



Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program
Steering Committee Meeting
March 23, 2021 10:00 AM-12:30 PM

Attendees: Luisa Valiela (US EPA Region 9), Heidi Nutters (SFEP), Alex Thomsen (SFEP), Aimee Good (SF Bay NERR), Brenda Goeden (BCDC), Brian Meux (NOAA Fisheries), Christina Toms (Water Board), Cristina Grosso (SFEI), Dave Halsing (SBSRP), 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), Melissa Foley (SFEI), Mike Chotkowski (USGS), Natalie Washburn (DU), Sahrye Cohen (USACE), Sandra Scoggin (SFBRA), Tony Hale (SFEI), Xavier Fernandez (Water Board), Sarah Firestone (USACE), Caitlin Sweeney (SFEP), Matt Graul (EBRPD)

Actions:

- Charter review
 - We will work on incorporating the suggestions received during the meeting (glossary of terms and consideration of a Steering Committee seat for SFBRA) and **will send you a revised draft Charter for your review in late April/early May**. You will have a 3-week window for providing comments once that revised draft is distributed.
 - After incorporating further SC feedback, **will send a summary of changes with the final proposed Charter prior to the next meeting (June 22), when the Charter will be a decision item.**
- Steering Committee composition WRMP Core Team to consider addition of SFBRA to SC.
- WRMP organizational arrangements Reach out to Caitlin Sweeney (caitlin.sweeney@sfestuary.org) or Melissa Foley (melissaf@sfei.org) with comments about joint SFEI/SFEP program administration.
- Fit-Gap Analysis Let Tony Hale (tonyh@sfei.org) and Cristina Grosso (cristina@sfei.org) know if you have questions or comments on the [presentation](#). **The Fit-Gap Analysis Report they produce will be a decision item at the June 22 SC meeting**
- WRMP permitting workshop Let Jen Siu (siu.jennifer@epa.gov) know if you have questions or would like summary notes from the workshop.

Meeting presentations, materials, and Zoom chat transcript are available [in this folder](#)
[Roster of SC Members can be found at this link](#)

Notes

1) **Welcome, Introductions, Project Update** (slides 1-10 in [this presentation](#))

Luisa Valiela (EPA; Steering Committee Interim Chair) and Alex Thomsen (SFEP Sea Grant Fellow)

- Steering Committee members

- USFWS: Jana Affonso is a new member, replacing Kaylee Allen
- Ducks Unlimited: Natalie Washburn is a new alternate
- SCC: Jessica Davenport = primary, Moira McEnespy = alternate
- Team updates
 - Luisa Valiela is Interim Chair while Heidi Nutters is on maternity leave
 - Alex Thomsen is new Sea Grant State Fellow with the San Francisco Estuary Partnership
- WRMP permitting workshop (Jen Siu, EPA and WRMP Core Team) -- slides 7 & 8
 - Agencies agree WRMP has utility, but unsure how it will fit with current permitting mechanisms
 - WRMP staff to work with agencies to figure out how to employ WRMP; it will differ for each agency
 - Standard monitoring protocols across the region, reference sites, and regulatory requirements based on science are important
 - Want to set clear expectations, keep agencies fully informed of the scope of WRMP
 - Summary notes can be provided to anyone interested and can be put on website
- Note new meeting date of September 30, previously September 28 but changed due to State of the Estuary Conference dates

2) Draft WRMP Charter (slides 11-24 in [this presentation](#))

Heidi Nutters and Alex Thomsen (SFEP)

- Charter process involved 4 meetings with working group members of the SC: Aimee Good, Dave Halsing, Erika Castillo, Melissa Foley, Xavier Fernandez. Draft was written up by SFEP staff (Heidi Nutters and Alex Thomsen) and presented to working group for review.
- Reviewed the major changes: Guiding Principles, Duties of SC and TAC, SC Focus Areas, SC Composition, SC Chair & Vice Chair, Workgroups
 - Note that Guiding Principles mention Bay-Delta coordination, but we're not expanding geographically at this time
 - SC Composition: balance between inclusion and achieving a streamlined, nimble process. Size and the type of decisions made are determining factors. Members limited to regulatory agencies, project implementers, funders and community-based organizations. Science institutions will be focused on TAC
 - Science institutions affected: SFEL, Point Blue (Julian Wood moving to TAC), USGS. All will have a rep on TAC
 - Suggestion that a glossary of terms could help define what is meant by "regulatory agencies" and other terms. Multiple members supported this
 - Discussion on instances where agencies have multiple "arms," e.g. regulatory and implementation, and where different arms should fit on different Committees. Some examples discussed were USFWS, USACE, BCDC. Generally, WRMP will work with agencies to determine where their representation makes

sense, with several examples having regulators on SC and implementers/planners on TAC. Where silo-ing within agencies occurs, that agency must work to address it and WRMP representatives should flag issues if they recognize silos/communication issues within an agency.

- Suggestion to add a seat on SC for SFBRA
- SC Chair & Vice Chair: currently Heidi with Luisa as Interim
 - Currently, Chair is non-voting. This will change as the Program is implemented
- Workgroups: Charter describes formal and informal workgroups
 - No current formal workgroups
 - Examples of current informal workgroups: Charter working group of SC members, fish/fish habitat working group of TAC members
- SC members were polled via Zoom “Raise Hand” function on whether they want more time for discussion or will be ready to receive the Charter as a decision item at the June 22 SC meeting. Most were in favor of making a decision on the Charter at June meeting.

3) WRMP Organizational Arrangements (slides 25-26 in [this presentation](#))

Caitlin Sweeney (SFEP) and Melissa Foley (SFEI)

- Context: at last SC meeting, we discussed straw proposal. Moving towards joint staffing model. Looking at some examples, including SFBRA
- SFEI & SFEP exploring collaborative program admin. Draws on ~30 years of collaboration. SFEI is nonprofit & JPA. SFEP is a regional government agency. Allows for agility in staffing needs & flexibility in pursuit of funding sources
- Graphic (slide 26) depicts SFEI/SFEP as supporting the work of the WRMP. Lots of room for partners. The hope is that additional organizations not directly represented on Committees will be connected through the monitoring network and/or represented by the partnership based organizations directly involved in WRMP
- Discussion
 - Overall support, with reminder of suggestion to consider SFBRA having an SC seat
 - Discussion about coordination with the CA Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW), with examples given on how WRMP has overlap with CWMW: Josh Collins and Xavier Fernandez involved in both, and fish workgroup being formed by TAC will likely also have connections. Comments pointed out that some sort of formal agreement might introduce additional bureaucracy, but recognized the need to be consistent with their framework and the ability to build in places in WRMP data/science framework where we are leveraging their work.

4) Consensus Proposal for Benchmark Site Network ([presentation here](#))

Christina Toms (Water Board; TAC Chair)

- Not many changes since December meeting
- Reviewed Guiding Principles & Priority Recommended Actions based on Guiding Principles

- Proposal outlines ideal vision for Site Network
 - Each subregion (Suisun, San Pablo, Central, South, Lower South Bay) has Benchmark (older marshes, “canaries in the coal mine”), Reference (targets for restoration projects), and Project sites (variety of design & management approaches)
 - TAC site selection steps: established list of criteria (reviewed by SC in December) looked at list of candidate Benchmark Sites throughout Estuary, did qualitative assessment. Some members did quantitative exercise and arrived at same conclusions as qualitative assessment.
 - Want to be able to monitor upland transgression, accretion, not just drowning
 - Not every Benchmark Site addresses all Guiding Questions and criteria
 - Geographic Core (necessary to address all 5 Guiding Questions) & Process-based sites (necessary to address a subset of Guiding Questions, particularly on role of freshwater & sediment in supporting resilience & population ecology) -- see slide 11
 - Viewed map: Wildcat Creek & Laumeister Marsh protect vulnerable communities. Inform GQ 5, understand role of tidal wetlands in addressing environmental justice concerns
 - Discussion on the caveats slide that there will be differences in all subregions due to factors like wind and wave fetch, with TAC highlighting differences in the South Bay due to differences in both wave fetch & substrate. Key is to identify appropriate Reference & Project sites considering things like wave fetch
- Indicators proposed to study at Benchmark Sites
 - Focus on remote sensing, physical processes, vegetation. TAC still working on biological & ecological indicators, developing workgroups to refine these indicators
 - Reviewed Level 1, 2, 3 indicators proposed to be monitored at Benchmark Sites (slides 13-15)
 - Context given for CRAM: Fits within WRAMP (Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Plan) -- statewide initiative that goes back to ~2000. State Board & other agencies came up with umbrella of how to protect wetlands no longer under federal jurisdiction. Became statewide water quality monitoring initiative. CWMW part of that. Have mostly focused on Level 2, less on Levels 1 & 3. Level 1, 2, 3 came out of EPA guidance.
 - Additional details added on SSC monitoring: working closely with Bay RMP sediment workgroup to understand sediment connections between systems. Existing sediment monitoring/studies informed selection of several sites. Hope is that additional funding will enable establishment of more offshore SSC monitoring, maybe link w/ strategic sediment placement project.
- Next steps for TAC on slide 16. Establishing Benchmark Sites is a launching point
- Discussion
 - Discussed that the TAC is in support of these proposed sites -- they have come up in 5 TAC meetings. All are excited about geographic scope, range of projects and processes

these will inform. Leverages lots of ongoing & historical work. While organismal biology/ecology opinions may shift depending on precise monitoring methods, all have signed on to this list of sites.

- More discussion on SSC monitoring and the need to recognize that monitoring at mouth of channel and along scarp are both important.
- Clarification that prioritization among the sites is laid out with the Geographic Core (bolded on slide 11) as the priority sites.
- Discussion on the need to consider impacts on listed species (before submitting grant proposals). WRMP wants rigorous conversations with resource agencies. Hope to get CDFW engaged in fish workgroup. Gregg: open to talking about programmatic route for permitting.
- Discussion on statistical rigor in # and distribution of sites. Several comments (verbal and in chat) in the vein that statistical rigor depends on what question is being addressed, and that we will not be able to do power analysis until we start to collect data. Additional comments note that site locations can be updated based on data as it comes in and enables comparison with conceptual models
- Consensus reached with none opposed. Thank you to TAC. Note this doesn't imply approval of access & permits. In voting, SC is accepting recommendation to move forward with SOP development

5) Data Management Update: FitGap Analysis ([presentation here](#))

Tony Hale and Cristina Grosso (SFEI)

- Stepwise process to determine criteria for selection of data to inform indicators
- Generally, a fitgap analysis characterizes gaps between what is required and what is available
- Focused on Management Question 1, indicators 1, 2, 3, 6, 7. Have a long list of criteria, but focused on some key criteria
- Have developed & vetted criteria thru TAC and identified data sources. Currently reconciling data to minimum requirements associated w/ each indicator. Next step is to produce Gap Analysis Report
- Takeaways of visualization on Evaluation of datasets to indicators
 - Identify data gaps: no identified datasets address indicator 3 as a primary indicator TAC to help identify additional data sets
 - Some nonpriority indicators are included in this visualization because TAC brought up some important datasets that will be used later
- TAC used process outlined in flow chart to evaluate datasets, commenting on datasets/indicators that matched their expertise or interests
 - Identified 3 new datasets
 - 2 datasets with conflicting feedback Cristina and Tony to work with TAC Chairs to address discrepancies
- Will request consensus from SC on Fit Gap Analysis report at June 22 meeting