

Minutes from the meeting of the Wetland Monitoring Group of the San Francisco Bay Wetland Restoration Program held on Tuesday, December 6, 2005 at 1515 Clay St., Room 12, Oakland, CA 94612 from 1:30 to 4:15. (Minutes by A.Breaux. Please send comments to [abreaux@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:abreaux@waterboards.ca.gov).)

Attendees: Bob Batha (BCDC), Andree Breaux (Water Board), Marcia Brockbank (Estuary Project), John Callaway (University of San Francisco), Josh Collins (San Francisco Estuary Institute), Jean Feinberg (BCDC), Phil Lebednik (LFR Levine-Fricke), Michael May (SFEI), Chris Potter (Resources Agency), Stuart Siegel (Wetland and Water Resources).

1. Sonoma Baylands WMG Review Letter is now on the website at [www.sfwetlands.ca.gov](http://www.sfwetlands.ca.gov). From a regulatory perspective, Andree Breaux found the Monitoring Review Team's (MRT) review useful as a general validation that the site is progressing, albeit slower than originally anticipated. Remedial actions for this particular site and suggestions for designing and adaptively managing future restoration sites can be found in the MRT letter which has been finalized except for a site figure. (Note for background information on the site see Philip Williams & Associates [PWA] Ref # 1687.01 dated 8/12/04 or the PWA 2003 Monitoring Report on the Sonoma Baylands Wetland Demonstration Project dated 4/05). Future projects should incorporate effective experiments into project designs to test the efficacy of features such as berms, peninsulas, starter channels, ditch blocks, or whatever important features are predicted to assist in reaching the goals. Large restoration projects should also produce well advertised presentations with data results at least every other year so that the interested public and regulatory communities can assess the physical, biological, and chemical data and provide feedback. Thanks again to John Brosnan and the PWA Team for their contributions.

2. Future projects for the MRT to review: Based on the suggestion at the previous meeting by Nadine Hitchcock of the CA. Coastal Conservancy that the Conservancy's projects would benefit from more focused direction from the MRT, Josh Collins suggested that the next MRT review be conducted as a one-time meeting with the aim of getting a preponderance of opinion from senior scientists. A majority opinion will be sought where feasible, and a minority opinion recorded if necessary. This approach could provide precise answers to questions posed by consultants and agencies, but also allow the MRT to provide relevant opinions when appropriate. He also offered to lead the MRT in the next project and suggested that the leadership rotate between WMG scientists. Josh is expecting to present a new Wetland Regional Monitoring Program to SFEI's Board on 12/16/05 that will include standard methods that can be prioritized for wetland assessments, wetland tracker, and more protocols in additions to those already written. (Note that he was not quite ready to distribute his outline at the 12/6/05 WMG meeting but hopefully it will be ready for distribution and discussion in the new year.)

Either Josh or Andree will ask Carl Wilcox if Fish & Game would cooperate with an MRT review of the Napa Salt Plant as the next project to review. This project would be useful because it is just beginning and because Fish & Game usually requires the

minimum cost-effective monitoring program due to a chronic lack of funds for monitoring. Hence the project could produce and prioritize the minimum monitoring requirements that Andree and Bob Batha need from a regulatory perspective to assure a net gain in wetland function. John Callaway stated that there is much interest in minimal monitoring programs for ecosystem restoration. Phil Lebednik and Stuart Siegel noted that the lack of funds available for funding monitoring and adaptive management of ecosystem restoration projects is a major hindrance to learning about what project features are ultimately effective or harmful to the environment.

3. Marcia Brockbank (Estuary Project) suggested that some of the available \$10,000 for WMG projects for 2006 be used to update the WMG website. Since the SF Restoration Program is static due to a funding shortage, except for the WMG (at least for 2006), she asked SFEI to provide an estimate to develop and maintain a page on SFEI's Wetland Regional Monitoring Program website.

4. CCMP Update. Marcia stated that the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan will be updated. Important elements will be added, but nothing will be removed. She will send an email to the WMG requesting assistance at one or two meetings or simply by email for opinions on important wetland monitoring features to update or add to in the CCMP. If you know of others who would like to participate, contact Marcia at [MBrockbank@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:MBrockbank@waterboards.ca.gov).

5. State Board's Mitigation Project. John Callaway (USF) and Richard Ambrose (UCLA) are overseeing over 100 wetland field studies across the state to determine compliance with 401 mitigation permits. Projects were randomly selected from the 9 Regional Water Boards, their permits reviewed, and field assessments were conducted this year using the California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) and, at some of the sites in Northern CA, the Wetland Assessment Method (WEA). A draft report will be available in Jan. 2006 and the final report will be available in March. If you would like to review the draft or final, contact John at [callaway@usfca.edu](mailto:callaway@usfca.edu).

6. Wetland Assessment Methods (CRAM & WEA). Both methods have been referenced in Region 2's updated Basin Plan passed by the Regional Board. The EPA-sponsored CRAM workshop has been postponed from Jan to May 2006. For information on the CRAM workshop, contact Josh at [josh@sfei.org](mailto:josh@sfei.org) or Paul Jones at [jones.paul@epa.gov](mailto:jones.paul@epa.gov).

7. State-wide EPA Grant for tracking No Net Loss: Chris Potter (Resources Agency) is managing a \$900,000 3-year EPA grant to develop state-wide guidance for wetland tracking, to evaluate the no net loss policy, and to evaluate wetlands on a watershed scale using EPA's scheme for providing inventories, rapid assessments, and intensive monitoring. A steering committee will convene in 2006. If questions, contact Chris at [chrisp@resources.ca.gov](mailto:chrisp@resources.ca.gov).

8. SFEI's Regional Wetland Tracker (WT). Michael May stated that the WT has some updated features including better resolution, the ability to zoom in and display base maps, and a new search function. The WT is expanding to the Central Coast and expects to

eventually expand state-wide. The final habitat types are likely to be based on those developed for CRAM, and cross-walks to other definition schemes will be available. The WT steering committee should meet in the new year to address some of the outstanding issues including how to deal with sources and their reliability; when to ask applicants to fill out permit files (definitely at the end, and maybe at the beginning); and the criteria for determining the change of habitat. Hopefully the San Francisco Bay Water Board will begin asking project applicants to fill out the WT form along with the other wetland application forms in 2006. If questions, contact Mike at [mmay@sfei.org](mailto:mmay@sfei.org).

9. Assistance with review of draft Invasive Plant list. Andree asked for comments on a suggested list of plants to avoid in wetland mitigation sites. She will send the list electronically to those present.

10. Sears Point. Stuart gave a brief summary of the 2,400-acre project for John Brosnan of the Sonoma Land Trust. A stake-holder group is currently discussing the design of the project and ways to deal with the constraints of low-lying infrastructure such as railroads. The hope is that environmental review, permits, clean-up, and design can all occur before 2008 when the site is to be restored to tidal marsh.

11. SF Bay Monitoring Issues: new protocols, decision tree for selecting protocol; goals, management questions; and inadequate direction on wetlands. Unfortunately we ran out of time before Stuart could address these issues adequately. He did emphasize that in order for ecological restoration to be effective in the San Francisco Region, there must be “buy-in” at the executive policy level. Josh’s attempt to build on past Wetland Regional Monitoring Program efforts (e.g., the Goals Project; protocols) with the support of SFEI management could be effective. Some of the management questions developed several years ago have changed with the appearance of very large wetland restoration projects. The policy questions are, what did we get and why was it worth it? A policy level management decision is required at the natural resource and environmental protection agencies to come to a consensus about the importance of monitoring data. Otherwise, if there is no support there is no funding and ultimately no point to assessing the overall environmental value of restoration projects.

12. Status of North & South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Projects.

- The North Bay SP project hopes to breach the levee of Pond 4 at a high water event this spring. Methyl-mercury and other sampling should occur before the breach. The Corps still has not received funding for the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program written for the project.
- The South Bay Salt Pond planning process is moving quickly and draft alternatives will be available in January 2006. The Island Salt Ponds may be breached this spring.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Josh and Mike will provide an estimate to provide a WMG page on SFEI’s website.

2. Josh or Andree will contact Carl Wilcox to determine if the MRT can provide input on the monitoring plan for the Napa Plant Site. If not, we will investigate Sears Point or North Bay Salt Ponds. Available funds are expected to go toward website update, review of one project, and, if adequate funds remain, a minimal monitoring program scheme for various sizes & types of projects (this might include some of the decision tree selection that Stuart has proposed or use of expanded standardized tracking, assessment, and monitoring that Josh has proposed).

3. Andree will send draft plant invasive list to those present at the meeting.

One topic for discussion at the next meeting on May 9, 2006 may be the regulatory requirements for monitoring large-scale restoration projects which we did not have time for at the 12/6/06 meeting. We hope Suzanne von Rosenberg can come to discuss the issues from a consultant's perspective. It would also be useful to hear about Stuart's new protocols, the results of John Callaway's study, and Josh's outline for a re-vitalized Wetland Regional Monitoring Program.

Please let me know if you comments on these minutes or suggestions for the next agenda.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday May 9, 2006, 1:30 – 4:15.** All are welcome.