

# Healthy Watersheds Partnership Meeting, 5/12/2022

## 1. Welcome

Ali Dunn provided Meeting Agenda overview

## 2. Announcements and Updates

Nick Martorano: The upcoming Monitoring Council meeting on May 26th will focus on post-fire monitoring lightning talks from the CSU system. Also, the Water Data Science Symposium is June 28th to June 30th and is looking for partners. If interested, reach out to Nick Martorano, Anna Holder, or Greg Gearheart.

## 3. California Watershed Assessment Dashboard Update

**Corey Clatterbuck, State Water Board**

Corey provided link to [presentation slides](#), re-introduced watershed health assessment framework, and displayed 5 preliminary indicator maps of watershed condition

Comments:

Elijah Portugal: We have also struggled with the catchment vs HUC12 scale. We need a statewide delineation of HUC14s. A size of watershed between HUC12 and catchment scale.

- Corey Clatterbuck: Thanks Elijah -- is this in reference to CDFW's ACE?
- Elijah Portugal: It would be helpful for ACE as well but my comment was in reference to our Ca Env Monitoring and Assessment Framework (CEMAF)

Rebecca Payne: Eric Stein and his group included an EJ factor in their reach assessment work.

- Corey Clatterback: Rebecca -- yes! Eric is on the dashboard TAC and he's been a great resource

Nick Martorano: What is the rough timeline for the dashboard?

- Ali Dunn: timeline is complicated. Given our limited resources (i.e., Corey alone) to develop the dashboard, and reliance on volunteers to help development - our timeline is constantly shifting. Happy to talk more offline.

Nick Martorano: The Delta stewardship council has done some work on a social vulnerability index for the delta

- Corey Clatterback: Thanks Nick -- I haven't revisited the DSC's work recently so I'll have to refresh!
- Nick Martorano: [Delta vulnerability map](#)

## 4. Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment

**Renee Thompson, USGS and Nancy Roth, TetraTech Inc.**

Renee & Nancy provided [presentation slides](#), their healthy watersheds assessment [report](#), and an online [tool](#).

Comments:

Corey Clatterback: Can get the report data for each reach and can you get it in a tabular format and compare and use the data in a different way and provide different visualizations?

- Renee Thompson: No but that's a great idea.

Ali Dunn: Is there any experience using data or results in land use planning or general plans?

- Renee Thompson: Started with identifying who key stakeholders would be to share the information with. Working with local leadership workgroup, and local engagement team, they created pathways for stakeholder engagement to pathways to communicate information. Initial work: webinar series, and create resources so that the planners on the ground have that information ready. Not quite there yet but have thought about this a lot.
- Ali Dunn: the closest example in mind is to require permits to have low-impact requirements, and for permittees to update their plans to incorporate these requirements.

Wendy Rash: Is the USDA involved in the larger partnership? NRCS has a big Chesapeake Bay funding program targeting agricultural lands, and this information could be very useful in targeting actions.

- Renee Thompson: Generally they are involved in the BMP implementation side of things; there's a bay model that helps track pollution reduction goals and the BMPs associated with the USDA data is fed into that. There is an opportunity to better connect that agency with some of the living resources. That is generally a good suggestion.
- Nancy Roth: There's potential to coordinate with state agencies.

## **5. Wisconsin's Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters Assessment & Action Plan**

**Pamela Toshner, WI Dept. of Natural Resources**

Pamela provided [presentation slides](#).

Comments:

Ali Dunn: Do you think that the progress you made would be possible without a regulatory driven foundation?

Pamela Toshner: Yes. I do think so and sometimes the regulatory context of the Clean Water Act limits us; moving towards other funding sources and partner groups as a more viable alternative.

## **6. Group Discussion re: Healthy Watershed Assessments & Management Plans**

Corey Clatterbuck: discussion of what we learned today; for our partners on the call, what questions they might have for us? All in the context of trying to protect healthy waters.

Ali Dunn: I would like to hear from our state partners. If you didn't have biological criteria in place or didn't have clear definition/high quality waters, do you think you would be where you are today?

- Renee Thompson: I was writing down the connection, overlap and missed opportunities in the Clean Water Act regulation and how we're a great example of

missed opportunities in the Chesapeake Bay. Always told that we need regulatory teeth in order to make progress; it is important to be equitable in our conservation dollars and to invest in preserving high quality landscapes. There's an opportunity to be strategic about how we spend dollars within our healthy watershed, especially working with tribes. A lot of the new requirements are encouraging relationships with our tribes. Looking at various approaches on how to leverage existing efforts and we should all continue communication with each other.

- Nancy Roth: There are limits with the regulations. Tier 2 coordinator said would be helpful to work with county planners and get protections in place to get ahead of the project starting.
- Ali Dunn: Once agency is not the lead, and need more people at the table to help plan and strategize to make this work advance.

Nick Martorano: How have either groups leveraged the 305b report or identifying these high quality waters in Category 1 and seen that status used in planning or impact EIR approval of a project?

- Nancy Roth: In the bay states it goes back to how states are identifying their high quality waters; the intersection could be where the information we have could contribute to some of the listing decisions.
- Pamela Toshner: In Wisconsin, we have exceptional resource waters that we have identified and have included those in high quality waters. In the most recent water quality report to Congress for the program and identifying that these could be considered for future purposes as high quality waters or even redo the outstanding resources water list. But we don't have direct or specific plans because there's a risk in opening up the administrative code and losing the protections that we do have.

Corey Clatterbuck: What is the California equivalent for water protections? Nick commented there are two: Lake Tahoe and Mono Lake.

- Ali Dunn: We're really good at Clean Water Act implementation for impaired water bodies. But as far as establishing protective actions, it's not there yet.
- Nick Martorano: Integrated Report guidance does put an emphasis on protection. We can't do much with what is impaired, and it's more important to put more emphasis on protecting what is healthy, instead of letting it get impaired and then dealing with it.

Wendy Rash: there's a challenge with "protection" actions- it's harder for agencies to document benefits to justify costs- whereas when you bring an impaired watershed into compliance, you can justify money spent.

- Renee Thompson: Gone as far as tracking protected lands and how best to communicate that information. There's ways to protect land through zoning and watershed protection programs; it's almost about first defining what those protections are and the protectiveness on watershed health. With the next phase and more confidence in data we're going to have more science and information where protection is lacking and categorize what kind of protection is needed
- Ali Dunn: Wendy, from NRCS perspective, what would be helpful to communicate to decision makers that these protective actions are needed and should be supported?
- Wendy Rash: From natural resources agency perspective would love to create partnerships with State agencies and see their priorities because we would be able to collaborate better and work on the same priorities together.
- Ali Dunn: I agree and would be open to chat to make connections with you. If there's a shared prioritization process across agencies, it would be easy to target and make progress.
- Greg Gearheart: I bet CNRA (water resources, conservancies, others) track conservation easements.

Corey Clatterbuck: Pamela & Renee, did you have to start making those connections or where they already there?

- Renee Thompson: As a data technical person that gives me direct connection to all of the data providers that maintain protected land status across the watershed. This give me an opportunity to present to those folks; and a lot of early work was about the overlap between their vital lands that they've identified for multiple uses and we overlap their priorities with ours and we look at co-benefits and how our work could leverage each other.
- Pamela Toshner: In Wisconsin the most enthusiastic partners are land trust protection partners; because they wanted the data and science for years. There isn't a permanent land protection toolkit, there isn't a go to place for property owners that would want to protect their lands, and this was a good partnership opportunity.
- Ali Dunn: Regarding land trust; it is helpful for them to know from an agency perspective what areas are important for protection. The Water Boards don't have a lot of experience working with land trust.

Carol Mahoney: Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) with groundwater dependent ecosystems could be protected.

Corey Clatterbuck: Are there any people/agencies that you wished you had brought in, in the assessment process; or what you could have changed with working with certain partners

- Pamela Toshner: Watershed staff didn't participate; it's difficult to collaborate across programs. Glad we looked to other states and efforts.
- Nancy Roth: Renee is the coordinator of the Goal Implementation team and the group meets regularly. It includes representation from the land trust alliance. Some of the participation includes local government, since a lot of the land use decisions are made at the local government level.

Carol Mahoney: Do you guys have a legislative advocate that has the ear of a legislator or two?

- Nancy Roth: Some of that happens at a level above. There are several government committees that get together; opportunities to work through existing channels that are already established to get healthy waters on the agenda.
- Pamela Toshner: We have national and state representatives in the discussion groups but we don't have a direct advocate.

## **7. Wrap-up**

Ali Dunn will follow up with notes, powerpoint slides and supporting materials.