Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program
Steering Committee Meeting
June 22, 2021 10:00 AM–12:30 PM

Attendees: Luisa Valiela (US EPA Region 9), Alex Thomsen (SFEP), Aimee Good (SF Bay NERR), Brenda Goeden (BCDC), Brian Meux (NOAA Fisheries), Caitlin Sweeney (SFEP), Christina Toms (Water Board), Claire Villegas (BCDC), Cristina Grosso (SFEI), Dave Halsing (SBSPRP), Erika Castillo (Alameda County Mosquito Abatement), Gregg Erickson (CDFW), Jana Affonso (USFWS), Jen Siu (US EPA Region 9), Jessica Davenport (SCC), Jessie Olson (Save the Bay), Laura Hollander (SCC), Melissa Foley (SFEI), Mike Chotkowski (USGS), Renee Spenst (DU), Sarah Firestone (USACE), Tony Hale (SFEI), Xavier Fernandez (Water Board)

Meeting Summary/Actions:
- Be in touch with Caitlin Sweeney (caitlin.sweeney@sfestuary.org) or Melissa Foley (melissaf@sfei.org) if you want to see another iteration of the funding proposal to the Restoration Authority
- SC reached consensus on the Charter, with the following modifications:
  - Approval of all tracked changes in the 6/15 draft
  - Approval of the proposed reorganization of section headings to add "Meetings and Procedures" as a separate major section
  - Approval of the revision making meeting summaries subject to SC corrections and approval at the following meeting
- SC reached consensus on the the Gap Analysis Report. Brenda to comment on the report by 7/23

[Folder with meeting presentations, materials, and Zoom chat transcript](#)
[Roster of SC Members](#)

Notes
1) Welcome, Announcements, Project Update (Intro presentation on slides 1-9)
Luisa Valiela (EPA; Steering Committee Interim Chair) and Alex Thomsen (SFEP Sea Grant Fellow)
- SC announcements
  - Claire Villegas attending as an Environmental Justice intern for BCDC
  - Sarah Firestone is now the main SC rep for USACE; USACE working on getting another WRMP rep. Sahrye Cohen is the new wetlands regulatory manager at EPA
  - Gregg Erickson retiring at the end of the month; CDFW will be recommending a replacement representative
- Team updates

- ○ Congratulations to Heidi Nutters and welcome to baby Raven!
- ● [WRMP website](#) is now live
  - ○ Contact Alex (alexandra.thomsen@sfestuary.org) about adding/updating things on the website

2) WRMP Proposal to SF Bay Restoration Authority ([Proposal presentation on slides 1-19](#))
Caitlin Sweeney (SFEP) and Melissa Foley (SFEI)
- ● Background
  - ○ WRMP has been giving presentations to the SFBRA over the past few years
  - ○ Citizens Oversight Committee presented an annual review letter to Governing Board, and pointed to WRMP as a critical evaluation tool for the Authority to track progress towards meeting performance metrics & contributions to broader ecosystem goals
  - ○ Advisory Committee had a performance metrics ad hoc committee, which released a memo including a recommendation to continue working w/ WRMP to develop metrics for habitat quality of restored wetlands
  - ○ WRMP staff and Authority staff have been working on a proposal to bring to Authority
- ● Overall objectives
  - ○ Fund critical tasks to move from development to implementation
  - ○ Build on Authority work to develop & coordinate metrics
  - ○ Support & advance project delivery
- ● Timeline of phases
  - ○ Phases 1 & 2: Have been developing framework for governance & science
  - ○ Phase 3: Move from development to implementation. Proposal to Authority will focus on monitoring site network & alignment of performance metrics
- ● Task 1: Establish WRMP Monitoring Site Network
  - ○ Will be a phased approach w/ SC oversight & TAC coordination
  - ○ Recognize that the timeline is aggressive to have results at end of year 3, but will work with SC & TAC to set reasonable expectations
- ● Task 2: Align Performance Metrics
  - ○ Year 1: Resolving discrepancies in indicators between SFBRA & WRMP
  - ○ Year 2: Expanding to align w/ other performance measures
- ● Total suggested budget allocation: 750-950k/year for 3 years
  - ○ Greater share of funds would be allocated to operationalizing the monitoring site network, and that share would increase over the 3 years relative to indicator alignment
- ● Would be an Authority project similar to BRRIT
- ● Funding would mostly support personnel, including lead scientist housed at SFEI, SFEI support staff, WRMP partners, consultants. Limited funds might go towards equipment
- ● Timeline

- - Advisory Committee presentation in May 2021; received questions on plans for community engagement & outreach, ensuring that results can inform projects on-the-ground (e.g. design recommendations)
  - Governing Board presentation in June 2021; received support for continuing to develop proposal
  - Working w/ TAC over the summer to refine proposal
  - Back to Advisory Committee in September 2021; Advisory Committee produces formal recommendation
  - Authority staff would take recommendation to Governing Board in October or December 2021
- Questions/comments
  - Clarification: this wouldn't be part of a competitive grant round, it would be an Authority project that the Governing Board can fund at any time, as BRRIT is funded
  - Will be challenging to make recommendations after 1 year of data collection. Defining success will be critical. We are unlikely to want to revise indicators after 1 year
    - A major focus will be seeking alignment & analyzing existing data (geospatial & on-the-ground). Will need to figure out how to analyze. Can allow us to see over a larger period of time even if WRMP data collection hasn't been established for long
  - Can have substantial impact on other programs: NFWF, Prop 1, etc. Help align those programs with SFBRA goals, which may help offset their costs (outcomes per dollar). Can consider this another type of success
  - Who will be collecting data?
    - Proposal is very high-level. Governing Board doesn't necessarily want to see this level of detail; wants to know what they're funding, why it's worth it, and what the products will be. Next steps would be developing detailed work plan including those details
  - Structure of proposal: what is SFEP's role?
    - Benefit of coadministration by SFEP & SFEI is that it allows flexibility for receiving & distributing funding
    - SFEP may play role as Authority staff in managing project, but SFEP can't receive the funds
  - Be in touch with Caitlin & Melissa if interested in seeing another version

3) Draft WRMP Charter ([Charter presentation on slides 28-33](#))
Alex Thomsen (SFEP), Caitlin Sweeney (SFEP), and Xavier Fernandez (Water Board)
- Reviewed Charter development process, major changes since the last (4/22/21) draft, and potential revisions suggested by Steering Committee members
  - See attachment: [Summary of major revisions and discussion topics](#)
- Community representation

- ○ Broadened types of community representation eligible for SC membership so representation is not limited to community-based organizations
  - ○ Removed specifications for a North Bay and South Bay rep to avoid appearing to exclude some subregions (e.g. Central Bay), while maintaining a stipulation for representation of different geographic regions and/or interests
  - ○ Comment: CDFW working on co-management w/ tribes. Tribes consider themselves more a government & manager. Recommend phone call w/ Graton
  - ○ Response: We're working on wetlands that have identified owners who we need to work with
  - ○ Decision: accepted the change in the 6/15 draft
- Science institutions
  - ○ In developing the initial draft, the Charter working group considered who should be on SC, decided it should be those making management decisions. However, some science institutions do make management decisions, and it can be hard to distinguish. Decided it would be good to allow more flexibility, hence the change in language
  - ○ Added a standing seat back for USGS, since USGS in particular has large monitoring programs, e.g. in Delta, and serves as science arm of DOI
  - ○ Decision: accepted the change in the 6/15 draft
- TAC Chair/Vice Chair selection process & term limits
  - ○ Received a comment to add these during the April-May feedback period, but didn't specify in the revision to allow for flexibility based on how things are going. Charter working group initially decided these decisions should be up to the TAC
  - ○ Comments:
    - ■ If left unresolved, term limits may only come up when there's a problem
    - ■ Term limits would help with regional capacity-building. Because people have been sitting in leadership positions for a long time, there is less room for others to develop leadership capacity
    - ■ Maybe put in a time limit for checking whether people want a change
  - ○ Responses:
    - ■ Core Team didn't want to be overly detailed, as we are still building the program and don't have permanent funding for staff. We will iteratively come back to this
    - ■ Need to reconcile leadership building with having people who have the knowledge/experience to carry out program needs
    - ■ TAC has more critical things to discuss
  - ○ Decision: accepted the change in the 6/15 draft
- Reorganization
  - ○ Suggested to improve document flow
  - ○ Decision: accepted the potential revision (moving "Meetings and Procedures" info to a separate major section)

- SC Chair/Vice Chair term limits
  - Received same comment to add term limits due to regional leadership capacity-building issue
  - Comments:
    - Probably unnecessary because people will likely not want to stay in that role for longer than 6 years
    - No structure in place yet to know if this is the right decision (adding term limits)
    - 6 years is a good length of time to make an impact, but long enough for people to raise question of changing Chairs without conflict
    - Can change header to "terms" rather than "term limits"
    - Needs to be revisited
  - Decision:
    - Kept the language from the 6/15 draft (no term limits)
    - Change "term limits" to "terms" in subsection heading
    - Add "Term limits will be revisited with the next Charter revision"
- Meeting notes procedure
  - Decision: accepted the potential revision (making SC meeting summaries subject to corrections & approval at the next SC meeting)
- Consensus from full SC, pending incorporation of the decisions made during the meeting

4) Fit-Gap Analysis Report and Next Steps (Fit-Gap presentation)
Tony Hale and Cristina Grosso (SFEI)
- Stepwise process to determine criteria for selection of data to inform indicators. Summarized gaps & recommendations in report and incorporated comments from TAC June meeting
- Multiple different gap types, only one of which is a complete lack of data (Gap 5: No suitable data yet exists. Other gaps relate to data not meeting minimum criteria, requiring synthesis/processing, or needing to wait for specific datasets to become available
- Indicator 1: Map of baylands. Gaps 1-4
  - Many datasets, but most don't meet minimum requirements
  - Recommendation: TAC geospatial workgroup will guide development of Baylands Change Basemap & SOPs
- Indicator 2: Map of wetland elevations & elevation capital. Gap 2
  - Recommendation: Geospatial WG will determine best methodology
- Indicator 3: Map of transition zones & migration space. Gaps 2 & 4
  - Recommendation: Geospatial WG will determine best methodology based on definition in BEHGU and consistent w/ Adaptation Atlas mapping
- Indicator 6: Map of changes in lateral extents (...). Gap 4
  - Recommendation: Wait until county-level imagery & Lidar are completed, and MTC dataset is released

- Indicator 7: Percent cover, height, patch characteristics (...). Gaps 4 & 5
  - Recommendation: Wait until adequate tidal vegetation mapping data are available (currently funded in some counties, hopefully will be funded in others)
- SOPs
  - Next step following Fit-Gap Analysis
  - SOPs = documents describing processes for collecting datasets, data processing including enhancements/calculations, and integration into a data portal
    - Include key assumptions & TAC decisions
    - Include indicator calculation showing how data are synthesized to calculate metrics
    - Will ensure reproducibility & transparency
    - Will be maintained over time
  - TAC geospatial workgroup will be provided with a "straw dog" to be revised to facilitate their process
  - Next steps
    - Develop draft SOPs & Indicator Calculation Document (subject to revision by geospatial WG/TAC), focusing first on Indicator 1
    - Establish geospatial WG
    - Develop draft SOPs & Indicator Calculation Document for Indicator 3, to be provided to geospatial WG when done with the more complex Indicator 1
    - Begin data compilation
- SOPs & Fit-Gap Analysis are both living documents
- Comments
  - By waiting for things to be available, does anything prevent standing up the program?
    - Probably not; WQIF is funding the Baylands Change Basemap, will be ready by 2023. Need to coordinate timing of this with tasks in SFBRA proposal
  - Tony & Cristina have gone through a very transparent process and have gotten very valuable feedback from the TAC
- Consensus from SC minus Brenda and Jessica
  - Jessica approved via email after reviewing the report after the meeting
  - Brenda will review and submit questions/comments by Friday 7/23. Any comments will be incorporated into document and recorded

5) TAC Update ([TAC update presentation](#))
Christina Toms (Water Board; TAC Chair)
- TAC has been working on several items following Benchmark Site proposal
  - Revising biological & ecological indicators in Master Matrix
  - Established 2 workgroups: fisheries/fish habitat & remote sensing (geospatial)
  - Providing feedback on Fit-Gap Analysis

- ○ TAC members have submitted funding proposals to NERR Science Collaborative, Delta Science Program, others
  - ○ Collaboration with Delta RIC, SFEGWG, Sediment RMP, others
- ● Fish & fish habitat WG
  - ○ Started with ad-hoc work by Ali Weber-Stover, Levi Lewis, and Watershed Stewards (Morgan & Erin) at Water Board
  - ○ Rough work plan includes assessing fish studies below Carquinez Strait, crosswalk w/ Tidal Wetland Monitoring Project Work Team of the IEP in the Delta, and eventually recommending fish & fish habitat monitoring questions, indicators, metrics, SOPs to WRMP TAC
  - ○ Comments:
    - ■ Water Board has been discussing monitoring requirements for hydraulic dredging with the Army Corps. They send $ to RMP to do sediment monitoring, and it would be beneficial to leverage these monitoring requirements to have monitoring go thru WRMP. Meetings held among Corps & TAC members and discussions of proposal from Karen Thorne & Susan de la Cruz (USGS) w/ LTMS team. Will bring proposal to fisheries/fish habitat WG & TAC.
      - ● BCDC has permit requirements for entrainment monitoring. Funds would be one-time
    - ■ Meeting frequency?
      - ● Aiming for 1 meeting per workgroup between each TAC meeting
- ● Geospatial WG
  - ○ Rough work plan includes reviewing recommendations from Montezuma project, addressing recommendations from Fit-Gap Analysis, developing SOPs for geospatial indicators, serving as TAC for Baylands Change Basemap, collaborating with Delta RIC, SFEGWG, statewide L1 group
  - ○ Trying to identify resources for Pete Kauhanen to co-chair WG. Caitlin has identified some resources to start with
- ● Rough TAC work plan for Q3-4
  - ○ Lots of work has filtered to WGs
  - ○ Work plan for Benchmark Site establishment aligning with SFBRA funding proposal
  - ○ Identifying Reference (and Project?) Sites
  - ○ Recommend locations for WRMP-adjacent studies (sediment dynamics, beneficial reuse, fish habitat)
  - ○ Provide feedback on data management, distribution, and reporting

6) WRMP Outreach & Engagement ([Outreach & engagement presentation](#))
Aimee Good (SF Bay NERR) and Sandra Scoggin (SFBJV); slides presented by Alex Thomsen (SFEP)
- ● WRMP Phase II engagement to include training, outreach, communication

- Goal is to build the user community of the WRMP and capacity among the program collaborators to implement the science framework and develop technical training materials
- Fall 2021 outreach event intends to reach a broader audience, need help sharing the word with your organizations & broader networks to build this audience
- SF Bay NERR & SFBJV working closely with SFEI team to develop trainings/user testing for SOPs and data collection when appropriate (likely farther down the line)
- Fall open virtual event
  - Capitalizing on the SOE Summit (Oct 1) we will be holding an open forum virtual event with paired but stand alone sessions
  - Morning WRMP "kick off"
    - Highlight goals for the program, overview of science framework, high level overview of benchmark network, and introduce SC, TAC, workgroups
    - Like a status update/progress report for the WRMP
    - Date not determined yet, but plan is sometime after SOE Summit to try to attract some of that broad audience
  - Afternoon SF Estuary Geospatial Working Group Meeting
    - Focusing on baylands mapping efforts
    - High level indicator overview
    - Overview of Fit-Gap Analysis
    - Ongoing developments with CARI, BAARI, DARI
- Aimee & Sandra offered to share more info with WRMP SC over email as planning for the fall event progresses