

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROGRAM
WETLANDS MONITORING GROUP**

**MEETING SUMMARY
OCTOBER 27, 2003**

Attendees:

Bob Batha (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)
Andree Breaux (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)
John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)
Josh Collins (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Arthur Feinstein (Golden Gate Audubon Society)
Lynne Hosley (CH2M Hill)
Paul Jones (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Phil Lebednik (LFR Levine-Fricke)
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
Mike May (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Peggy Olofson (Invasive Spartina Project)
Anitra Pawley (The Bay Institute)
Chris Potter (California Resources Agency)
Stuart Siegel (Wetlands and Water Resources)
Eric Tattersall (California Department of Fish and Game)
Luisa Valiela (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Neal Van Keuren (City of San Jose)
Katy Zaremba (Invasive Spartina Project)

1. Introductions/Review Agenda

Molly Martindale opened the meeting as chair and opened with a round of introductions. Molly asked for announcements. John Brosnan provided an update since the last meeting, noting he had sent a memo summarizing the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) as well as the revised Coordinator's Workplan to the group. John asked Paul Jones if there were updates on the draft agenda for the tidal datums reckoning workshop discussed at the last Monitoring Group meeting, and Paul said that Karl Malamud-Roam was reviewing the agenda. John said he presented a WRP poster at the State of the Estuary conference and he also presented the WRP at the H2O Conference in Long Beach. John encouraged group members to take some of the new WRP brochures.

2. Change in Monitoring Group chair

Molly stated that she was concluding her term as chair of the Monitoring Group and that Andree Breaux was assuming the post. Andree stated her priorities in the position were (1) making use of the protocols, (2) pursuing a consistent means of collecting project-tracking information (i.e., the project information transmittal form), (3) establishing monitoring plan review teams, (4) pursuing group funding and (5) encouraging wetland assessments of both ambient wetland sites and mitigation projects. Molly requested that the protocols discussion from agenda item 7, iv be moved up, as she had to depart the meeting early.

7, iv, Protocols

Molly stated her intention in the editing of the vegetation protocol (found at www.wrmp.org), which was to make them more accessible and ready for use by consultants, the Joint Venture and the Coastal Conservancy and wetlands monitoring volunteers alike. She stressed the need for a uniform data sheet to accompany the protocols. Molly stated her edits did not result in many changes and the next step involved sending the edited protocol to some DRG consultants for their review. Molly said a reviewed protocol could be presented to the group at its next meeting. Josh Collins suggested this action was premature since the group does not have a good handle on "who" the audience is. He felt the protocols need a collaborative use strategy and noted that some field-tested modifications have not been incorporated into the protocols. Anitra Pawley agreed, stating there are multiple audiences and purposes for these that need to be determined before editing and that some sites need several protocols while some need one or only a few. Stuart Siegel brought up the concept of a protocol decision matrix that could be used to inform users of what should be used and in what instance. He felt the decision-making approach needed to be revisited.

Molly stated her goal was to try to ensure a consistent method among those submitting data, among consultants, restorationists, and volunteers. Stuart felt the protocols needed to be adequately completed before sending them into the field again; he stated the protocols were not as far along as the group might like to think they are. Andree felt the protocols needed an additional one for fish and more general ones for herps and mammals which she could probably find someone to author. Stuart noted incomplete protocols could lead users in an unintended direction. Josh stated the protocols were not rushed to completion, that they were produced by expert teams, but that some of them may not have been sufficiently externally peer reviewed; Stuart noted there was a conscious choice to not include everything. Josh pointed out that there are minutes of those many meetings that document protocol development. He suggested that protocols distributed without follow-up support to the users might not be the most efficient means of utilizing the Monitoring Group's collective knowledge. Josh proposed the establishment of monitoring plan review teams (similar to the teams of the Design Review Group) to advise project proponents on monitoring. He stated protocols could be delivered on a case-by case basis through the Monitoring Group, so that users have a place and body of expertise to turn to for answers to questions. Josh said he did not favor the development and use of a decision-making matrix because all of the questions and answers cannot be foreseen and new protocols will be added, making any document outdated. He preferred a dynamic approach that provides users access to expertise.

Anitra felt a matrix might be able to point people to a variety of alternative protocols or perhaps the most recent protocols; Josh said that a driving reason for developing the protocols was to increase standardization among monitoring efforts, so that projects could be compared to each other and over time, and that offering up alternative protocols could defeat that purpose. He felt that leading people to other protocols would not result in accurate ability to compare projects. Josh added that the protocols

exist now as an appendix to a comprehensive regional monitoring program plan produced by the monitoring group through SFEI for EPA, that the program plan is designed as part of the WRP that was being created at that time; the Plan was extensively reviewed and revised by the group.

[In his review of these minutes, Josh added these thoughts not presented at the meeting. A revision of the program plan is warranted due to the developments of CRAM and IRWM, the new state wetlands and riparian inventory. The plan needs to clearly fit the EPA framework since it has the best chance of any framework at this time to be adopted by the State Board. It's not a big job because we designed these ventures to fit the EPA framework. To make the most of opportunities ahead, he suggests that the Group needs to seize the opportunity to have a home. The group got started ahead of the WRP, but was designed to be its Monitoring Group, and should now step up to the job by (1) formally joining the WRP as the Monitoring Group, (2) finalizing membership rules and getting a roster together, (3) get started on a duty statement beginning with how it should communicate with the rest of the WRP, (4) start to revise the program plan to reflect changes in the last 2 years and to align the plan with the needs of the WRP and its members, and (5) decide what to recommend to the WRP regarding the protocols. He suggests the protocols become tools in the Monitoring Group tool box for helping projects and ambient monitoring; as such they become products of the WRP, which can then help distribute them and promote their use according to the Group's recommendation.]

3. California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) testing

Josh said that, in the context of the 3-level framework for monitoring, CRAM is one aspect of Level 2. The Bay Area Regional Team met in the field Oct 2 and 3 to verify the attributes and metrics of CRAM. He added he was meeting with the Southern California regional team to get its input from its field-testing and both they and the Northern California regional team will use their collective information to push through verification this fall and winter and begin calibration in early spring. Josh noted the sample frame for CRAM is the State Wetlands Inventory, which is being coordinated by the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) of the USFWS, but is being conducted in the Bay Area through SFEI. The inventory will be used as the sample frame for ambient monitoring, and it will update the project maps and background maps for the wetland tracker. Chris Potter said the Statewide Wetlands Inventory has conducted a third workshop to update and develop priorities as it proceeds. He added there is approximately \$350,000 for new mapping of the central and southern coast and it will likely cost about \$700,000 to map the entire state. Josh stated the Bay Area's baylands and adjacent habitats are being mapped beginning November 1. **Andree asked John to send the draft project information transmittal form to the group following its revision.**

4. Integrated Regional Wetlands Monitoring/CALFED

Stuart noted progress on the Integrated Regional Wetlands Monitoring (IRWM) being done, stating it is an intensive field assessment project. This work is not being done in a regulatory context; partners include PRBO Conservation Science, San Francisco State University, Phillip Williams and Associates, the University of Washington, UC-Berkeley, and the University of San

Francisco. The sites under evaluation have changed slightly; the team will now be looking at four restored sites and two natural sites (instead of three of each type). Stuart said the aerial photography is done and the team will soon have usable protocols. A final deliverable for the project will be in the form of a final fieldwork plan.

5. Ecological Scorecard

Anitra distributed the scorecard index and the Executive Summary to group participants. Anitra noted the scorecard is Bay-focused and said the intention is to create one for the Delta in the future. She used a general list of indicators in the development of a conceptual framework for the scorecard; in some instances, data was limited. For example, the Food Web category was limited to Suisun Bay data. Much of the scorecard's data came from the *Habitat Goals Report* and searching through databases to sum up acreages. The scorecard's grades do not reflect the large amounts of habitats that have been purchased, but those that have been restored to date. Anitra noted the technical reports that substantiate the scorecard are available online. Some initial conclusions from the scorecard include: there is a need for one project tracking database that everyone can use, there is a need to figure out what habitat types need to be tracked, and there is a need to determine how to track salt ponds gains and losses (as it is not an historic habitat). Anitra noted there is a placeholder in the scorecard for diked wetlands. She stated the habitat piece of the study is very complex; the public is very interested to know where funds are directed and how effectively those funds are being used.

Neal felt the scorecard was a very effective means of getting key points across to the public, but he noted that some localized progress may be lost in the averaging needed for determining a grade. Neal referred to cases where good progress is being made and said those citizens need to be made aware that their contributions are having a positive effect. Anitra recognized that she is not totally satisfied with how generalizations are conveyed through the scorecard. Peggy Olofson felt that having generalized information was helpful for outlier communities. Phil Lebednik stated the arrows that indicate trends are very helpful; Phil recognized the scorecard was a great way of demonstrating where improvement is needed. Phil asked what the 1800-era baseline is, and Anitra responded it would be an A+. Lynne Hosley suggested the scorecard somehow incorporate establish reasonable 10-, 20-, and 30-year goals.

6. Wetlands Ecological Assessment (WEA) Presentation

Andree presented the results of the WEA study. Further information is available on the Water Board's website (<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb2/download/wecareport0803.pdf>). The WEA process assessed sites for permit compliance and assigned scores to each. One intention was to have a framework with lessons learned that could be compared to CRAM (the California Rapid Assessment Method) currently being developed. Andree added the intention is to co-test WRAP with CRAM and compare scores. The assessments looked at vegetation, wildlife, surrounding land uses, and hydrology. Testing covered several kinds of sites - such as tidal wetlands, riparian areas, and vernal pools - and tidal sites and larger sites tended to score higher in terms of compliance. Vernal pools proved relatively harder to score and assess.

Based on her results, Andree advocated mitigation sites take advantage of economies of scale, as these larger sites tend to be more productive. Andree stated the study suggests the need for

an overarching wetlands monitoring organization; there is also a need to obtain more funding for wetlands monitoring efforts. Andree recommended agencies coordinate and combine their efforts on wetlands monitoring. Phil questioned if Andree was advocating for mitigation banks. Arthur Feinstein recognized the debate on mitigation banks is on two levels - an advocacy level and a scientific level; he noted mitigation banks have the potential to change the function of a landscape. Arthur expressed his hope that the Coordinating Committee and the Executive Council would create policy to address the issue of failed projects' proponents being held accountable for those failures. Paul Jones noted spending on the pre-permit process is greater than post permit and that there was a general lack of adequate follow-up with project proponents. **Paul proposed the Monitoring Group put together a team to look at a certain number of sites in the area and assess those sites on an annual basis.** Stuart noted there remains a need to know how much wetland acreage has been lost, in addition to the information on what is being gained. **Josh suggested the group vote on Paul's proposal.** Josh referred to wetlands' size, and noted that mapped patches of historical sites demonstrate that 60% of patches are less than 10 acres in size. Phil noted there is value in edge effects.

7. Monitoring Group products

John deferred the agenda item to the next meeting in order to ensure adequate time to cover those efforts the Monitoring Group should prioritize, among the establishment of monitoring review teams, expanding the Wetland Tracker, protocols and funding. Josh stated there is some funding available for the Wetland Tracker expansion; he added he's waiting for a group to suggest how best to apply those funds. Anitra advised not underestimating the costs of building and maintaining these systems. Lynne recognized the value of a requisite form to go to the Wetland Tracker along with project applications.

8. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was set for Monday, December 8, at 1 P.M. The meeting was adjourned.