

California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup
January 13, 2009 Meeting Minutes
SWRCB, Sacramento

Attendees:

In attendance:

Bill Orme, State Water Board
Chad Dibble, CDFG
Chad Roberts, Humboldt Bay Hrbr Dist.
Cliff Harvey, SWRCB
Craig Wilson, CDFG
Genevive Sparks, Central Valley
RWQCB
John Oram, SFEI
Jon Marshack, State Water Board
Josh Collins, SFEI
Melissa Scianni, USEPA
Paul Jones, USEPA
Roger Vale, UC Merced
Robert Soleki – Central Valley RWQCB
Wade Eakle, USACE SPD

On phone:

Andree Greenberg, SF Bay RWQCB
Chris Potter, Resources Agency
Cori Farrar, USACE Los Angeles
Dave Castanon, USACE, Los Angeles
Eric Stein, SCCWRP
Kevin O'Connor, MLML
LB Nye, LA RWQCB
Martha Sutula, SCCWRP
Ross Clark, CA Coastal Commission

Meeting Minutes from 1/13/2009 (Craig Wilson)

Minutes approved.

State Wetland Monitoring Plan (Josh Collins)

- Organization and Process
 - State Policy being developed by SWRCB will include a Wetland and Riparian Monitoring Strategy (WRAMP). This strategy could address the basic needs of all the agencies.
 - The SWRCB policy needs to address SB and RB needs, but also be general enough for all agencies to adopt. This policy should be the mechanism to provide a statewide monitoring program.
 - The Policy TAT develops technical recommendations for the SWRCB. These recommendations should come to CWMW for review and comment before they get to the SWRCB. There is currently no agreement, memo, etc stating that this needs to happen. Do we want to formalize this in the TAT workplan?
 - CWMW should be the clearinghouse for interagency technical review. This is essential for development of policies that are acceptable to all agencies.
 - If CWMW takes on this role, it will be more work than just bimonthly meetings. We need to start sharing written documents for other agencies to comment on. Documents shared through CWMW should be marked as “CWMW Draft”.

Comment [JC1]: I tried to indicate decisions based on my notes, which I took per bullet on each slide.

- The first statement on Josh's slide needs to be made into a vision statement. The existing vision drafted by the SWRCB for the WRAMP needs to be revised to reflect the intent that the WRAMP has multiple agency application.
- The organization slide needs to be simplified and described verbally for the monitoring plan.
- 5 Key Technical Elements
 - The five elements of the monitoring plan are: Portal/Tracker, base map, ambient assessment, project assessment, and method development/refinement.
 - The written plan should highlight regulatory transparency. This could be captured in the vision statement.
 - Group agreed the above elements are the key elements of the plan.
- Data Framework
 - The basic framework is 1,2,3 plus Tracker.
 - The items presented on this slide in Josh's ppt are examples of each level. This needs to be made clear in the written document.
- Regional Framework
 - Regional capacity will need to be developed for data management and training. This capacity could be built around existing infrastructure such as the regional boards or SWAMP data centers.
 - The monitoring plan will be larger than just the water boards and each agency has its own regions. However, we should build on what we have. It will be too expensive to try and establish new SFEI/SCCWRP groups throughout the state.
 - While we will need a regional focus for data management and training, we will want a statewide plan for implementation of the strategy to maintain statewide consistency.
 - It was decided that it is necessary to establish boundaries for the data centers to establish who maintains what data and who is responsible for QA/QC in a given location.
 - It was decided that the state should be divided up by eco-region for data management and other tasks that require a regional focus. Eco-regions should be given names rather than numbers to avoid confusion with agency regions.
 - Right now we should focus on what we are implementing and worry about the who later.
 - This slide will be rewritten as outlined above for the written document.
- Questions
 - The monitoring plan should help address the needs of the government and public. We need to develop questions that we and public want answered.
 - Ideally a wetland classification system should be developed after we have identified the critical questions. In reality, the TAT will make assumptions about the questions and move forward with developing a wetland classification recommendation.
 - Our information needs will drive the questions. This is not a one-way street. We need to develop a diagram outlining how we will develop and modify questions.

- Each agency has its own questions. There will be both ambient and project questions. We need to organize the specific questions into categories and then develop overarching questions for each category. These overarching questions will be the questions the SB 1070 Council wants answered.
 - We need to make sure that we are collecting data that can be translated and used to answer agency specific questions. Even if we cannot answer every detailed question for all groups, individual groups can pull data off of Tracker to perform their own assessments.
 - We do not know all the relevant questions right now so we need to have the ability to ask new questions and get new answers in the future. We need to develop a framework to develop and update the questions.
- Next Steps
 - The status of the WRAMP tasks can be translated into a progress report for the overall state plan. This could help inform resource allocation.
 - We need to develop a written monitoring plan that can be vetted through each agency. Josh will start to develop this for the next meeting.
 - We should review the state agencies comments on the WDP report. This could help inform development of the plan.
 - Need to address whether or not the TAT is morphing into an advisory team for CWMW rather than just the SWRCB.

Action Items:

- Josh will start drafting a written version of the monitoring plan.
- Goal of the next meeting will be to agree on the outline of the monitoring plan and core questions.
- Chris Potter will email the WDP report comments to Josh.

Data Portal

Technical Design (John Oram, SFEI)

- The portal needs to be more than just an access page; it should be an exploration tool for the public to find wetland data.
- Essential components of a data portal include: Interactive, search capabilities, related information box, login, multimedia, ability to answer predefined questions via links, links from graphs/tables to data, and the ability to share information with others.
- We will not be able to develop all of these capabilities immediately. We need to identify what is the most important and start there.
- We need to be strategic about how the portal is developed and should develop a long-term vision so the portal is not outdated before it comes out.
- The portal needs to link to non-resident data (e.g. SWAMP).
- We need something like an Information Technology Advisory Team (ITAT) to help the CWMW plan and develop the wetland portal. The ITAT could be a loose collaboration of people that advises the Council and the workgroups.

- The CWMW is ahead of other workgroups in organization and planning for monitoring and for portal design. It plus the ITAT could show the way for other workgroups and develop technology that other groups might by use.
- If there is an ITAT, it should involve Karl Jacobs and other state experts working on data management and web-based data access systems.

Portal Content (Martha Sutula)

- We need to agree on: Scope of habitat types to include in Tracker. Questions and general type of content portal should feature.
- Portal will be organized around level 1,2,3 framework.
- Process for developing portal.
 - Scope of habitat types.
 - Key questions (relate to questions for monitoring plan)
 - Critical data types
 - Key functionality
 - Develop database and user interface
- There will be substantial overlap among the workgroups and we need to talk with the Council about how to proceed.
- The portal needs to include links to static data such as management reports.
- We should choose one question and have the portal focus on that for now.
 - Should we choose a more detailed question and focus on a specific watershed or county or choose a more general question that can be answered for the entire state? If we have to choose, then the latter is more appropriate at this time.
- The written plan should identify a question and work through the process. A paper example of how answering one question informs others and involves the 1—23 framework plus the portal should be included as an appendix in the monitoring plan.
- It is likely that the plan and portal will initially focus on the question: where are the wetlands? It might then move on to the question: are the wetlands healthy?

Portal Funding (Bill Orme, Jon Marshack)

- Bond money frozen for foreseeable future (maybe as long as two years).
- SFEI has overhead money to continue the development of level one data in Tracker through October.
- There was a 30% cut in CIAP funding. The current budget is \$795,000. The adjusted scope is focused on Wetland Tracker, building a North Coast regional wetlands team, and validating CRAM for depressional wetlands. The scope for Wetland Tracker is based on priority tasks as of last April, minus what SFEI has funded on its own since then. More of the CIAP funds could move to IT, but this would take money away from other CIAP tasks, and there is a limit as to how much the workplan can be altered. This money might be available as early as June.

Comment [JC2]: I don't think we covered all this, but it is a more accurate appraisal of where CIAP scope is at this time.

Action Items:

- Build out an example in written monitoring plan of how to answer one question in the data portal. This could be placed in an appendix that will be implemented once money is available.

- The Council needs a progress report from CWMW. Eric will draft the report based on the meeting minutes and present at the next Council meeting. This report should have a positive spin but also address areas of concern, including funding shortfalls.

Announcements

104(b)(3) Grant (Paul Jones)

- EPA has 1.9 million to disperse. Grants will be 50,000-300,000.
- Proposals need to be consistent with EPA's regional and national priorities.

SWAMP/CRAM (Ross Clark, Paul Jones)

- Moss Landing Marine Labs is submitting a report on the results of a pilot project.
- CRAM was used alongside three level 3 protocols to assess stream sites throughout the state.
- There was tight correlation between CRAM and the level 3 data. However, each level of data (CRAM and Level 3) provided different but complementary information.
- DFG staff are now incorporating CRAM into the monitoring of SWAMP reference sites.
- SFEI briefed the State Department of Parks and Recreation on CRAM at the DPR annual science conference. DPR expressed interest in using CRAM to assess State Park wetlands. Josh forgot to mention this in the meeting and has added it to the minutes.

Comment [JC3]: I forgot to mention this.

Vernal Pool Forum (Paul Jones)

- Two follow up sessions are currently scheduled.
 - March 26: wetland monitoring and performance standards
 - May 28: preservation versus other forms of compensatory mitigation.
- Sacramento District is ready to start requiring CRAM. Mike Jewel can come to a CWMW meeting to coordinate the role out of CRAM with the other Districts and agencies.
- Sacramento District is also undertaking a 6 county aquatic resources survey, including suitability for development.

Reference Network (Paul Jones)

- Contains two elements.
 - Framework for developing the wetland reference network and regional audit teams.
 - Build additional capacity in the central valley and Sierra foothills.
- Have a statewide team and have held the kickoff meeting.
- Working on developing a goal statement for the reference network and how it feeds into the state monitoring plan.
- EPA grant will not fund full framework but will fund initial population of the network.

State of the State's Wetlands Report (Paul Jones)

- The WDP report was sent to the state resource agencies for comment. Resources agency is currently receiving feedback.

- The State Report itself is still at a very draft stage.
- EPA is working on closing out the grant.
- Chris Potter will send the comment letters to Josh.

Future Meetings

Next Meeting will be on Monday May 18 from 9 am - 4 pm at SWCCRP.

Items to cover at the May meeting:

- Monitoring Plan (Josh)
 - Draft outline of plan
 - Next stage of data portal design concepts
- Wetland Classification (Josh)
- Monitoring methods and performance criteria for compensatory mitigation (Paul Jones)
- CWMW website (Chris Potter)

Potential Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Update on the Riparian Definition work of the TAT
Examination of CRAM peer review
Review of CIAP Workplan
SWAMP discussion with Terry Fleming from EPA
State agency comments on the WDP report