



Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program

Steering Committee Meeting Agenda

September 18, 2025, 10:00 am - noon

Meeting Attachments

- [June 12, 2025 Steering Committee meeting notes](#)
- TAC meeting notes

Attendees:

Steering Committee members: Jessie Olson (Save the Bay), Marco Berger (MCM), Sara Moncada (ARO), Sarah Firestone (USACE, SF District), Jana Affonso (USFWS, Bay-Delta Office), Erika Castillo (ACMAD), Dave Halsing (SBSP Restoration), Luisa Valiela (EPA Region 9), Alison Weber-Stover (NMFS), Xavier Fernandez (SF Bay Water Board), Matt Ferner (NERR), Dylan Chapple (Delta Stewardship Council), Stacy Sherman (CDFW), Damian Higgins (USGS), Matt Graul (EBRPD), Kelli McCune (SF Bay Joint Venture)

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

Other attendees: Jim Hobbs (UC Davis OGFL), Levi Lewis (UC Davis OGFL), Christina Toms (SFBRWQCB), Laura Feinstein (SFEI), Jaime Lopez (BCDC), Warner Chabot (SFEI)

Notes:

1) Approval of 6/12/25 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Approved

2) Program Updates

Sasha Harris-Lovett, SF Estuary Partnership

- State of the Estuary Conference: WRMP will have a session on Day 2 of the conference, we hope everyone can come.
- Funding – EPA funding for the third year of on-the-ground monitoring at EPA has been approved and will move soon. The process is slower than usual because of low staffing.

3) Notes from the Field – WRMP Science in Action

Lisa Beers, SFEI; Levi Lewis, UC Davis

- Summary of who's out in the field; preparation of results for SOE
 - Thanks to Point Blue and UC Davis for boat access
 - Chris is almost finished with monitoring
 - Permits are acquired for Eden Landing for water quality collection
 - USGS sets are being installed
 - Fish surveys are ongoing (see below)
 - CRAM team collaboration for surveys at 30 sites
- LiDAR timeline
 - 83% of survey area is completed to date
 - Data products expected early 2026
 - When conditions weren't good enough to fly, LiDAR was done at a different time to meet standards
- Fish monitoring presentation
 - New vessel acquired, multiple boat captains
 - The fish monitoring ties into the WRMP mission and guiding questions. Looking at whether there's evidence that wetland restoration strategies affect fish population patterns.
 - They are working on a literature review of existing monitoring data.
 - Fish use the wetlands at high tides, they move into the sloughs and tidal channels.
 - They are getting permits from CDFW, USFWS, NOAA, and UC Davis in place.
 - Started official sampling in April, they are part way through the first year of monitoring.
 - Focused on monitoring within the primary monitoring site network sites, then added in some sites from the secondary monitoring site network, at a mix of benchmark, reference, and project sites.
 - They're doing otter trawls because they're able to do a broad distribution of sampling over a short period of time. They've monitored with seven OLU's so far, and are working with SFEI to map them. They have maps of all the stations. Suisun Marsh sampling is being monitored by John Durand, and Levi's team is aggregating that data with the data they're collecting. They're monitoring each site twice per quarter, year-around.
 - Will be presenting at State of the Estuary.

- They commonly see longfin smelt in a lot of the wetland habitats – there's not existing data about whether these are in the wetland habitats in the winter.
- Looking at many different species of fish, crabs, shrimps, sharks, rays.
- A lot of the observations are being shared by Jim Ervin on the “Fish in the Bay” newsletter and blog.
- The fish monitoring data will also go into the State of the Estuary report.
- Have completed over 250 surveys to far.
- Q&A
 - Donna: The fish monitoring and the other monitoring are all integrated – we want to be able to look at these marshes as integrated places on the landscape, so the monitoring is all being designed that way.
 - Levi: Also collecting water quality data (DO, Ph, etc.). They've been thinking about at which scale to aggregate the fish data to present.
 - Xavier: Collecting the data is wonderful, but we need the data turned into information that can be used. When can we expect to see a report so that we can start using it for some of our management decisions? The quarterly report have helped us with information about dredging.
 - Levi: We can certainly provide annual reports if that will be helpful. They are planning to provide a full report at the end of the 2 years to evaluate the monitoring. The reporting depends on what the needs are.
 - Xavier: For those managers who are using the data, let us all know what you might use the data for.
 - Levi: If there are specific timelines or needs around endangered species, feel free to reach out to ask.
 - Donna: As Steering Committee members reach out to Levi, please include the WRMP staff in those correspondences.
 - Levi: They've had conversations with a lot of TAC members about how the data would be used – quantifying differences across space and through time, to understand how restoration features correlate with fish populations. They also plan to combine the spot water quality data with continuous data to be able to model or extrapolate out to some of the places that aren't being monitored for water quality.
 - Sarah Firestone: Listed species occurrence data would be helpful for Section 7 ESA consultations. Are these observations added to the CNDDDB?
 - Levi: Yes, they will be made available
 - Jana Affonso: This information could be helpful for species status assessments for both listed and at-risk species.
 - Levi: Yes, they will be made available
 - Jana: Will be doing a status assessment for white sturgeon – do you have any helpful data available?

- Levi: Yes, we have some data available that documents their presence in the South Bay – you can search our website for fish records – and informally we are using acoustic imaging which can be helpful for sturgeon observations – let's chat!
- Matt Ferner: One use of the fish data for us (State Parks, Solano Land Trust) is to validate or inform eDNA sampling from various pilot projects.
- Dave Halsing: The SBSRP is trying to update our Adaptive Management Plan to focus our scarce resources on the biggest remaining questions. Anything we can do to reduce the number of things we have to monitor, survey, study, etc. on our own is useful. Levi's Fish Survey Synthesis will inform that effort.
- Christina: Is survey data from efforts such as the CDFW deep-water trawls typically added to CNDDDB? I've always thought of CNDDDB as a place where consultants put their survey data, not so much government monitoring programs. I would be happy to be wrong.
 - Levi and Jim don't know if it is a requirement
 - Stacy Sherman: Bay Study data are now on EDI: [Data Portal - Data Package Summary | Environmental Data Initiative \(EDI\)](#)

4) Report-Out on Regulatory Alignment

Xavier Fernandez, SF Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board

- Christina Toms and Donna Ball presented in August to the BRRIT. There was a lot of enthusiasm and receptiveness to the WRMP. The BRRIT is getting a lot of monitoring plans that aren't up to snuff, and it will be better if the projects start using the SOPs of the WRMP.
- Agnes Farres proposed using Goat Island Restoration Project as a pilot for including the WRMP in permits. This is a NERR site, they want to do a lot of monitoring there. We need to establish the expectation with the agencies as we move forward that not every project will do this amount of monitoring. The Goat Island team met with the Water Board, and came up with a proposal about what the WRMP will provide and what the Goat Island team will do in terms of monitoring, and they will present that to the BRRIT in the near future. Some ideas include: using WRMP mapping as the needed mapping for the site, and incorporating the WRMP SOPs into the monitoring that the NERR will do.
 - Matt: Note that the Goat Island Marsh field monitoring is contingent on project implementation funding from the Restoration Authority
- Levi: Recent restoration effort in Ravenswood used fish monitoring, Helix Environmental got a contract with Ducks Unlimited, and they followed the WRMP guidelines for fish monitoring. Levi plans to reach out to them and acquire some of those data in the future. That's an example of independent monitoring programs that previously very disconnected, and now they're using a standardized SOP so the data can be integrated into larger meta-analysis methods.
 - Dave: That work pre-dated the SOPs, and was decided with NMFS, and then Ali went on to work on the SOP.

- Levi: They were in consultation with them while the SOP was being developed.
- Xavier: One of the key pieces is to have them upload the data into the database and not have it off to the side. Often what we find is folks propose all these different monitoring methods, and then the regulators have to go and evaluate them, and it takes a lot of time back and forth to iron out the wrinkles, and they have to understand and sometimes tweak what they are doing. This is a big thing for permitting in terms of timelines.
- Donna: One of the goals of the WRMP is to save projects money. If we can pilot with Goat Island how the Baylands Habitat Map can be used to evaluate change over time, that would save them money and be a pilot for other projects.

5) WRMP Demonstration Site at China Camp

Matt Ferner, SF Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

- China Camp is a Benchmark Site
- Endangered species hotspot (birds, mammals, plants)
- California State Parks prioritizes protection
- WRMP monitoring onsite (separate from fish surveys)
 - Including SETs, vegetation, groundwater monitoring
- Proposing a new WRMP training and educational site at Bullhead Flat, right across the street from the ranger station and infrastructure for visitors. There are plans for a new outdoor classroom there, led by Friends of China Camp. Will provide a safe and appropriate location for learning new WRMP protocols, training technical staff, and showcasing the WRMP to visitors.
- In 2026, will be consulting with many interested parties, including SC and TAC, to learn about vision, opportunities, constraints and shared values.
- Laura: Josh Collins (on TAC) has been a big proponent of getting the word out more about the WRMP. Josh would be jumping out of his seat right now, and she is too. Would be good for people to learn more about the science we do and why it is important.
- Matt: Want this to be a place we can test things, and maybe eventually we can have more training and demonstration sites around the Estuary.

6) New WRMP Website

Karen Verpeet, SFEI

- Website will be live by end of month
 - Laura: Would anyone be interested in a demo about how to use and upload data to the WRMP website?
 - Jana Affonso, Dave Halsing, Matt Graul, and East Bay Parks staff biologist are interested in demo
 - Erika Castillo and Jessie Olson are interested in a demo but can probably attend a TAC meeting
 - Laura: It sounds like there may be enough interest that it would be worth having a public webinar on how to use and upload data on / to the WRMP website.

7) Updates on People & Wetlands Products

Alex Thomsen, SFEP

- General update provided
- New StoryMap on wetland water quality and PCBs. Contains an embedded data explorer: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/170d8cad456d4ca289f25a496ac0b83e>
- New StoryMap on wetland flood risk reduction and the benefits wetlands provide. Focuses on five case study areas in the Bay. Will be available later this year.
- Survey on process of wetland decision-making.
- Projects Benefits & Public Access Map – in progress.
- Questions:
 - Levi: Is there any fishing access information in the Projects Benefits & Public Access Map? Free fishing access is a big asset to communities he works with and would be beneficial if that information could be added.
 - Christina: There are maps at bait shops that show fishing sites: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing-in-the-City/SF/Gofish>

8) Announcements

Jessie Olson

- Remaining Steering Committee meeting dates for 2025:
 - December 18 – in person option
 - 2026 dates, generally 3rd Thursday for the month in March, June, September, December
- Registration is open for the State of the Estuary Conference (October 28-29) - join us at the WRMP session!
- Delta Adaptive Management forum coming up: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Agenda-Available--2025-Adaptive-Management-Forum.html?soid=1136094946314&aid=JRxbdQwUnF4>
 - DSC will be having a site visit to Lookout Slough on Day 2, there are still a few slots available. Let Dylan know if it is full but SC still want to go, he can make accommodations as needed.
- Save The Bay is hosting Bay Day the first weekend in October (Oct 4). They're hosting a big volunteer program in the South Bay around Ravenswood. <https://savesfbay.org/bay-day-2025/>
- Oct. 19, will have an EOS Center Open House 11 am – 3 pm – will be last as EOS Center as part of SF State. <https://eoscenter.sfsu.edu/marine-lab-open-house>