

**Notes from the Wetland Monitoring Group (WMG) Meeting held on
December 8, 2009 at the
San Francisco Bay Water Board Office, Oakland, CA.**

RE: Summary of the Wetland Monitoring Group (WMG) Meeting held on Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at the San Francisco Bay Water Board Office, Oakland, CA. 94612

Participants:

Donna Ball & Howard Shellhammer (H.T. Harvey & Associates); Bob Batha (BCDC); Naomi Feger, Maggie Beth, Leslie Perry, Beth Christian, Dale Bowyer, & Andree Greenberg (Water Board); Rich Freitas (US EPA); Tom Gandesberry (CCC); Mike May & Meredith Williams (SFEI); Eric Mruz and Meg Marriot (US FWS); Karen Taylor (DFG); David Thomson (SFBWS); Susanne von Rosenberg (GAIA); Julian Wood (PRBO).

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Napa Sonoma Marsh Restoration Project: update on restoration & monitoring (Susanne von Rosenberg, GAIA and Karen Taylor, Department of Fish & Game [DFG]).

The Napa Sonoma Marsh Restoration Project (NSMRP) consists of over 10,000 acres of former salt ponds that are being restored to tidal marsh on both sides of the Napa River. The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) obtained agency orders and permits in 2006 with an amendment to add the Napa Plant Site on the east side of the Napa River in 2007. Some ponds are or will be managed for waterfowl and shorebirds but most will be restored to wetlands. The project has been proceeding according to schedule in spite of the State's economic crisis. California Coastal Conservancy has worked with DFG to find funds to manage the restoration sites adaptively which includes pre-project planning; monitoring before and after the salt pond breaches; and assessing the presence of and potential for native biological species. The project monitoring has been proceeding well, and water quality elements have not, for the most part, exceeded the Water Board's limits. DFG is working with the Water Board to determine appropriate biosentinels for mercury monitoring, and silversides are likely to be the primary fish species selected for analysis. The breached ponds are filling in with sediment and vegetation as expected. Endangered species such as the least tern and western snowy plover have been sighted and are nesting in the project area. DFG personnel are altering the Napa Plant Site design to provide nesting islands for new least tern arrivals. The NSMRP should restore thousands of acres of former tidal marsh for wildlife and plants, improve water quality, provide recreational opportunities, store flood waters, and provide a buffer for sea level rise and storm surges. Project Web Site:

<http://www.napa-sonoma-marsh.org/>

Contacts: Karen Taylor, DFG, kctaylor@dfg.ca.gov or Susanne von Rosenberg, GAIA, Susanne@gaiainc.com)

Attachment 1: Photos by Karen Taylor, DFG of snowy plover chicks and least tern chicks (please credit Karen Taylor as the photographer, if these photos are used).

2. Outer Bair Island Restoration Project: monitoring breaches (Meg Marriott and Eric Mruz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [FWS]).

Outer Bair Island covers about 1,400 acres of the total 2,640 acre Bair Island Restoration Project which includes Outer, Middle, and Inner Bair. For Outer Bair, ditch blocks were constructed and two levees breached in January 2009. The FWS and Ducks Unlimited monitored the breach sites to ensure that water quality was protected and breaches were eroding according to plan. Baseline satellite imagery has been selected and site monitoring will include tidal circulation, slough and marsh morphology, habitat development, bird use, and invasive plants and predators to keep off the site. One of the goals of the site is to provide habitat for sensitive native species such as the endangered California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse which will be monitored after sufficient vegetation has established. FWS found water quality parameters to be within required parameters after the levee breaches and it has collected mudsucker fish for mercury analysis. Over the next 5 years restoration on Outer and Middle Bair Islands will continue by breaching levees and installing water control structures. The more subsided Inner Bair is currently being filled with up to 1.5 million cubic yards of clean construction (upland) or dredged sediment to raise elevations to a point where the site can be restored and to discourage water bird habitat too close to the San Carlos airport.

Contacts: Meg Marriott, Meg_Marriott@fws.gov; Eric Mruz, Eric_Mruz@fws.gov.

3. New State Wetland Portal, Wetland Tracker & on-line 401 Application. (Michael May, San Francisco Estuary Institute [SFEI]).

The new state wetland portal mandated by SB 1070 will soon be available to join other completed portals such as “Is it Safe to Swim?”, or “Is it Safe to Eat Fish and Shellfish from Our Waters?” (see website:

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/>). When completed, the wetland portal will be available in “Are Our Aquatic Ecosystems Healthy?” and will answer questions such as where are wetlands throughout the state? how are they functioning? and what proportion does not have adequate data? This will provide an important management tool to track wetland projects and monitoring statewide.

SFEI continues to work with the Regional and State Water Boards to improve the Wetland Tracker (www.wetlandtracker.org) for wetland and riparian projects. The tracker is required in Region 2 for some mitigation and restoration projects, and is being tested in other Water Board regions, by the State Water Board, and by other state agencies.

SFEI is also working with Regional Water Boards and the State Water Board on an online 401 application that can meet the goals of each region. Maps will be created in the browser which will provide more consistency. The draft release is expected in late 2010. Benefits of such a form include the potential for an automatic public notice for certification applications, and automatic notices for regulatory staff.

Contact: Mikem@sfei.org

4. Wetland Regional Monitoring Program Status Reports on final upcoming products (Williams/Collins, SFEI).

Funding for SFEI's Prop 50 grant was restored after a 6 month delay due to the state bond freeze. The Bay Area Model for Wetland Assessment in a Watershed Context expects to complete the following by the end of 2010:

Level 1: Maps for wetlands, creeks, and streams in the San Francisco Bay Region. It will also complete a model to determine the extent of riparian habitat associated with vegetation and hill-slope processes. The final maps and model will be available on the internet and will provide a new regional base map for the region's Wetland Tracker www.wetlandtracker.org.

Level 2: Rapid assessments will be conducted in key watersheds including some ambient studies to determine how CRAM can capture change along a known gradient, and how sensitive the method is to stressors.

Level 3: A protocol will be developed for foodwebs (probably song sparrows and/or bats in riparian habitats). Geomorphic methodologies are being compiled and reviewed to provide a standardized set of protocols appropriate for this region. (Contact: Meredith Williams, Meredith@sfei.org)

UPDATES:

A. Tidal marsh-upland ecotone plant community protocol (Williams)

The new protocol was developed by Save the Bay and SFEI; a copy is provided as an attachment to these notes.

Attachment 2: Tidal marsh-upland ecotone protocol

B. CRAM workshop for volunteers (Williams). This workshop was postponed from 2009 and will now be held on February 6 & 7, 2010 (Saturday & Sunday). The 2 day-workshop for volunteer monitors will highlight volunteer data collection and introduce the CRAM for wetland monitoring. Fee: \$30. Register at: www.wrmp.org

Attachment 3: Flier for CRAM volunteer monitor workshop (February 6 & 7, 2010)

C. Invasive cordgrass: (Peggy Olofson: did not attend meeting but provided the attached written update). Note that clapper rail numbers are down in some sites treated for invasive cordgrass, and the ISP is consulting with USFWS to determine whether additional actions should be taken.

D. 2009-10 Wetland monitoring group budget: (Greenberg)

The 2010 WMG budget of \$8,000 is expected to be allotted as follows: \$1,000 to the CRAM Volunteer Monitoring Workshop scheduled for February 6 & 7, 2010; \$2,000 to SFEI for web site maintenance and wetland tracker assistance; the remaining \$5,000 to the Water Board's wetland tracker student intern to track incoming projects). If others have ideas for 2010 wetland monitoring projects,

please let Andree know either by email or at the next WMG meeting on May 4, 2010.

E. Subtidal goals project (Marilyn Latta: did not attend but provided the attached written update).

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 4, 2010 at the Water Board Office in Oakland. Send agenda suggestions to Andree at AGreenberg@waterboards.ca.gov

Other Attachments below:

4. Marilyn Latta's Subtidal Goals Update
5. Peggy Olofson's Invasive Cordgrass Update

Attachment #4:

From: "Marilyn Latta" <mlatta@scc.ca.gov>
To: "Andree Greenberg" <AGreenberg@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: Wednesday, December 02, 2009 10:18 AM
Subject: RE: WMG Meeting Dec 8- updates for Subtidal Goals

Description: The San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Project will establish a comprehensive and long-term vision for research, restoration and management of the subtidal habitats (submerged areas below MLLW) of the San Francisco Bay. The Project is a collaborative interagency effort between the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the California Ocean Protection Council/State Coastal Conservancy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the San Francisco Estuary Partnership.

Updates:

- UC Davis has completed a Shellfish Recommendations Report, with a focus on native Olympia oysters
- SFEI has completed a draft Creosote Piling and Artificial Structures Assessment
- Kathy Boyer (SFSU) has completed a draft Eelgrass Recommendations Report
- Wim Kimmerer has completed draft conceptual models and diagrams for each habitat, and draft research goals by habitat
- The administrative core group has completed draft management goals by habitat
- We held a small climate change discussion meeting specific to subtidal habitats on 9/2/09- Wim is summarizing potential climate change adaptation strategies and research, taking into account freshwater inflow and sediment

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supply changes

- We have developed cross-habitat recommendations for better integration of Subtidal-Wetland project designs/ and Living Shorelines, invasive species, and oil spill response.
- Charleen Gavette at NOAA has completed draft Subtidal GIS maps by habitat

Upcoming Milestones:

- We will send out all draft goals statements (management, science, restoration), conceptual models, consultant reports, and subtidal GIS maps for the committee members to review 12/17/09
- 2-3 committee meetings will be held between January-March 2010
- Public Comment on final draft goals May-June 2010 . I will give a comprehensive presentation to the Wetlands Monitoring Group at the 5/4/2010 meeting.
- Final Subtidal Goals Document planned for September 2010, all info will be web-accessible as well

Listed below are future Meeting Dates that all are welcome to attend. There will be brief time for public comment from people who aren't on the committees.

2010 Committee Meetings:

- 1/12/09 9-1pm Science Committee, Oakland Coastal Conservancy
- 1/13/09 1-5pm Restoration Committee, Oakland Coastal Conservancy
- 1/20/09 9-1pm Resource Management Committee, SF BCDC
- 1/26/09 10-12pm Executive Steering Committee, SF BCDC
- 3/23/09 9:30-3:30pm Joint Committee Meeting, SF BCDC

Feedback Welcome: I welcome any questions about the project.

Marilyn Latta

Project Manager, San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Project
 Ocean Protection Council/State Coastal Conservancy
 1330 Broadway, Suite 1300
 Oakland, CA 94612
 mlatta@scc.ca.gov
 510-286-4157 direct
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Attachment #5:

From: Peggy Olofson, San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Project (510)
 548-2461; prolofson@spartina.org
 To: Andree Greenberg, San Francisco Bay Water Board
 Date: 12/8/09
 RE: Invasive *Spartina* Project Update

In brief summary:

1. FUNDING: ISP has funding for management, monitoring, and control through the end of next season, and things look pretty promising for 2011.
2. TREATMENT: Despite loss of funding from December to April, we were able to complete treatment of very nearly everything in the Bay in 2009. Efficacy this year and last (2008) seems very good, and we are making excellent progress.
3. CLAPPER RAILS: Clapper rail surveys at treatment sites over the last 4-5 years indicates that clapper rail populations are declining at the sites, presumably in large part because of *Spartina* removal. We are working with USFWS to analyze the trends in relation to the baywide population to determine if any additional actions need to be taken.
4. MONITORING: Full bay-wide monitoring for invasive *Spartina* is continuing annually. We have developed extremely precise monitoring methods, using helicopters (that can land in the marshes for sample collection), boats, and ground access, to be able to inform control work. We look forward to presenting these methods and our GIS to you at an upcoming WMG meeting.
5. HYBRIDIZATION: Continued genetic backcrossing over time, exacerbated by our efficient removal of everything that LOOKS or ACTS non-native, has resulted in more occurrences of plants that look like *foliosa*, but which test as having *alterniflora* genetics. The *Spartina* Project is planning a summit meeting of stakeholders and scientists in the coming months to discuss how best to address this.