-Large position was filled by the State Coastal Conservancy for several years. With the retirement of former Executive Officer (EO) Sam Schuchat, the organization decided to take a temporary hiatus from the EC while their new EO came on board. The Coastal Conservancy recently let staff know that given the large amount of funding they are working to distribute, their organization no longer has the capacity to serve on the EC.

We would like to have a discussion on potential organizations that could fill this government-at-large interest seat. As this seat is a representative of a specific interest in the watershed and estuary, the EC

will vote on this representative and their alternate for a three-year term. We are hoping to identify a potential member for EC approval by early next year.

Also, a noteworthy change to EC membership is that Matt Keeling is retiring from the Water Board and from the EC as well. August will be his last meeting. The Water Board has selected Phil Hammer to serve as their representative on the EC. Phil is responsible for stormwater and 401 permitting, and we've interfaced with him over the years on water quality issues in our watershed. Tamara Anderson will continue as the Water Board's alternate.

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

Every five years, each of the National Estuary Programs undergoes a Program Evaluation (PE) 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 PE letter, which lays out the noteworthy program accomplishments and areas for improvement. Twice a year, Estuary Program staff provides an update 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 and expanding outreach to non-English speakers and visitors.

8. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Community Project Updates:** Both projects for FY23 are underway. The Cal Poly professor and students working on monitoring Morro Bay phytoplankton are conducting analysis on samples from two locations in the bay. They are preparing a poster to present at a technical conference this fall. We are considering a BIL-funded project with the professor to continue this work in FY24. The Los Osos Community Services District (LOCSO) completed permitting and are poised to purchase and install trash receptacles for the Baywood area. For the outreach component on the project, the project originally included an educational sign on marine debris prevention. Instead, the approach will be to develop and produce reusable coasters with marine debris messaging and distribute them to restaurants in Baywood and eventually Morro Bay. Staff has completed a contract with One Cool Earth for their FY24 project to provide outdoor environmental education to Baywood Elementary.
- **Administrative Updates:** We hired an Administrative Assistant to support contracting and grant management. We are finalizing the BIL workplan for FY24, as discussed back in February. We will approve it at the November EC meeting, and the grant award is expected in January 2024.
- **Monitoring Updates:** The 2023 eelgrass map is still under development. Imagery acquisition via sonar and drone was completed in May, and map analysis is underway. Based on staff observations from fieldwork around the bay, we are expecting a decrease in acreage from the 500 acres mapped in 2021. We had a successful bioassessment season, with eleven sites monitored. We saw better than usual macroinvertebrates on mainstem Chorro, which we attributed to the big winter storms and higher than normal flows that swept out fine sediment and improved the substrate for sensitive macroinvertebrates.
- **Restoration Updates:** Contracts and subawards have been development for several BIL projects including a historical ecology project, pikeminnow and steelhead management in Chorro Creek, an estuarine fisheries survey, and USGS tidal marsh monitoring and modeling. Work also continues on the Conservation Planning Initiative, which is a document outlining restoration goals and actions that is a part of our program's Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan. This document is expected to be completed early next year.
- **Education and Outreach Updates:** Estuary Program staff has been busy with several updates to the Nature Center, many funded by BIL. Staff also wrapped up pilot teacher trainings to share curriculum with educators from the area and beyond. Our program is also ramping up field trip opportunities for students, with several groups already planned for the fall.

9. Adjourn to next meeting of November 15, 2023 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.

Attachments:

- Minutes from May 17, 2023 EC meeting
- Program Evaluation Letter update