California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup
(CWMW)
Meeting Minutes
10:30 – 4:00
February 7, 2017
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, Ca 95814

In Attendance

Paul Jones, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Cara Clark, Central Coast Wetlands Group
Joseph Morgan, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Jenn Siu, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Josh Collins, San Francisco Estuary Institute
Jon Marshack, Monitoring Council
Kevin O'Connor, Central Coast Wetlands Group
Tony Hale, San Francisco Estuary Institute
Tom Cavanaugh, U.S. Army Corps
Chris Devine, Butte County Conservation Plan
Bill Ziebron, Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan
Eric Stein, Stormwater Monitoring Coalition
Hildie Spautz, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Melissa Scianni, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Cristina Grosso, San Francisco Estuary Institute
Bill Orme, State Water Board
Cliff Harvey, State Water Board
Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, Delta Conservancy
Tatyana Isupov, State Water Board
Eric Burres, State Water Board
Megan Fitzgerald, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Kris Jones, Monitoring Council
Chris Potter, California Natural Resources Agency
Gregg McKenzie, Placer Land Trust
Ross Clark, Central Coast Wetlands Group

Review of Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the November 21, 2016 meeting were approved by voice vote. The minutes will be posted to the CWMW website and distributed through the email list.

State Co-Chair Selection

As Special Advisor to the Sacramento- San Joaquin Delta Conservancy and former Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Medical Cannabis Regulation, previous State Co-Chair, Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, was nominated and unanimously reappointed as the State Co-Chair.

Discussion with Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Sponsors

HCP and Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Monitoring Needs

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Managers are gauging the effectiveness of HCPs on a broad, landscape level using an adaptive-management strategy. The South Sacramento HCP will likely be available for review this spring. HCP templates were created by monitoring the individual impacts and benefits on specific species while meeting avoidance and minimization measures (AMMs). After permits are issued, sponsors will have 12-18 months to finalize monitoring plans. Managers of HCPs are interested in developing one set of monitoring protocols that satisfies specific species and federal dredge and fill requirements. There is also a general interest in developing consistent monitoring plans across Sacramento District HCPs. However, monitoring plans need greater development to be field ready, as they are currently more intentional than prescriptive. HCPs need to use their own land cover types, which would need to be added to EcoAtlas. The Landscape Profile tool could be used to generate reports for HCPs. Foremost, planners can start with creating Plan Area maps and adding projects to maps. Then, planners can use the landscape profile tool to generate acreage reports. It was suggested to have further coordination meetings once CWMW has a chance to review those documents.

Gregg McKenzie spoke of similar needs from the Placer County Land Trust. Currently they are focusing on developing an aquatic resource inventory for what is in the reserve system. The Placer County Land Trust plans to move forward with direct monitoring, testing methods and, eventually, a set protocol based on what is available. Through a partnership with Jessup University, graduate researchers are testing a pilot project that is aquatic-resource driven.

Chris Devine of the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP) has submitted a formal draft for input from the public, but substantial comments have led to dropping several species covered within the plan and have extended the completion date. BRCP is working to increase consistency with other organizations in nearby areas. The BRCP monitoring plan just received a large grant to expand the plan. Though the details are still under development, they will be seeking additional input on this expansion from other organizations.

Action Item: Send CWMW contact information and presentations to HCP sponsors.

Overview of WRAMP Framework and Use of WRAMP by the Lahontan Water Board

Before applying the WRAMP framework, it is essential to have a clear idea of the data's purpose and a careful identification of what data are needed. Built into the WRAMP framework is the Level 1,2,3 classification of data. Paramount to this methodology is correctly identifying the correct level of data needed.

Level 1 (L1) assessments consist of map-based inventories of aquatic resources, including: rivers, streams, and riparian areas, plus related projects that have a direct effect on the distribution and abundance of aquatic resources. Level 2 (L2) assessments are rapid, field based assessments that provide data on the overall aquatic resource condition. The California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) is the baseline for L2 data collection. Level 3 (L3) assessments measure more detailed, quantitative and site-specific resources. The challenge of L3 data is the difficulty of standardizing across specific locations as assessments will vary from site to site. The utility of WRAMP is it prioritizes a standardized method that is used across projects and organizations, in a public context.

Specifically within the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan Water Board), the WRAMP framework was important in bringing together a larger consortium with a common goal of protecting the water quality of Lake Tahoe. WRAMP helped streamline what data was needed by creating one standard map (L1) for the basin. They are now in the process of adding all projects in the area on this map and using CRAM to simplify data collection (L2). As a result, the Lahontan Water Board is now developing a Water Quality Certification-

project template, which is now being reviewed internally. The general consensus to adopting WRAMP has been very positive and has been essential in Lahontan monitoring efforts.

WRAMP Use by the Central Coast Water Board

The Central Coast representatives presented two examples of how L2 development and the WRAMP toolset created a more coordinated approach to wetland management. The first example used L1 mapping for Bar Built Estuaries. This included a complete confluence inventory and using historical habitat maps. The second example included L1 and L2 assessment in coordination with California State Parks. The primary challenges are disparate management and limited CDPR inventory information, limited ability to compare data between systems, and limited understanding of relationships between habitat loss/changes and mouth breaching. They combatted these challenges by working closely with State Parks and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) staff, training them in CRAM, and using a prioritization strategy in threshold evaluations to assess condition vulnerability. The current challenge is storing L3 data, expanding this protocol through the greater coast and adding current projects to Project Tracker.

Unique to this Region was the development and verification of the Riparian Rapid Assessment Method (RipRAM). This method creates an EPA-supported index score that is correlative with CRAM. The Central Coast Water Board has incorporated this into riparian water quality databases (CCAMP data navigator).

For more information on the use of WRAMP and development of RipRAM, please refer to the complete presentation from the Central Coast Wetlands Group.

WRAMP Use in Southern California and Status & Trends Program

The current Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) focus in Southern California is a prime example of why most water quality management programs have limited data on the effectiveness of management efforts. The most recent triennial report concluded they had no definitive monitoring status updates due to a focus on research rather than monitoring. That means organizations collected data on specific species and habitats, but could not answer fundamental questions on effectiveness of management methods. The main reasons for this failure are outlined as follows:

1) Permit structures are set up in a way that does not require monitoring.

2) No one regional organization/staff was positioned to act as an interagency coordinator, neglecting quality control and standardization.

3) Current data information management systems don't facilitate communication amongst researchers/data sets.

The Southern California Stormwater Monitoring Coalition is an important counterpoint for effective water quality monitoring in Southern California. They organizationally require monitoring and have specific staff dedicated to data management, quality control, auditing, etc. As a 6-county program, they prioritize access to data across systems, using the WRAMP Framework.

Live Demo of WRAMP Toolset, Q&A, Open Discussion

Christina Grosso led a live demonstration of the WRAMP toolset in EcoAtlas, with a particular focus on HCP applications. Of note is the ability to use the landscape profiler, CalVeg to populate HCP profiles and the ability to compare performance data indexes (CRAM index scores against the development curve). There is a current effort to create a regional summary dashboard. Please refer to the presentation for more detail.

EcoAtlas Consistency with Open and Transparent Data Water Act

AB 1755: The Open and Transparent Water Data Act of 2016 (Data Management Act) was deemed necessary for more efficient, coordinated water management practices in the state, a goal shared by CWMW. The ultimate goal of the Data Management Act is to make water data available and shareable, without compromising data integrity. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is tasked with implementation, in consultation with the State Water Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and California Water Quality Monitoring Council, with no direct funding. In addition, this legislation is challenged by shifting goals, and the difficulty of integrating existing data from multiple (and often incompatible) databases managed by various agencies into a useful metadata repository. Agencies need to address the issue of how to keep data-origination information with data sets. The law requires a data visualization tool; there could be multiple tools available . Shakoora has meetings set with DWR representatives to discuss the Data Management Act. She will attend the Delta Stewardship Council February meeting and discuss existing WRAMP tools. We can work to develop examples of use-case specific to Delta wetlands mapping and monitoring.

Commented [AMS1]: I think we need to discuss what you mean here.

Commented [IT2R1]: There was a pretty lengthy discussion on using a data ID system to keep data linked with its original source.

Tony Hale, Ph.D., from the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) provided this information on EcoAtlas and how it relates to AB-1755; please refer to the full presentation for more detail

Action Item: Shakoora will present at the February Delta Council meeting and will work with Jon and Josh on messaging.

EcoAtlas Business Plan

The EcoAtlas business plan is formatted in three parts: background and history, funding models, and a business plan. Each point can be used as a separate deliverable, or they can be combined, depending on the context. The diversity of EcoAtlas and its applications poses a challenge in identifying a single funding source. Thus, a major point of discussion in the business plan was weighing funding options within a hybrid model. The hybrid model should consider the interrelational aspects of collection cost, storage and distribution. The “general service agreement” model that would be a general buy-in that then allows access to the core common library and peripheral summaries and customization. An alternative is a project-based funding model in which participants pay for access to a particular project. Foremost the plan needs to incorporate the new State FSR Process (PAL) and have CWMW review the core principles for input.

Action Item: SFEI to send a draft Business Plan in the next two weeks, which CWMW members and co-chairs can send comments in track changes by end of March. SFEI will work with co-chairs to develop a revised Plan for review at the May meeting.

Updates

104 (b)(3) Request for Proposal (RFP)

The Wetland Program Plan is currently in the signature chain and will be sent to EPA shortly. The EPA should release RFP within the next couple of weeks.

Bay Area Regional Monitoring Plan(RMP)/Permitting Program

The EPA is leading the effort to set up the Bay Wetland Monitoring Program. The group should at a minimum coordinate with CWMW, but could also be a regional group under CWMW. CWMW can help bring commonality to regional wetland programs so that data is comparable across the state. We should add tenet to the CWMW charter to help coordinate among regional monitoring programs.

Level 2 Committee

The L2 Committee will send an update report to CWMW in the next week. The committee would like input as to whether data uploaded to CRAM should be defaulted as public or left as private. The L2 Committee will likely be ready to develop CRAM Version 7 in the next couple of years. The committee would like input on whether we put an "active status" on the website for CRAM trainers. We will have an L2 agenda item for next meeting for further discussion.

2016 Progress Report

Co-chairs have written progress report for the Monitoring Council with input from select members. Melissa Scianni will add HCP coordination as a 2017 priority.

Announcements

- Jon Marshack, Monitoring Council, will be retiring after the next scheduled CWMW meeting.

Future Agenda Items

- EcoAtlas business plan (Josh/Tony)
- WRAMP training approach (Josh/Kevin)
- Delta CARI (Josh)
- State of the State's Wetlands Report (Chris)
- CRAM Survey Results (Joanna)
- Technical Bulletin Update (Melissa/Cliff)
- Bay Area RMP/Permitting Program Update (Josh/Jen/Melissa)

- L1 Committee formulation (Hildie, Josh)