



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

**February 21, 2024
4:00 pm**

Minutes

Attendees: Ethan Bell, *Stillwater Sciences*; Phil Hammer, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*; Becka Kelly, *Morro Bay Harbor Department*; Jason Curtis, *Bay Foundation of Morro Bay*; John Flaherty, *Recreation/Tourism seat*; Marshall Ochylski, *Los Osos CSD*; Kate Ballantyne, *SLO County Public Works*; Bruce Gibson, *SLO County*; Suzanne Marr, *USEPA*; Ann Kitajima, *MBNEP Staff*; Melodie Grubbs, *MBNEP Staff*.

1. Introductions and Updates

- Ethan: Stillwater Sciences is working with the Estuary Program on monitoring steelhead in lower Los Osos Creek. With the big rain events this winter, they are seeing the fish moving down to lower Chorro Creek. They are already starting to smolt and make their way out into the bay. A few have gone out into the bay and come back into lower Chorro Creek. Data collection is expected to continue through the fall, and results are available to all interested parties.
- Jason: Vice President of Instruction at Cuesta College, serves on the Bay Foundation Vice President, and is a representative of the Bay Foundation Board to the Executive Committee (EC).
- John: Central Coast Outdoors. Not a lot to report. It was another successful Winter Birdfest. The weather cooperated, and the event attracted record numbers of people.
- Phil: Senior Environmental Scientist for the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.
- Marshall: Representing the Los Osos Community Services District (LOCSD).
- Bruce: San Luis Obispo County supervisor, back with the group after some time away.
- Becka: The Morro Bay Harbor Department has had a lot of activity related to the big winter storms. They've provided rides to Estuary Program staff and partners out to the sandspit for ice plant monitoring. In late December, they removed four derelict boats from the bay and demolished them. They have a few more on their list for removal and will try to complete this while use of the launch ramp is slow. The Ironman event is on May 19. Last year the event caused quite a bit of sea otter disturbance, so planning is underway for additional mitigation this year. The approach is for more education and outreach. Potential changes include a narrower course, no air horn at the start, no spectator use of cowbells, no spectators on the South T-pier, or eliminating the swim altogether. The organization is in year two of a three-year contract and would like to see the event continue in the Morro Bay location. Sea Otter Savvy will not be as involved in the process this year, and an additional organization is being sought to conduct the monitoring. As for dredging, no dates have yet been announced. Although the city proposed dredging back to State Park Marina, it's unlikely to happen this year as no discussions have yet begun.
- Kate: Public Works SLO County.
- Suzanne: Project Officer from EPA for the Estuary Program. Part of the Water Division in San Francisco.
- Mel: Executive Director of Estuary Program.
- Ann: Assistant Director of the Estuary Program.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Agenda Revisions

None.

4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of November 15, 2023 EC meeting minutes (see attached)

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

5. **ACTION:** EC Chair and Vice Chair Vote

The terms of Chair and Vice Chair are up for reelection. Jason, who served as Vice Chair of the EC for just over two years, was put forth for the Chair position. Becka Kelly, a long-serving member of the committee, was put forth for Vice Chair. With this election, both positions will be on the same timeframe for their two-year terms.

Vote: Marshall moved to elect Jason as Chair. Kate seconded. All in favor. None opposed. Jason abstained. John motioned to elect Becka as Vice Chair. Ethan seconded. All in favor. None opposed. Becka abstained.

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

The EC bylaws were updated with non-discrimination language to ensure access to the meetings. The EC reviewed the proposed changes and recommended removing Mel's name from the non-discrimination statement, instead referring more generally to the Executive Director.

Vote: John motion to approve the bylaws with the change to remove the current Executive Director's name. Ethan seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

7. **DISCUSSION:** 320 Workplan Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Discussion

Staff presented the 320 workplan tasks and the expected budget of \$875,000 for FY2025. The workplan is due to EPA on June 1. In general, we focus our 320 funding on staffing and other ongoing operational costs, while BIL funding is used to support short-term projects.

Staff reviewed the new potential projects and described the proposed changes from the FY2024 workplan. Staff encouraged EC members to reach out if they had ideas about projects or partnerships that might be of interest in workplan development. Staff asked for input by early April.

Suzanne mentioned that she will be retiring from EPA at the end of May. The new Estuary Program project officer will be starting next week, so there should be a lot of time to bring her up to speed.

8. **DISCUSSION:** Program Evaluation update (see attached)

Staff presented the highlights of recent activities that address the areas identified by EPA during the 2020 Program Evaluation that merited further effort and attention.

9. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Community Projects Updates:** Staff present the status of the two ongoing Community Projects and the termination of the project with the Los Osos Community Services District.
- **Administrative Updates:** Staff provided an update on hiring and on the upcoming Association of National Estuary Programs meeting in D.C. in April.
- **Monitoring Updates:** Staff described the ongoing creek monitoring and eelgrass mapping efforts.

- **Restoration Updates:** Staff gave a status update on the ice plant management work on the city-owned portion of the sandspit, the historical ecology study with San Francisco Estuary Institute, and the fish passage barrier project on San Luisito Creek.
- **Education & Outreach Updates:** Staff gave updates on the start of another series of trainings for the year, our upcoming Science on Tap event, and other program outreach activities.

10. Adjourned at 5:01 p.m. to the next meeting of May 15, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., to be held via Zoom and in the Morro Bay offices.