

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

August 19, 2026
4:00 pm

Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **DISCUSSION:** Community Project update

SLO Beaver Brigade has wrapped up all work related to their 2026 Central Coast Process-Based Restoration Workshop Community Project. A total of 58 participants attended a day-long process-based restoration workshop in March 2026, and 41 participants attended site tours of Walters Creek restoration site from April to June 2026. For 2027 funding, we are exploring various projects, including tree planting with ECOSLO at El Chorro Regional Park and naturalist explorer kits with SLO Library.

5. **DISCUSSION:** State of the Bay impact

As we wrap up our 2026 SOTB, we are excited about the level of community engagement from this effort. Since the start of this year, we distributed over 600 printed reports, received 461 views of the [online report on our website](#), connected with 895 individuals at 11 events, and had 370 visitors to our [online data dashboard](#).

6. **DISCUSSION:** Eelgrass draft map

The biggest change between the 2023 eelgrass map and our current 2025 draft map is a large empty patch in the mid bay, where eelgrass has essentially disappeared. At this time, causes of the dieback are unknown, but it may be due to stressors like heat trapping and/or hypoxia.

Our staff are meeting with Cuesta researchers and other eelgrass experts to discuss these findings in August. The final baywide eelgrass map is expected to be finalized in September. We do not yet have a total acreage number. Aside from the changes in the area in the mid bay, there have also been smaller-scale changes in abundance throughout the bay. There are no indications of any large-scale decline or collapse.

7. **DISCUSSION:** Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan update

Following a minor update to the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) in 2022, we are now preparing a more substantial update for 2028. We've begun reviewing the 2022 plan and are developing a process for completing this update. We will review existing action plans with staff, followed by late-fall meetings for community and TAC input, including the EC.

The EPA has asked us to track the progress of action plans more rigorously, develop clearer measurable outcomes, and ensure that we develop actions to address rising global temperatures and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Once the updated CCMP is complete, we'll build a public-facing tracking dashboard. This tool will boost accountability, encourage regular check-ins, and simplify future CCMP updates.

8. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- Administration Updates:
 - We are in the process of hiring an Education & Outreach Projects Manager, expected to start in late August/early September.
- Monitoring Updates:
 - Cal Poly field study training: The monitoring team led half-day field training for 13 Cal Poly students in early July. These provided students with hands-on field experience in water quality and streamflow monitoring in Pennington Creek. The professor followed up to let us know that this field date was a highlight of the course.
 - Macroalgae in the bay: The Monitoring and Restoration teams worked together in mid-July to assess macroalgae in the bay. Our field teams monitored six sites and collected intertidal macroalgae samples. Our lab team cleaned, identified, and weighed about 6 lbs of algae biomass, exceeding the 5 lbs total from last year.
 - Watershed Stewards Program (WSP): Interviews for the next round of WSP Corpsmembers are underway, with new members starting in October. The Corpsmembers will support monitoring and restoration fieldwork for the Estuary Program, Creek Lands Conservation, City of SLO, and the CA Conservation Corps.
- Restoration Updates:
 - Nature Center: The eelgrass focused children's exhibit in the Nature Center will be installed in late August.
 - RAE Sea Level Rise: Staff have completed the SLR vulnerability and adaptation planning project with a grant with Restore America's Estuaries. A final Story Map will be posted in September.
 - Invasive Sea Lavender: Surveys were conducted throughout June and July at suitable habitats around the estuary.
 - [Historical Ecology Report](#): Report is finalized with hardcopy and online files to share with partners, libraries, etc. Considering additional outreach through community presentation, Story Map, etc.
- Communications, Outreach, & Education Updates:
 - Communication: Our social media reach continues to grow. Reach and content interactions were up on both Instagram and Facebook by over 200% in July.
 - Outreach: Thirty-two people came to our post-July 4th clean up event, and volunteers picked up over 40 lbs of trash.
 - Education: Summer family field trips are underway. So far we have hosted a nature walk in the Elfin Forest and a tidepool exploration trip at North Point. We have also had children's story time programs at two libraries, with two more coming up. We worked with the Boys and Girls Club summer camp in Oceano, teaching kids about watersheds, marine debris, and benthic macroinvertebrates.

9. Adjourn to next meeting of November 18, 2026 at 4 p.m., which will be hybrid.

Attachments:

Minutes from May 20, 2026 EC meeting