



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

**February 18, 2026  
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 November 19, 2025 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** EC Chair and Vice Chair election

Jason serves as the EC Chairperson, and Becka serves as the EC Vice Chairperson. Both were elected in February 2024 to a two-year term. Per the EC bylaws, they are eligible for a second consecutive two-year term. Jason has expressed an interest in an additional term. Becka will continue her involvement with the EC but does not wish to continue in the vice chairperson role.

Kate Ballantyne has expressed an interest in serving as the EC vice chairperson.

Staff recommends EC approval of Jason Curtis as Chairperson and Kate Ballantyne as Vice Chairperson for two-year term.

6. **DISCUSSION:** Fiscal Year (FY)27 320 workplan (see attached for the FY26 workplan)

Each year at our February meeting, the EC discusses the potential workplan tasks for the upcoming grant and determines if any additions are needed. The additional funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) grant has resulted in a shift in our spending approach. We now tend to focus our 320 base funding on staffing and other ongoing operational costs, while IIJA funding is used to support short-term projects. Thus, the proposed workplan tasks for FY27 for the 320 funding are expected to be substantially similar to those for FY26. At this time, the funding amount for FY27 is not yet known, so we are holding these initial workplan discussions assuming the same amount of funding as for FY26, which is \$850,000

The major changes to the workplan tasks are the addition of a task for revising the Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP) and the removal of tasks for State of the Bay.

The following are the expected workplan tasks for FY27, including any major changes (shown in italics).

**Workplan Task Categories for 320 in FY27:**

**Restoration and Conservation**

- Land Conservation and Planning
- Restoration Maintenance and Monitoring
- Other Restoration
- Conservation and Restoration Project Development
- Invasive Species Management
- Fisheries Management

### **Monitoring and Research**

- Monitoring Program Coordination
- Reporting and Analysis
- Data Management
- Quality Assurance
- Project Effectiveness Monitoring
- Eelgrass Monitoring and Research
- Partner Research Efforts
- ~~State of the Bay Analysis~~

### **Education and Outreach**

- Communications
- Education
- Nature Center Maintenance & Operations
- Community Engagement and Stewardship
- Mutts for the Bay
- ~~State of the Bay Events~~

### **Program Administration**

- Manage Committees and Partnerships
- Grants and Contracts Administration and Financial Management
- General Administration and Human Resources Management
- Tracking Implementation of the Management Plan and Workplan
- *Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan Update - New*
- Community Projects Program

## **7. DISCUSSION: Program Highlights**

### **Administration Updates:**

- Status of IIJA grant: The IIJA grant is currently being processed at the EPA Regional office.
- Status of federal funding: The FY26 federal budget that includes funding for the NEPs has been passed by Congress and signed by the president. In the event of a government shutdown, EPA will continue to operate and our funding will continue to be available.

### **Monitoring:**

- Eelgrass: Our draft bay-wide eelgrass map for spring 2025 will be available soon for our review. Cal Poly conducted drone flights of the bay in late 2025. Our staff also conducted our fall eelgrass monitoring

effort and reported that we are generally seeing stable conditions at most of our long-term monitoring sites.

- **Wildlife sightings:** We recently downloaded photos from a game camera on upper Chorro Creek. We saw quite a lot of wildlife, including an adult bear with an ear tag. The California Department of Fish & Wildlife said this bear was collared near East Cuesta but somehow managed to pull off the collar near 101. They think the bear is about three years old and in good health. They appreciate our letting them know that we captured him on camera since this information is helpful for their mark-recapture analysis and population modeling. Check out our February blog post for more wildlife sightings.



#### **Restoration:**

- **Sea Level Rise & Adaptation Planning:** We held a TAC meeting in January highlighting modeled vulnerability of the tidal marsh under various SLR and sediment scenarios and discussion on adaptation actions. The tidal marsh habitat at this time seems resilient compared to many other systems in CA until 2060/2080 when more conversion of habitat is projected. We will model adaptation strategies next and are working on a public communication tool to share results.
- **Walters Creek Floodplain Enhancement:** The first phase of the project was implemented in September 2025. Winter storms altered many of the smaller structures where there was a more confined floodplain. We are monitoring results to inform future adaptation actions in March.
- **Historical Ecology Study:** A draft report was reviewed by local partners and tribes with a final report expected in April.

#### **Education & Outreach:**

- **Education:** Efforts currently underway include developing a teacher training series in partnership with Cal Poly and planning for State of the Bay events for the spring. We have two new exhibits in design phase for the Nature Center.
  - **Communications:** Since Oct 1, our Instagram has 87k views and our Facebook account has had 109k views. In the last quarter, we released two newsletters and nine blogs, and our Annual Report is about to go out.
8. Adjourn to next meeting of May 20, 2026 at 4 p.m., which will be hybrid with attendance via Zoom or meeting in the Estuary Program office.

**Attachments:**

- Minutes from November 19, 2025 EC meeting
- FY26 320 workplan (for reference)