

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

**MEETING SUMMARY
DECEMBER 5, 2003**

Attendees:

Marcia Brockbank (San Francisco Estuary Project)
John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)
Arthur Feinstein (Golden Gate Audubon Society)
Shin-Roei Lee (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)
Mike May (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Steve McAdam (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Brian Mulvey (NOAA Fisheries)
Briggs Nisbet (Save San Francisco Bay Association)
Peggy Olofson (Invasive Spartina Project)
Barbara Salzman (Marin Audubon Society)
Steve Thompson (NOAA Ocean Service)
Luisa Valiela (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

1. Introductions

Mike Monroe chaired the meeting and opened with a roundtable of introductions. Mike asked for any announcements. Arthur Feinstein noted the first meeting of the South Bay Salt Ponds restoration Stakeholders' occurred on the preceding day. The meeting covered the project overview, the process and the timeline. Arthur felt the group featured broad representation and the meeting was well attended by the public. Peggy Olofson noted the Invasive Spartina Project was not able to implement planned control measures during the current year. Although programmatic CEQA and NEPA compliance is complete, site-specific impact analysis will be required at Spartina treatment sites; smothering and physical removals have proven to be very effective, yet highly labor intensive. Peggy mentioned that treatment sites containing clapper rail populations might require their own Environmental Impact Reports. Funding required for treatment and program operation is in place, as well. Brian Mulvey noted NOAA Fisheries has a new habitat manager, Steve Edmondson, who has replaced Miles Croom. Brian mentioned NOAA Fisheries' new San Francisco Bay Habitat Team, which will result in his office placing greater emphasis on bay restoration activities. Steve Thompson noted the NOAA Science Panel has just completed and released the final report on the proposed San Francisco International Airport expansion. Steve should have a few extra copies for those interested in obtaining one. Arthur noted the State Water Board has released a report on "filling in the blanks" caused by the Solid Waste Authority of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) isolated wetlands ruling; this document was approved for release by the governor's office.

2. September 26 Coordinating Committee Meeting Summary

John Brosnan reviewed the significant action item from the previous meeting and stated all items would be addressed in the following agenda items. The one action item not addressed

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over the past two months is the committee for the permitting workshop; John noted several other events that took precedence during that period. The planning workshop is still anticipated, yet Executive Council members have advised to not proceed hastily with planning.

3. WRP Group Reports

Public Outreach. John noted Debbi Nichols of the San Francisco Estuary Project greatly contributed to the development of the Program's brochure and those are now available for distribution. John presented a poster on the Wetlands Restoration Program at the October 2003 State of the Estuary conference and gave a similar oral presentation at the H2O Conference in Long Beach. John also presented to the Marin Environmental Forum and to a branch meeting at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' office. John also coordinated the Wetland Tracker workshop, held at the Corps' office in San Francisco.

Design Review Group (DRG). John stated the Napa Plant Site restoration project Letter of Review was completed in November. As directed at the last Coordinating Committee meeting, John consulted with some Executive Council members on review of the Redwood Creek project, located outside of the WRP boundary. Council members agreed such a project should only be reviewed by the DRG when it's no cost to the WRP, that John has time to manage the Letter of Review for the project and the project's review does not delay a bay project. Will Travis talked with Peter Douglas at the California Coastal Commission to determine whether DRG involvement in a coastal project would be acceptable; Peter saw no problem with this and provided Coastal Commission staff contacts. John noted remaining tasks involved scheduling with Jennifer Vick of the National Park Service and scheduling with the DRG; the next DRG meeting has yet to be scheduled.

John described the WRP's response to the Public Records Act (PRA) request, which was initiated by the Bahia Homeowners' Association (BHA); hard copies of the request letter and the response were made available to meeting attendees. The BHA sought all documents related to the DRG's March 2003 review of their project, including any final Letter of Review; due to a stop work order at that time, the DRG never completed the Letter of Review. The BHA also requested to be placed on the next Executive Council meeting's agenda. John noted he worked with counsel at the U.S. EPA, the Resources Agency, and the Association of Bay Area Governments (vis a vis, the San Francisco Estuary Project). All three agency attorneys contacted agreed on the same response, which was to turn over all BHA-related correspondence, including meeting agendas and minutes, and all documents related to the June 2003 Executive Council meeting. The WRP was advised not to release draft comments from Design Review Team members, as the PRA does not require surrendering documents considered "draft" during the normal course of business. The packet of materials was submitted to Stephen Fraser - attorney for the BHA - on November 6; there has been no response since that time. Barbara Salzman stated Judge Dufficy (Marin County Superior Court) scheduled a hearing with some BHA homeowners to hear their case; the focus of the hearing is the homeowners' opinions on funds being spent for the lagoon project and associated litigation.

Wetlands Monitoring Group. John stated the group last met on October 27, at which time Molly Martindale stepped down as the group's chair and Andree Breaux assumed the seat. Andree's stated priorities in the position are (1) making use of the protocols, (2) pursuing a

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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. Then meeting also featured updates on the CALFED-funded Integrated Regional Wetlands Monitoring work, CRAM testing, and a presentation on the Wetlands Ecological Assessment work. John noted the next meeting is Monday, December 8 and the group will then be developing its prioritized list of anticipated, collaborative work products.

4. Creating Steering Committees within the Design Review Group and Monitoring Group

John noted this agenda item has been informally discussed within the DRG and the Monitoring Group for several months. He noted the Monitoring Group did have a defined steering committee when it was known as the Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program. DRG participants have long talked of a "core" DRG, although one has never been defined. John stated that limitations imposed by compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) would limit steering committee participation to agency staff, yet the value of opinions and input from non-agency participants would not be diminished as a result. Either steering committee would be responsible with moving group recommendations up to the Coordinating Committee and the Executive Council. FACA would simply require that any recommendations coming from either group be traceable to a body solely composed of agency staff people. John asked if the Coordinating Committee saw any issues with this concept before he took it to the DRG and Monitoring Group. Steve McAdam wanted to make certain that all group members would not see themselves as a second tier to the steering committees, which John said was his priority to ensure. **John will take this issue to the DRG and the Monitoring Groups for their respective approvals.**

5. Update on Joint Venture Project Tracking system/Wetland Tracker update

John stated several WRP group participants have asked to bring Joint Venture (JV) staff into a WRP meeting so that both organizations may discuss the development of the JV habitat tracking system. More specifically, many group members have expressed interest in discussing how the JV system and SFEI's [Wetland Tracker](#) might be linked in the future. In response to past invitations, JV staff has said such a meeting would be premature. For the December meeting, Beth Huning was not able to attend. Instead, Beth asked Sandy Scoggin to prepare a summary of progress on the development of their tracking system; that summary was forwarded to John and provided to the Coordinating Committee members (a hard copy of this report was made available at the meeting's start). Staff at Ducks Unlimited wrote the memo; Ducks Unlimited is building this system for the JV. John noted the JV/Ducks Unlimited progress has been substantial and is clearly well underway, given percentage complete progress listed within the memo.

Arthur Feinstein noted he is a member of the JV Management Board and saw tracking mitigation projects as a major difference between the JV and SFEI systems. Arthur said that tracking mitigation sites' permit compliance was a critical need. Mike Monroe noted the inherent overlap between the two systems and also hoped to avoid any unnecessary duplicative actions. Mike referred to the high cost of such systems and felt any possible economies of scale

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between the two systems should be realized. Mike May stated the Wetland Tracker catalogues all projects including mitigation projects and will contain regulatory information, and he speculated the JV system might focus more on strategic acquisition-related information for JV partners' projects. Mike felt sharing data between the two systems would be advantageous, but noted attributes such as project definitions, boundaries and other descriptors would need to be normalized for consistent use between systems. Mike suggested the establishment of a shared project ID coding scheme as a good first step for the sharing of information. **Mike Monroe and the committee asked John to draft a letter, to be from the Coordinating Committee, which would be sent to Mike Connor at SFEI and Fritz Reid at the Joint Venture.** The letter will state the Committee's opinion that several opportunities could be seized upon by early efforts to coordinate the two systems. A draft letter will be circulated to the Coordinating Committee before sending.

John noted the November 18th Wetland Tracker workshop was successful, with 23 attendees from a variety of backgrounds. Several people provided comments on content and prioritization of possible modifications, in addition to completing post-workshop surveys. John felt it set a good precedent for the WRP to host such workshops in the future. Peggy Olofson felt there was a lack of discussion on potential funding mechanisms for the Tracker; Luisa Valiela stated funds might be available through EPA Wetlands Grants.

6. Regional Board 2 Executive Officer

Mike Monroe introduced Shin-Roei Lee of the Regional Water Board and welcomed her to the Coordinating Committee. She succeeds Bruce Wolfe, who has recently taken the position of the Regional Water Board Executive Officer. Shin-Roei currently serves as the Board's South Bay Watershed Division chief and most recently worked as the NPDES permit chief. Some of her current work is on discharge permits for the salt ponds in the north and south bay.

7. Update on Resources Agency funding and new Secretary appointments

Steve McAdam stated Mike Crissman is the new Secretary for Resources and Terry Tamminen is the new Cal-EPA Secretary. Steve noted the Resources Agency's General Fund funding had been zeroed out, even though Resources had submitted a proposal to the Legislature to assess fees on the constituent agencies. The proposal was rejected, yet the Resources Agency continues to function and at reduced staffing levels.

8. Planning for next Executive Council meeting

Mike Monroe asked what the Committee felt about planning for the next Executive Council meeting. Mike noted six months have passed since the last meeting and that the two new secretaries are also two new Executive Council members. Mike felt the agenda for the next meeting needed to be more than substantive enough to bring the Council together, yet he also noted several Council members appreciate the opportunity to interact with their peers at the meetings. Arthur suggested waiting until the Monitoring Group is off of the ground and then show off the group's products to Council members. Arthur also felt the Council would like to see examples of how the WRP is assisting agencies in the region. Barbara suggested the Council could review the response to the DRG's mitigation policy. Steve McAdam felt state agencies

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would have a lot of business to attend to through August 2004; Mike Monroe saw an opportunity to complete the WRP annual report in June and then present it in August. Steve Thompson advised against going more than 12 months between meetings. Steve McAdam noted April and May would be very busy times for the new secretaries. **John was instructed to coordinate potential dates with Chris Potter at the Resources Agency.** Steve Thompson suggested establishing an annual meeting time, which could be June to coincide with the annual report. Arthur felt that, given so many large projects that will begin restoration in the coming years, the Council would need to be made aware of anticipated, large appropriation needs. Arthur said the Council members might want to clarify the WRP's role in the South Bay Salt Ponds project. Marcia Brockbank felt the Council could address the state funding situation and coordination between state and federal agencies and the California Bay-Delta Authority. Steve McAdam suggested the ABAG/CALFED Task Force could be invited; he also proposed the Council could speak to the state's response to the SWANCC decision. Mike Monroe proposed the Council might need to address West Nile virus issues. Briggs Nisbet asked if the public was aware of mosquito and vector control districts and proposed highlighting those organizations at a Council meeting. She also mentioned the potential for problems with methylated mercury in wetlands restoration and implications for endangered species.

9. Public Comment

No comments were forthcoming.

10. Wrap-up/Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was not set at the meeting; this will be done via email. Mike Monroe adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

- **John will take the issue of establishing agency staff steering committees to the DRG and the Monitoring Groups for their respective approvals.**
- **John will make the first draft of a letter, to be approved by and sent from the Coordinating Committee to Mike Connor at SFEI and Fritz Reid at the Joint Venture. This letter will highlight the opportunities that could be realized by avoiding duplicative work on either system.**
- **John was instructed to coordinate potential Executive Council meeting dates with Chris Potter at the Resources Agency and then report back to the Coordinating Committee.**