



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

**May 21, 2025  
4:00 pm**

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**Staff Report**

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1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider approval of February 19, 2025 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** Consider approval of EC bylaw updates (see attached)

The EC bylaws which guide the structure and mission of the group require occasional updates. During the recent e-vote for Consent Decree spending, it was discovered that a few portions of the bylaws could use some clarification. The proposed changes are as follows:

- Meetings Format (Section 3, item b): For meetings held in person, participants may attend either via conference call (audio only) or via meeting platforms such as Zoom or Teams. Suggested edit that adds “virtual attendance” as an option for meeting attendance.
- Email Voting (Section 9, item b): The bylaws originally stated that after an e-vote, the EC will “ratify any such action at the next Committee meeting.” The term “ratify” seemed open to interpretation. E-vote are needed when a matter has some urgency which cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting. If we require a vote at the next EC meeting on items that were approved by e-vote, it defeats the purpose of an e-vote. Staff proposes altering the bylaw language to streamline the process. The proposed language removes the requirement to ratify the e-vote and replace it with language to report the e-vote results to the EC via email and at the next meeting, and to log the e-vote results with the EC meeting minutes.

Staff recommends approving updates to the EC bylaws.

6. **ACTION:** Consider approval of 320 base funding workplan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 (see attached)

While the budget for the National Estuary Programs has not yet been set for FY26, we needed to move forward with developing our budget and workplan for next year. Thus, we based our budget on the FY25 amount of \$850,000. The workplan tasks for FY26 are substantially similar to recent workplans, in particular because the 320 base funding is focused on operational costs while Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding is focused on project work. Changes to the FY26 320 base funding workplan include analysis and event planning for the 2026 State of the Bay. Additional funding will also support increasing supply costs and staff compensation. Note that the workplan includes the following Consent

Decree allocations: \$34,500 to support Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve (CCER) maintenance and \$15,000 for Community Projects.

If updates to the workplan and budget are necessary per EPA feedback, staff will modify them as required. The EC will be notified if any substantive changes occur.

Staff recommends approval of the FY26 320 base funding workplan.

**7. ACTION:** Consider approval of Consent Decree request for CCER maintenance in FY25

The CCER project was a long-time in the making, involving land acquisition, planning, permitting, and finally the construction phase, which was completed in 2019. Since then, the Estuary Program has supported planting, site maintenance, and monitoring at the project site. While the construction phases were supported by grants from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and the State Coastal Conservancy, post-project support has been funded by the Estuary Program.

To continue maintenance at CCER in FY25, staff are requesting Consent Decree funding of \$33,600 to support a contract with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to conduct plant maintenance and to purchase plant cages. This work is essential to meeting the project goals of stabilizing the site, improving the hydrology, and enhancing habitat function.

Staff recommends approval of the \$33,600 request for CCER maintenance work to be conducted throughout FY25.

**8. DISCUSSION:** Update to FY25 IJA workplan (see attached)

The grant agreement for the FY25 IJA funding was finalized, and we now have access to those funds. The process required some minor updates to the workplan that was originally approved and submitted earlier in 2025. A summary of those changes is included in the attached memo.

**9. DISCUSSION:** Consent Decree spending for Harbor Department pumpout project

In April, EC members e-voted on Consent Decree funding of \$8,400 to support the Tidelands Park dock repair for a pumpout unit replacement project. The project and the need for timeliness were described to the EC members via email, and they were informed that a vote must be unanimous. We received email votes from all members, and the vote was unanimously in support of the project. Contracting has been completed for the project. The dock repairs were successfully completed, and issues are being resolved with installation of the pumpout unit.

**10. DISCUSSION:** Program Evaluation (PE) update

The Estuary Program is currently undergoing a comprehensive five-year PE review. The primary purpose of the PE process is to assist the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in assessing how National Estuary Programs are progressing in achieving programmatic and environmental outcomes through the implementation of their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs). The PE results will be used to demonstrate the national program's impact and inform the development of future CCMPs and programs. The process includes a site visit scheduled for July 9 to 10, 2025, where evaluators will meet with staff, partners, and stakeholders to assess progress and outcomes.

On July 10, we will be hosting an early evening reception at the Nature Center, which will include the EC, Bay Foundation Board members, and project partners to celebrate the ongoing work and share insights into our efforts to protect and restore the Morro Bay estuary and watershed.

**11. DISCUSSION:** Semi-annual reports for 320 base and IIJA funding (see attached)

Twice a year, the Estuary Program submits semi-annual reports to EPA, which provide program status on the budget and tasks laid out in our workplans. Separate plans are created for IIJA and for 320 base funding.

For our 320 base funding, we have expended 73% of our funding since the cumulative grant began on October 1, 2021. We have met 182% of our match requirement. Cash and in-kind match are at approximately \$5.7 million.

For our IIJA funding, we have expended 53% of our four years of funding which totals \$1,943,788. The IIJA funding does not require match.

**12. DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- Administration Updates:
  - With audit now completed, we are working with Glenn Burdette to file our taxes. We are also hiring a full-time Community Engagement Coordinator. The job announcement is [available here](#), and we are hoping to fill the position by July.
- Monitoring Updates:
  - Bioassessment: Monitoring staff are in the midst of surveys at our ten bioassessment sites for the year. We've got a great team and have good support from both the Americorps Watershed Stewards Program and CCAMP staff. We will be posting a blog in May highlighting the fieldwork. <https://www.mbnep.org/blog/>
  - Eelgrass Mapping: Staff are launching a project to create a 2025 eelgrass map. Due to IIJA funding delays, we missed out on survey dates in April. The contractor had a successful data collection effort in early May and will be back in June to complete the sonar surveys and drone flights. The completed map is expected in early 2026.
- Restoration Updates:
  - Sea Level Rise & Adaptation Planning: We continue our partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on planning for sea level rise and adaptation measures. USGS is incorporating additional field monitoring into the model. The first Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting was held in April with good engagement. The next TAC meeting is planned for August.
  - Adobe Rd. Fish Passage Feasibility Study: The feasibility study is expected to re start in May and finish in the summer. We are still waiting to hear back on the grant proposal to CDFW for evaluating existing fish passage barriers in the watershed.
  - Walters Creek Floodplain Enhancement: We received one final permit and are awaiting approval of others. We will proceed with implementation once permits are secured. The low-tech process-based restoration approaches (e.g., beaver dam analogs) planned for Walters Creek are being piloted elsewhere in the County. We are working with partners like Creek Lands Conservation and the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District to apply for funding such as Wildlife Conservation Board Prop 4 for these types of practices at the County scale.

- Historical Ecology Study: A local partner engagement meeting was held on May 7. We are also trying to connect with tribes on the study this spring.
- Invasive Ice Plant Removal: Last removal efforts occurred in January to respray areas treated in the fall of 2023. Effectiveness monitoring of the project occurred in April.
- Chorro Creek Invasive Species Mapping: We are developing a contract with SLO County to begin treatment at 20 locations of *Arundo spp.* as the first step in addressing invasives in the area.
- CCER: We are exploring adaptive management options for the site given channel bed erosion and possible fish passage issues. A geomorphic survey indicated fish passage concerns under certain flow conditions. Staff met with multiple CDFW staff to discuss alternatives. If funding is available, we are considering approaches such as beaver dam analogs, etc.
- Regional Dune Workshop: We are collaborating with UC Santa Barbara on a state-wide study to look at dune habitat function and vulnerability with Morro Bay as a case site. A regional workshop on project results will be held in May.
- Steelhead Growth and Tracking: We are continuing to track steelhead movement in Chorro Creek through May 2025. We are considering other funding options to keep the project going longer such as the Army Corps of Engineers, CDFW grants, etc.
- Communications, Outreach, & Education Updates:
  - Community Projects: State Parks is continuing to implement their 2025 Community Project. Staff met with ECOSLO to discuss the possibility of a tree planting project in the watershed for 2026. Other project ideas are also being considered.
  - Outreach: In the month of April, we tabled at five events and spoke to nearly 650 individuals, including 300 people at the Beaver Festival. This outreach helps to increase public knowledge and awareness of our program. Our annual Earth Day cleanup attracted 35 people who picked up 65 pounds of trash from downtown Morro Bay.
  - Education: We had four field trips in April, ranging from nature journaling at Sweet Springs Preserve to sea otter observations at Morro Rock. We reached a total of 121 students, including 25 students from Lake Tahoe and 65 students from Hanford.
  - Nature Center: We are still in the process of updating our Nature Center. This spring we will have new brochure and flyer displays up on the wall and will continue with ongoing maintenance.

**13.** Adjourn to next meeting of August 20, 2025 at 4 p.m., which will be hybrid with some attendees participating via Zoom and others meeting in the Estuary Program office.

**Attachments:**

- Minutes from February 19, 2025 EC meeting
- EC bylaw draft update
- FY26 320 workplan
- FY25 IJA workplan summary of changes memo
- 320 semi-annual report
- IJA semi-annual report

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