Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

March 20, 2025, 10:00 am - noon

Meeting Attachments

- 2025-2027 Implementation Plan
- 2024-2025 Implementation Plan (for reference)
- Draft WRMP Approach to Partnership
- January 24, 2025 TAC meeting notes
- December 12, 2024 Steering Committee meeting notes

Notes

Steering Committee members: Jessie Olson (Save The Bay), Karen Thorne (USGS), Dave Halsing (SBSPRP), Steve Culberson (Delta Stewardship Council, alternate for Dylan Chapple), Jana Affonso (USFWS), Erika Castillo (Alameda County Mosquito Abatement District), Erica Johnson (SCC/ RA), Luisa Valiela (US EPA), Matt Ferner (NERR), Ali Weber-Stover (NMFS), Erin Chappell (CDFW), Marco Berger (MCM), Sara Moncada (ARO), Brenda Goeden (BCDC), Kelli McCune (SFBJV)), Matt Graul (EBRPD), Christina Toms (Water Board, alternate for Xavier Fernandez))

WRMP staff: Donna Ball (SFEI), Aviva Rossi (SFEI), Karen Verpeet (SFEI), Melissa Foley (SFEI), Lydia Vaughn (SFEI), Lisa Beers (SFEI), Miranda Melen (SFEP), Sasha Harris-Lovett (SFEP), Alex Thomsen (SFEP)

Others: Sarah Pearce (SFEI), Lyndsey Tu (US EPA), Dan Hossfeld (US EPA), Sarah Lowe (SFEI), Natalie Reeder (EBRPD)

1) **Approval of 12/12/24 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

    - Approved

2) Program Updates

- Welcome new SC member, Sara Moncada, and new Sea Grant Fellow, Miranda Melen
- RA funding moving forward
- Federal funding is in process
- Brenda: Sediment beneficial reuse Action Plan coming out on Tuesday!

3) Notes from the Field – WRMP Science in Action

- Fieldwork has started – vegetation work is happening, we have permits.
- Science products are in the works, including updates to the Baylands Habitat Map.
- Tidal Wetland Extent report coming up in April
    - Tidal Wetland Extent webinar coming up on April 16th
- Indicator Alignment report posted on the WRMP website.
- Many of the permits are approved.
- Bird workgroup is formed, Aviva is spearheading that work.
- Staff is updating the WRMP data submittal portal.
- Creating a WRMP user guide related to reaching out to landowners and accessing permits for the sites.
- WRMP has been in the news (KneeDeep Times, Maven's Notebook).
- Field monitoring is beginning – all the monitoring helps answer the management and guiding questions developed by the Steering Committee
    - 3 levels of monitoring: landscape level, rapid assessment, and field-level assessment
    - Using the WRMP SOPs
    - Vegetation monitoring:
        - Chris Janousek from Oregon State University is setting up vegetation monitoring at 18 sites (6 each in benchmark, reference, and project sites), and setting up 30 vegetation plots per site along transects, along with accretion plots. Also measuring shallow groundwater.
    - Fish monitoring:
        - Levi Lewis at UC Davis is starting to do analysis of existing data, he is ready to go and will have people out in the field in April. Has hired 5 field staff and Dr. James Hobbes to help with study design and data collection. Will be collecting data on fish and water quality.
    - SET / MH:
        - Karen Thorne at USGS is leading this
        - Data will be available on sciencebase.gov website
    - LIDAR:
        - Will be funded by SFBRA due to federal contracting freezes
        - Will be coordinating with Delta LIDAR to collect Estuary-wide data
- Dave Halsing: Update on SBSPRP is planning to shift the way they get their science done
    - SBSPRP had taken responsibility upon itself to monitoring how it was doing at restoring the wetlands (apart from permit requirements), and to see how the

project was affecting the mudflats outside of the breaches. They spent $230,000 on this in 2020.
    - Baylands Habitat Map mapping effort can do most of what they need for aerial mapping, and provides more regional-level situational awareness. SBSPRP contributed about $50-$60k to it.
    - SFEI was able to crosswalk the earlier work by Fulfrost and Associates with the BHM.
- Sarah Pearce on WRMP CRAM results:
    - CRAM answers, "what is the health or overall ecological condition of our marshes?"
    - WRMP CRAM data builds on existing regional CRAM data
    - CRAM is a field-based "walk and talk" tool that provides an assessment of the condition. It takes 2-3 trained practitioners about 1-3 hours to assess a tidal marsh area. It provides a score for different attributes, which roll up into an overall index scores. The score quantifies the wetland's potential to provide ecological services, and classified as "good", "fair", and "poor."
    - In 2023, they looked at existing CRAM data for WRMP sites. Scores in general were best for benchmark sites, slightly less good for reference sites, and less good for project sites. This is what we would expect.
    - They also evaluated gaps – there were 64 WRMP sites without CRAM data.
    - In 2024, they focused on getting some CRAM data in places where none existed. Did 33 new CRAM assessments at 18 different sites.
    - Cumulative distribution function – tool to help better understand the condition of tidal marshes across the estuary. X-axis is CRAM score, Y-axis is percent of wetland area across the estuary.
        - Can see the median score across the Estuary is 75. (Half the marshes are in better condition, half are worse).
        - Project sites are in fair condition. This is what we would expect, they are newer restoration projects.
        - Most reference sites were in good condition, which is what we would expect. But a few are in fair condition. We can drill down into the CRAM scores to see why these scored lower.
    - Project Performance Curve: another tool to compare a wetland site to the regional averages.
    - CRAM can support status and trends assessments, restoration project performance tracking, and compare the WRMP projects to benchmark sites or sites in other places.
    - CRAM can be a screening tool to see where other more in-depth studies should be collected.
    - CRAM will continue for 3 more years using RA funding, about 30 sites each year. Fieldwork will happen in summer and fall.
- Q from Brenda Goeden:
    - If we picked reference sites that are only in the fair level, or just marginally good, how does that fit with the overall concept of improving marshes compared to reference sites?

        - WRMP didn't have boat access for CRAM, so they did assessments where they could access. Each site might have more variability across the site, so additional CRAM at those sites would be helpful.
        - CRAM is all about drilling down into those scores to understand the "why".
- Q from Steve Culberson:
    - Is the CRAM data in a format so that it's discoverable and crawlable? Are the datasets associated with an ORCID so the authors can get credit if they're cited?
        - All CRAM data are available and viewable on the EcoAtlas website, can be downloaded as CSV, Excel or Shapefile. The names of the practitioners in the field are associated with the CRAM data, as well as a project name.
    - Knowing there is a website is a huge improvement, but that doesn't go all the way towards open data – in the future we should consider how this is discoverable.
    - Can the WRMP have its own ORCID?
- Christina Toms – WRMP has been thinking a lot about how to make data useable and accessible.

4) WRMP Website Mockups

- Over the past year, the WRMP has been working on updating its website to able to better share monitoring results, and expand and engage WRMP audiences.
- Audiences include: elected officials, regulators, funders, project implementers, community members.
- Want website to introduce audiences to the program, understand what is being monitored and why, easy to find and understand summaries of monitoring information, easy to find more detailed information about any given metric, find broader info about the program.
- Have been working with a web design consultant at ESA to develop visual mockups, now we are developing initial content.
- SFEI will build the pages in the next few months.
- Will keep the current information on the website, but may reformat or reorganize it.

5) 2025-2027 Implementation Plan

- Baylands Habitat Map 2025 – requires new LIDAR, to be taken this summer
- Transition-zone monitoring with SFB NERR, done every few years
- SET and marker horizon monitoring – Sonoma and Napa areas
- Need to contract out the horizontal and vertical control
- Fish and Fish Habitat
    - Sampling in priority and secondary networks
    - Aligning with 5 other large-scale projects

- Overview map of known monitoring locations (veg monitoring and fish sampling with SET-MH locations)
- Approach: being nimble, maintaining consistent dataset through time to ensure valuable data
- Questions:
    - Kelli McCune would like a graphic that connects the guiding and management questions to the different monitoring
        - Aviva offered the monitoring matrix
        - Response from Christina Toms (echoed by Aviva): "We also have a graphic that demonstrates how multiple monitoring elements address multiple monitoring, management, and guiding questions" https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Py-9Pwphh5lQH6OIVy8fyBAm1jFeIa5hMx2a4gmHh9Q/edit

6) WRMP Approach to Partnership

- Developing an Approach to Partnership statement for placement on the website. It will be revised before it's posted. Please direct questions or comments to Sasha Harris-Lovett (sasha.harris-lovett@sfestuary.org).

7) Announcements

8) Adjourn