

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROGRAM
COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**MEETING SUMMARY
MARCH 11, 2004**

Attendees:

John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)
Arthur Feinstein (Golden Gate Audubon Society)
Heather Gustafson (Bay Planning Coalition)
Shin-Roei Lee (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)
Karl Malamud-Roam (Contra Costa Mosquito Vector and Control District)
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
Steve McAdam (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Chris Potter (California Resources Agency)
Carl Wilcox (California Department of Fish and Game)

1. Introductions

Mike Monroe and Chris Potter co-chaired the meeting and opened with a roundtable of introductions. Mike asked for any announcements. Chris stated the new Resources Agency Secretary, Mike Chrisman, has been very busy during his transition into office. Chris also noted the Resources Agency now participates on the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture's Management Board and Dave Widell is the designated Resources participant; Chris will serve as the alternate, as necessary. Chris also mentioned he'll be briefing the Resources Secretary on the WRP in the next 1-2 months. Chris noted the EPA Region 9 104(b) wetlands pre-proposals are due March 19. John Brosnan stated the Center for Collaborative Policy will hold collaborative process education workshops at BCDC on April 28 and 29; these workshops are being held for agency management and staff.

2. December 5 Coordinating Committee Meeting Summary

John stated the primary action item of the last Coordinating Committee meeting was to send a letter to the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture and the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) urging as much early collaboration as possible on their respective project tracking systems. This letter was signed by Mike Monroe and Chris Potter and sent in early January. (Copies of the letter were distributed prior to the March 11 meeting as well as at the meeting) In terms of response thus far, there was been a verbal commitment from the Joint Venture that a formal reply is forthcoming. Mike May of SFEI responded in an email to Mike, Chris and the Joint Venture and explicitly spelled out preliminary measures that could be taken to ensure long-term, efficient integration between the two systems; the actions suggested in the SFEI response were essentially the anticipated result that the Coordinating Committee sought when writing its initial letter. John will continue to follow up on this issue and Chris will work with the Resources Agency's Joint Venture contact, Dave Widell. Carl Wilcox noted some database funding issues taking precedence at the Joint Venture and that the system is not developing as quickly as they'd expected, which may be delaying a formal response.

On a related issue, Mike Monroe noted the Friends of the Estuary wrote a letter to the Corps of Engineers urging them to better quantify project-related gains and losses. Molly Martindale will be responding to the Friends' inquiry. Mike suggested this topic could be fashioned into an Executive Council meeting agenda item. Molly noted the Corps is updating their project tracking system and will be switching over to another system that will more closely meet the Friends' letter's request; the goal of the new systems is nationwide, transparent tracking. Steve McAdam stated BCDC now has PTS, their permit tracking system. Steve noted this year's permit data is currently being input. He purported approximately 1% of the system will be devoted to wetlands tracking, as it primarily serves as a permitting tool.

3. WRP Group Reports

Design Review Group. John noted the DRG met last on January 12, when the group featured a project presentation by National Park Service staff on the Big Lagoon Creek and Wetland Restoration (Muir Beach, Marin County). John noted the Big Lagoon Letter of Review was complete within 30 days of the presentation and that the review team members did an excellent job on the final product. This brings the DRG's tally to seven completed project reviews. John noted he contacted several proponents from his list of potential DRG review projects; no leads for near-term project reviews have emerged. He is continuing to follow up with a few parties to schedule the next review. Anyone knowing of a project nearing its design phase should contact John. Arthur Feinstein suggested the Eastshore State Park seasonal wetlands enhancements (Jim Levine, contact) and Clinton Basin were possibilities. John also mentioned he intends to distribute survey forms to those project proponents who've gone through the DRG process; the forms were provided to meeting participants. Molly said she liked the look of the form and felt it did not require too much to complete; she suggested follow-up calls to all recipients. Karl Malamud-Roam suggested the Concord Naval Weapons Station (Dick Rujan, contact) for potential restoration projects, which will occur after several contaminant issues are addressed. Steve added the Navy is also cleaning up radioactive materials at its defunct Hunter's Point facility and may need restoration design assistance in the future.

Wetlands Monitoring Group. John stated the Monitoring Group used its December 9 and March 9 meetings to address the creation of a mission statement and set of objectives for the group and to discuss collaborative efforts it would like to engage in, namely the establishment of monitoring plan review teams and creating a region-wide compensatory mitigation review team. John noted the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for paid members of monitoring plan review teams was released in late February; respondents to this RFQ may be used to staff review teams and be paid for their service. The Monitoring Group intends to review the Sonoma Baylands monitoring plan and results as its pilot project. The Corps is holding a workshop on the monitoring report toward the end of April, which will serve as the project presentation. Carl suggested Eden Landing's monitoring report could be available to review if the group is seeking additional projects. Arthur asked if the review teams would be comparing what worked and what didn't work at the site? Molly replied that yes, this was true, and noted project monitoring includes objectives and goals; the monitoring plan review teams may assess if the objectives and goals were achieved, among other things. John noted that there is a greater potential range of responses for monitoring plan feedback (relative to DRG feedback) and that upfront definition of scope is critical to this process.

Public Outreach and Other Organizations. John noted Karl Malamud-Roam invited him to speak at the annual Mosquito and Vector Control Association conference; the conference took place in Sacramento in early February and was attended by several hundred people. John said Marcia Brockbank had nominated him to participate in planning the September 2004 Restore America's Estuaries conference in Seattle; John has been busy reviewing proposals and assisting with that effort. John announced the completion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the regulatory and trustee agencies involved in the South Bay Salt Ponds restoration process; agency heads are signing the document now and returning signed signatory pages to the project management team at the Coastal Conservancy. John also noted he and Andree Breaux have begun participation on the South Bay Salt Ponds Stakeholder Forum Habitat Restoration working group. Mike Monroe asked for clarification on the exact role of the working groups; Carl said the process' National Science Panel is process-oriented, while the Science Team is charged with releasing the science strategy to the public (the Science Team is being expanded to 16 members). He added the working groups include members of the public who may not have technical backgrounds and provide broader involvement in restoration planning elements. Carl noted Steve Ritchie has been hired as the project's overall Director. Steve McAdam pointed out a South Bay Salt Ponds issue paper is going to the BCDC Commission next week; the paper is intended solely to educate the commission members on a wide variety of issues. Karl expressed that the mosquito and vector districts are most interested in flooding concerns as relate to mosquito production.

4. Corps of Engineers' Monitoring Guidelines

Molly stated the Corps updated Mitigation and Monitoring Guidelines were released in December. The guidelines focused on outlines for mitigation and monitoring proposals and included recent National Academy of Sciences recommendations along with the Corps' Los Angeles district guidelines. Molly said the document was widely interpreted as confusing, so the Corps intends to release a revised Public Notice and guidelines. Molly noted she recently attended the National Mitigation Banker's meeting in New Orleans, where she met with additional members of the regulator's forum. Molly said the Corps is required to develop regulations to standardize success criteria for mitigation banks within two years. Molly mentioned the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an international wetlands organization, and stated San Francisco Bay is not listed as a Ramsar site. Arthur noted groups have been trying to get San Francisco Bay listed as a Ramsar site and Steve said designating legislation was passed in the state assembly in the 1980s, but was not signed by the governor. Molly stated the benefits of the designation would be limited to international recognition and could be more beneficial in the future.

5. WRP Permitting Workshop

John reviewed the history of the WRP Permitting Workshop to the Coordinating Committee. In the fall of 2003, the Coordinating Committee discussed holding a workshop to illustrate the real-world realities of processing permits, such as constraints from funding, staff levels and varying levels of wetlands expertise among permit analysts. Secondarily, the proposed workshop would cover the rules and regulations involved in permitting. The group felt this was something worth pursuing in the fall, yet the Wetland Tracker workshop overshadowed it.

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Shortly thereafter, John and Mike brought the concept to the LTMS Management Committee for their reaction and they felt the concept needed more planning before moving forward. John noted that holding such a workshop would require substantial time and effort on his part and the part of those regulatory agency staff members who'd participate; given this, John asked the Committee if they remained interested in pursuing this concept.

Carl Wilcox stated it's important for the regulated community to understand the regulatory context, which includes a full picture of regulator's resources. Molly stated the intention of the workshop was to educate members of the environmental community who serve as project proponents and file permit applications; Molly added the workshop would likely be more interesting to NGO staff over consultants. Arthur felt such a workshop could be very interesting. Mike Monroe said Barbara Salzman's comments on varying degrees of expertise in wetlands design were the original impetus to undertake the this workshop. Mike added that planning such an event would be quite time consuming, we'd need to have a very focused agenda and message and we'd have to have a sound sense of who the audience is before moving forward. Heather Gustafson noted the Bay Planning Coalition is hosting 4 workshops and one of them will cover wetlands; she felt this could be worked into that somehow. Karl Malamud-Roam suggested avoiding the agencies hosting such an event and said it may be better received if the workshop were sponsored or co-sponsored by an organization like the Bay Planning Coalition, Audubon or the Joint Venture. Karl suggested a panel would provide an effective format for this message. Karl felt the audiences would be staff from small environmental nonprofits (who may be less familiar with the regulatory process), staff from watchdog environmental nonprofits and the balance of the regulated community. **John proposed he would summarize the discussions to date on these issues, circulate that to the group and work from that point to proceed on planning.**

6. Planning for next Executive Council meeting

John summarized the past meeting discussion on planning for the next Executive Council meeting; in December, the group preferred not going beyond one year from the last meeting and foresaw the presentation of the WRP's premiere Annual Report as the cornerstone of the next meeting. John suggested first focusing on selecting a date. The Committee felt holding the meeting in Sacramento might be helpful in pulling the group together. The Committee named June 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 and 16 as possibilities; **John was instructed to contact Executive Council members for preferences among these dates and report back to the Committee with the favored choice(s).**

Relative to potential agenda items, John distributed a draft list of potential Executive Council agenda items and asked for feedback and prioritization of appropriate items. Arthur suggested emphasizing how and why the WRP has been helpful over the past year and a half. He proposed asking past DRG project proponents to come to the Council and speak about their experiences; Molly expressed reservations about having testimonials. Steve McAdam advocated for focusing on how valuable we will be in the future in addition to how we've done. Karl proposed focusing on answering the questions, what is the WRP, why is it valuable and how does it fit into the Bay Area wetlands restoration scene? Steve felt the spotlight should be on what the group has done to deal with problems; he added the group was formed to head off "train wrecks" and pointed out there have been no such problems in the past year and a half.

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Steve suggested John contact Nadine at the Coastal Conservancy to inquire about her interest in presenting at the Council meeting. Mike Monroe summarized that the group will revisit these topics in greater detail once a meeting date as been established.

7. WRP Annual Report

John referred the Committee to a draft outline of the WRP's first Annual Report, which will be complete in early June. The draft outline laid out the proposed contents of the document and John asked if there were other items Committee members felt should be included. Arthur and Carl said the connections to the South Bay Salt Ponds restoration process should be emphasized. Molly stressed illustrating the broad range of participation in the report. Overall, Committee members felt the report should underscore where the WRP fits into the regional scene and what it does.

8. Public Comment

Arthur stated the U.S. Navy has until July 1 to transfer Skaggs Island to the USFWS in order to utilize some \$8 million in funding. Arthur also noted the Beyond Pesticide conference is taking place in Berkeley on April 2, 3 and 4.

9. Wrap-up/Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was set for Thursday, April 8, to be held in Oakland. The meeting was adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

- **John will summarize the discussions to date on the WRP permitting workshop, circulate the summary to the group and work from that point to proceed on planning the event.**
- **John will contact Executive Council members for preferences among several dates in June 2004 and report back to the Committee with the favored choice(s).**