



Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program Steering Committee Meeting NOTES

December 13, 2022 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Meeting Attachments

- 9/22/22 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
- Monitoring Site Network Proposal technical memo and executive summary
- Updated WRMP Charter

Meeting Slides: [WRMPSC_20221213_preview.pdf](#)

Steering Committee Members and Alternates: Sandra Scoggin (Chair, SFBJV), Erika Castillo (Vice Chair; Alameda County Mosquito Abatement), Brenda Goeden (BCDC), Brian Meux (NMFS), Matt Graul (EBRPD), Mike Chotkowski (USGS), Stacy Sherman (CDFW), Stuart Siegel (SF Bay NERR), Sarah Firestone (USACE), Luisa Valiela (US EPA), Christina Toms (Water Board; WRMP TAC Chair), Tom Kimball (USGS), Jessie Olson (Save the Bay), Jana Affonso (USFWS), Xavier Fernandez (Water Board), Laurel Larsen (DSC)

WRMP Staff: Alex Thomsen, Sasha Harris-Lovett, Heidi Nutters, SF Estuary Partnership (SFEP); Donna Ball, Caitlin Crain, Cristina Grosso, Tony Hale, SF Estuary Institute (SFEI)

Other Attendees:

Catie Thow (Coastal Conservancy), Jaime Lopez (BCDC Sediment), Stacie Smith (Consensus Building Institute), Todd Hallenbeck (BCDC)

Decision Items

- Meeting minutes for the 9/22/22 Steering Committee meeting - approved

Action Items

- Steering committee members will be given an opportunity to provide written feedback on the Site Monitoring Network Technical Memo. TAC will address the comments and circulate for SC approval by email before the end of January.
- SFEI will share the Geospatial Data Catalog once it is ready, along with the list of datasets that inform the catalog. They welcome feedback about additional datasets to include.

Announcements:

- Vogel breached
- new staff members at SFBJV
- NERR will be hiring education coordinator
- Save the Bay is also hiring
- BCDC is also hiring

Project Updates:

-Staffing updates at SFEP

-DWR potential seat on SC: talk with DWR about who

-Karla at DWR would make the decision – likely an EcoRestore person like Charlotte Biggs or someone from the DWR side of the Fish Restoration Program (managed by Dean Messer, Catharine McCalvin)

-Communications Needs Assessment: conducted by Carmen Zamora, results [here](#).

-Survey mostly reached people already involved with WRMP.

-Recommendations include developing a WRMP communications plan, creating interactive opportunities like workgroups, sharing updates in newsletters.

Approval of 9/22/22 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

-Approved

Regulatory Needs Assessment Update (Stacie Smith, Consensus Building Institute)

-Aimed to improve alignment and take advantage of collaborative opportunities for permitting and permit monitoring requirements within restoration projects.

-Engaged with regulatory agencies individually to see where they are coming from, what their needs are, and how WRMP might help meet their needs.

-Particularly trying to pinpoint where there is already alignment and clarify where there are opportunities for efficiencies and improvements in permit monitoring.

-Led by an advisory group of regulators, began convening in May 2022, and developed a methodology for the needs assessment and background materials with them.

-Focus groups were the best way to get input from agencies, conducted in Oct and Nov.2022

-Also conducted interviews with project proponents.

-Advisory group of regulators helped hone preliminary findings.

-Findings will be finalized shortly, then CBI will work on strategic engagement roadmap over the next few months (Jan – April 2023).

-Key themes from regulatory agency focus groups:

-Different agencies had different perceptions of how voluntary restoration projects and mitigation projects should be treated

-Project site monitoring is important in addition to regional monitoring

-Take advantage of opportunities for increased agency coordination within existing forums (i.e. BRRIT, SC, TAC, working groups)

-Support for project proponents while developing their monitoring plans can maximize potential of regional coordination

-Need high data quality, consistency, and standardization

-Excited about Standard Operating Procedures and shared data management platform

- Interest in regional and baseline monitoring
- Would be helpful to develop shared approaches for promising emerging technologies like drones and eDNA
- Exploring opportunities for simplifying project monitoring requirements
- Needs assessment next steps: CBI will finalize findings, prioritize opportunities

Discussion:

- Some of the monitoring activities need to be permitted by other agencies – requires coordination. Fish agencies need to be on the same page around protections and the value of the sampling.
- For a shared data management platform: Data from the Bay should be going up on the Environmental Data Initiative – most of the long-term fish and invertebrate surveys are already putting data on there.
- Session on WRMP at Restoring America’s Estuaries conference. Heard consistently how difficult permitting is for everyone trying to do restoration projects – this is a challenge for everyone, nice to be doing something more proactive in the Bay Area.

Data Catalog Development and User Testing Update

WRMP geospatial data catalog: One component of a comprehensive data management catalog, aims to daylight data and make it more discoverable. SFEI held an open beta-testing session and a session with Tribal representatives to test it, then provided a survey for additional input.

- Feedback from beta tests: textual improvements, some lags in the platform, places that needed more instruction and clarity.
- SFEI prioritized feedback, developed data management plan and video instructions, will be done this month and released.
- SFEI will coordinate with TAC as WRMP indicators are revised
- SFEI will continue collection of legacy data sets
- This geospatial data catalog will point to existing repositories, like EDI or CDFW directly, make a network of interwoven data repositories
- SFEI will be continually revising geospatial data catalog as changes to WRMP come down the pike
- SFEI will be coordinating outreach around the tool, amplify with social media
- This is the initial step to being to collect the datasets that are relevant to the WRMP, this is a common place to aggregate those datasets, so as we’re developing the SOPs we have all the relevant datasets in one place.
- SFEI will share datasets to inform the Geospatial Data Catalog once the tool is released, they welcome feedback about additional datasets.

Science Workgroups Update

Fish and Fish Habitat workgroup:

- Final stages of developing SOP, which is well-researched and thorough. TAC saw it at Nov meeting, now it’s undergoing final revisions, will go to TAC again in January for approval.

-The SOP also documents the process by which the group came up with their recommendations.

-Includes attention to intertidal areas, subtidal channels and sloughs

Vegetation workgroup

-SOP will be ready in early 2023

-Will track change over time, apply methods at regional scale, capture vegetation dynamics at different salinities and different site types.

-Will include remote-sensing and field-based metrics to capture broad patterns and target leading indicators of change.

Hydrogeomorphology workgroup

-Just forming, identified co-leads, coordinating with key stakeholders. Building from NOAA and USGS SOPs, kickoff meeting in January 2023.

-Indicators related to sedimentation and accretion, elevation, tidal inundation.

Geospatial workgroup

-SOP developed for WRMP indicators 1 and 3, approved earlier this year by the TAC, continuing to advise on Baylands Change Basemap Development

People and Wetland workgroup

-First meeting in October 2022, want indicators to reflect values of frontline communities and Tribes

-Seeking to recruit new members with additional expertise

-Possibly develop new management questions for WRMP guiding question 5

Monitoring Site Memo

-WRMP near-term science priorities in Phase 1 program plan (April 2020) to address management questions and guiding questions:

-Regional baseline of conditions

-Establish monitoring site network

-Conduct repeating surveys

-Analyze data on sediment

-Assess interactions between people and wetlands

-Sites will be distributed throughout the Estuary, with benchmark (older, generally in equilibrium), reference (more realistic target conditions for restoration projects), and project (variety of design and management approaches) sites.

-Rotate monitoring activities across space and time, particularly across the projects

-Inform development of a monitoring plan in 2023

-Benchmark sites adopted in 2021

-Process of selection: core science team narrowed candidate sites to distribute representation across the Estuary, to leverage existing data sources, to contribute to climate adaptation planning for underserved communities, to inform existing and planned tidal wetland restoration, and supported near-term science priorities. Core science team presented draft site selection memo to TAC, revised the memo into what we have today.

-Caveats: approving this memo does not constitute a formal plan to initiate monitoring at any of the proposed monitoring sites. Consensus means this looks like a solid foundation upon which you can build a monitoring program. It's a monitoring program, not a research program – might not be as statistically rigorous as a research project, but must be actionable science to inform decision-making. Does not mean that other projects / locations won't be part of the WRMP, new sites may come online. See *Priority networks in memo*: [Technical Memo WRMP Priority Monitoring Site Networks 2022-1110ct.pdf](#)

-Opportunity to establish monitoring in Montezuma OLU, Baypoint OLU, and Cache Slough – can coordinate monitoring between WRMP, IEP, and Fish Restoration Program. Needs to be closely coordinated to Delta entities, don't want to impede monitoring through other networks

Secondary priority networks: Petaluma River, Corte Madero, Belmont-Redwood, San Francisquito-Stevens OLU

-2023 TAC will develop Monitoring Plan – what are new data that WRMP should collect? How and where should it collect it? Which legacy data to synthesize? Early success of WRMP will be from bringing older data back to life, using new data tools to synthesize and visualize older data.

-Monitoring plan will rely on the workgroup's SOPs

-TAC will support development of the Baylands Change Basemap

-TAC will help align WRMP indicators with BRRIT, SFBJV, State of the Birds, etc.

-TAC has dug into the details for a year, think about the bigger picture

-Some SC members want more time to look at the Monitoring Site Network memo and provide written feedback.

-Some SC members not sure that benchmark, reference and project sites should be organized by OLU

-Reference sites might not need to be within the same OLU to inform new restoration projects (i.e. if they have similar dredged material used as sediment)

-Some SC members curious about more sites in the Central Bay

-Developing a Site Monitoring Network is a challenging task, doesn't lend itself to neat, clean selection of sites.

-Need to think about how these places will be used in decision-making.

-Won't be able to get a reference site for every restoration project in the SF Bay Area, we don't have enough funding to do that much monitoring.

-Steering committee will provide written feedback on Google Doc, TAC will address the comments and circulate for SC approval by email no later than the end of January.