Draft Minutes of the Wetland Tracker Subcommittee Meeting, Wetland Monitoring Group, SF Bay Wetland Restoration Project. The meeting was held on Thursday, October 21, 2004, 9:30 – 12:30 at 1515 Clay Street, Room 15, Oakland, CA 94612

Attendees:
Bob Batha (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)
Andree Breaux (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)
Patrycja Bossak (San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board)
Josh Collins (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Mike May (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Luisa Valiela (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Introductions/ Agenda Review

Andree Breaux chaired the meeting and reviewed the agenda items.

> **Announcements:**
> ❑   International Invasive *Spartina* Project Conference - San Francisco, Nov. 8-10, 2004.
> ❑   Salt Pond Restoration event:
> > o   Oct. 27, 2004 Entire Project Area , Workshop at The Coyote Point Museum.

Agenda Item #1: Who is interested in the Wetland Tracker (WT) and why?:

Bob Batha stated that BCDC would like to be able to access project information on mitigation and restoration projects, including their habitat types, monitoring elements and length of monitoring period, and their success or failure. He would also like to be able to sort projects by agency, wetland type, size, etc. Michael May stated that this would be possible as a list, but he is not sure whether or not the capability of mapping these features will be available. If there is overlap in agency jurisdiction, the agency with the largest will be listed as the primary agency.

Andree Breaux emphasized that the performance criteria field was one of the most important project elements to include since agencies could quickly determine a project's success targets and assess them in the field, rather than having to locate and research original permits and monitoring reports that may have been submitted years before and that are sometimes lost. She also stated that while the CA Coastal Conservancy was not able to participate on the subcommittee, it stated *in abstentia* that it was also interested in performance criteria to use as a model for future projects and that it would be useful to have the option of entering detailed performance criteria.

The DRAFT Guidance Document entitled "An Evaluation of Compensatory Mitigation Projects Permitted Under Clean Water Act Section 401 by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, 1991-2002 (Ambrose & Lee, DRAFT, Sept 2004) was discussed as having some good recommendations for wetland databases and tracking, some of which the agencies have noted before. The WT addresses some of those recommendations including standardized habitat types and permit conditions, as well as the need for including performance criteria. SFEI will review the draft document and address where the WT can address the recommendations. Luisa Valiela will send the updated report for comments to the State Board and other interested agencies.

Michael May stated that one of the most valuable features of the WT for agencies was likely to be the library function which allows entire monitoring reports to be accessed from the website. He will add a Yes/No box to the WT form as a prompt to consultants and others that this feature is available. Josh

suggested that State Lands be contacted as an agency with potential interest in the WT. Michael May will maintain the WT subcommittee mailing list.

Agenda Item 2: Are the selected habitats adequate? Under "tidal wetlands" Bob Batha suggested we include subtidal, mudflats, and vegetated tidal marsh. Salt pannes will also be added and "lakes" will be changed to "lacustrine" and described as the wetland boundary bordering lakes.

Agenda Item 3: Are the fields covered in the regulatory form adequate for restoration and mitigation projects?

Michael May and Josh stated that the issue of whether the WT should provide more specific directions and fields for latitude and longitude by wetland type (Box 3) should be taken care of by including a statement that "maps should depict planned habitat types or boundaries" and stating that "the typical convention is to use the center of the project for lat/longs". This can be crude but it is not practical to include lat/longs for all wetland types in the project, and the locations should be evident by Box 44 which asks for maps (GIS shapefiles, other electronic formats, or USGS 7.5 minute paper maps with boundaries carefully marked or digital orthophoto quarter quadrangles) that SFEI will put on the website.

Box 15 to 21: Mike Monroe suggested that the past tense be changed to "Total Areas to Be Impacted, Enhanced, Preserved, Created". It was also suggested that the specific breakdown be eliminated in Boxes 22 to 28.

Andree noted that the current agency tracking form is suitable for (a) new projects that are being permitted and (b) old projects that are being entered after project completion and monitoring. In the former case, it is expected that planned habitat acreages are goals to achieve and that whether or not these goals are met at the end of the monitoring period would require some sort of project assessment (e.g., California Rapid Assessment Method or Wetland Ecological Assessments). Michael May will add an additional form that can be accessed to record the date and description of specific events affecting the site (for planned or completed projects).

Boxes 40-44: Performance Criteria: The word "Planned" will be added to subtitle. Bob Batha suggested that we include examples of performance criteria in Box 41 such as vegetation percent cover, hydroperiod, etc. and the target year. Only final (not interim) performance criteria will be asked for. This field will be able to receive extensive final performance criteria if necessary. "Contaminant guidelines" will be deleted in Box 43. Bob also suggested that we include project cost on the Tracker data form, but the group decided that would be too difficult during this round of funding though it might be appropriate as an add-on form in the future. Box 44 will state that the map should depict different habitat types and boundaries. The managers need to suggest the use of standard protocols such as the one for Vegetation Mapping (for both aerial and field analysis) on SFEI's web page.

Josh stated that National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps can be updated every 10 years or so to determine overall picture of habitat types. Individual projects can be monitored by consultants (using the vegetation mapping protocol developed by SFEI, if possible) and those projects can then be entered into the WT. Regional gains and losses by wetland type can then be calculated.

Agenda Item 4: What years should we cover? SFEI has had an intern working at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers inputting data in the WT form on all projects in the Baylands permitted since the year 2000. The subcommittee agreed that this should continue. Once wetland projects from 2000 to the present have been entered, the 1995 to 2000 period can be covered using projects permitted by U.S. ACOE, SFB RWQCB, and BCDC. Michael May will determine if the Regional Water Board's and U.S. ACOE's historical database which covered projects permitted between 1988-1995 can be incorporated into the WT. Josh noted that Stuart Siegel's mapping effort filled in a lot of gaps and that SFEI is working on filling in any remaining gaps for wetland projects permitted in the SF Bay Region.

Agenda Item 5: How would the Tracker benefit the agencies to make them input information?

Luisa Valiela pointed out lots of search opportunities in the Tracker e.g., looking at projects by type, size, habitat etc. Bob Batha suggested comparing NWI mapping to monitoring reports which has not been done yet. The NWI provides information on the current state of habitat while Project Tracker presents the opportunity to build more detailed picture. Most of the wetland changes are going to be seen through projects which suggests a need for using consistent protocols.

     An additional value of the Tracker will be in identifying different restoration projects, mitigation projects, what habitat they created, how successful they become, and if there were any problems. The Tracker will help to produce reports and provide current information on different project types. It will help interagency collaboration and provide excellent educational tool. It will help address the issue of tracking habitat changes and project's success.

Agenda Item 6: What should be the boundaries for the Tracker? Molly Martindale of the US ACOE had requested *in absentia* that one or more watersheds be considered as suitable locations for the Tracker. She suggested San Francisquito, San Mateo, or Alamo Creeks. However, it was determined that the Tracker should not go beyond the Baylands at this time because EPA funding is specifically for projects within the Baylands. If the Tracker is successful in the Baylands, the next iteration of grant proposals can include more complete watersheds. Josh pointed out that much work is being done in certain watersheds, especially in the Napa Watershed, so watershed analyses can be conducted there or in any other regional watersheds in the future.

Agenda Item 7: How much information will the Tracker have? Is there a limit? As with all databases, the trick is to balance too little information with too much. If we ask for too much, the consultants and agencies will not input the information. If we ask for too little, the WT will be useless as a tracking tool to provide locations, wetland gains & losses, and performance criteria.

Agenda Item 8: Who will work on the submittals? Ideally the consultants or project applicants would put in the initial information, the regulatory agencies would review and finalize the WT form after the permit has been issued, and SFEI would assure that the information is accurately put on the WT website.

Agenda Item 9: Who will check the WT for accuracy? Michael May stated that anyone can probably add information into the WT but SFEI will review any submittals before placing them on the website. Information that is accepted will be posted with the submitter's name.

Agenda Item 10: How will the project be funded after the grant has expired? Josh mentioned 4 potential sources for future funding and will try to prepare draft proposals for these: Calfed's ERP, State Board's Prop 50, NOAA, and, possibly, South Bay Salt Pond Restoration project.

The date of the next meeting will be determined via email. The meeting adjourned at 12:30.

The minutes were written by Patrycja Bossak and Andree Breaux. Please contact the following if there are any questions on the WT project or corrections to these minutes: Michael May (**mmay@sfei.org**), Josh Collins (**josh@sfei.org**), or Andree Breaux, 510-622-2324 or **ab@rb2.swrcb.ca.gov**.