

California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup

Minutes

May 5, 2015

Delta Conservancy, Sacramento

Attendees

In Attendance

Ana Maria Saenz, State Water Board
Bill Orme, State Water Board

Brian Dailey, State Water Board

Chris Potter, CA Natural Resources

Cliff Harvey, State Water Board

Eric Stein, SCCWRP

Jeanie Mascia, State Water Board

Jon Marshack, Monitoring Council

Kathryn Kynett, Delta Cons.

Kris Jones, Monitoring Council

Kristen Van Dam, Urban Creeks
Council

Melissa Scianni, USEPA

Paul Jones, USEPA

Phil Stevens, Urban Creeks Council

Ross Clark, MLML

Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, Delta Cons.

By Telephone

Elaine Blok, NWI

Karina Johnson, Santa Monica Bay
Restoration

Ross Clark, Central Coast Wetlands
Group

Meeting Minutes

- February 2015 meeting minutes were approved after edits and were posted to the CWMW website.
- Next CWMW meeting is August 4, 2015 at the State Water Resources Control Board.

Coordination with Other Workgroups (All)

The Healthy Streams Partnership has renamed their workgroup the “Healthy Watersheds Partnership”. The workgroup will still focus on streams, but at a watershed scale, and will operate more in line with the USEPA’s Healthy Watersheds Initiative program. The question of whether, this may change the focus of other workgroups was discussed. CWMW efforts at developing information about our wetlands at the watershed scale is consistent with the new focus of the Healthy Watersheds Partnership

WRAMP Strategic Planning Sub-committee Updates

Outreach (Chris Potter)

SFEI and SCCWRP provided updates on their outreach activities in advance of the meeting. There was no update on other committee activities.

Sub-Committee Members: Chris Potter, Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, Josh Collins, Paul Jones, Eric Stein, Jeanie Mascia.

Institutionalizing WRAMP Tools (Bill Orme)

The latest effort made by this subcommittee was a presentation made to the Monitoring Council on February 23 by Tony Hale outlining the need for a business plan for institutionalizing WRAMP tools. The Monitoring Council expressed concern that the business plan did not appear to satisfy their request for a business plan for all Monitoring Council work groups, expressed in the December 2014 Triennial Audit Report. The subcommittee will make adjustments to the business plan proposal based on comments received at the Monitoring Council's meeting. Meanwhile, a funding proposal for the wetland Status and Trends project is being initiated by State Water Board staff as a BCP for 2016.

The subcommittee has concluded that an interagency subscription service for EcoAtlas may be the most viable model for the business plan given the formidable state IT obstacles to "adopting" an existing IT system such as EcoAtlas. These same IT obstacles have stalled Online 401 project at the State Water Board. State Water Board staff went through the steps of obtaining approval by the California Department of Technology for the Online 401 project and then worked with the State Water Board Division of Information Technology (DIT) on the Feasibility Study Report (FSR). However, DIT has not moved forward with finalizing the FSR and has no immediate plans to do so. State Board staff will brief DWQ management in June on the need for the project in the hopes of obtaining enough support to re-ignite the FSR process, but will need a backup plan in case the process cannot go forward.

Sub-Committee Members: Bill Orme, Jeanie Mascia, Tony Hale, Josh Collins, Keven O'Connor, Melissa Scianni, Cristina Grosso, Brian Dailey, Megan Cooper and Rebecca Loeffler.

L3 Committee Development (Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon)

The L3 sub-committee has met three times and discussed the following topics since its formation in July 2014:

- 1- reviewed and clarified their two main objectives regarding Level 3 data standardization and CRAM
- 2- Identified key actions to help with meeting the Subcommittee objectives
- 3- Identified key groups that are currently working on effort related to L3 types of data throughout the state. The L3 Subcommittee will collaborate with other efforts to help in standardizing Level 3 data. L3 Subcommittee goal is to get a better understanding of monitoring protocols that are being developed for different types of wetlands.
- 4- L3 has discussed a list of suggested protocols for each CRAM class

Sub-Committee Members: Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, Tony Hale, Keven O'Connor, Marco Sigala, Megan Cooper, Karina Johnston, John Kleinfelter

L1 Committee Development (Chris Potter)

The L1 sub-committee was not able to give an update on progress at this time.

Sub-Committee Members: Chris Potter, Bill Orme, Eric Stein, Kevin O'Connor, Paul Jones, Tony Hale.

WRAMP Science Plan (Cliff Harvey)

The WRAMP Science Plan sub-committee was not able to give an update on progress at this time. However, the workgroup discussed the need for external processes of WRAMP tools, specifically out of state agencies. Also, a funding source for the WRAMP Science Plan is yet to be determined.

Next Steps for Strategic Plan (All)

The workgroup discussed the approach of the subcommittees. Specifically, the CWMW discussed the timing of the subcommittees reporting back to the group and if the expectation for reporting back every meeting was too much.

The workgroup agreed that the strategic planning has been effective and it was agreed that another strategic planning meeting will be held in July. In advance of that meeting, each subcommittee should prepare an outline of what they have accomplished in the last year and proposed priorities for 2016. At the meeting the Workgroup will refine the priorities for each committee.

ACTION ITEMS:**WRAMP Strategic Planning Sub-committees**

- Jon Marshack will check room availability at the CalEPA building for the strategic planning meeting.
- Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon will check room availability at the Delta Conservancy for the strategic planning meeting
- Paul Jones will send out a Doodle Poll to set a date for the strategic planning meeting, based on room availability.
- Sub-committees will prepare outlines in advance of the strategic planning meeting.

Monitoring Council Requests (Jon Marshack)

The Monitoring Council has asked CWMW to refocus the Business Plan to be in line with what was requested in the “First Triennial Audit of Implementing a Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California” (December 2014). Specifically, the Monitoring Council requests that CWMW focus on developing, “a business plan to identify key workgroup actions, necessary resources, and potential funding sources that would ensure workgroup sustainability.” In addition, the business plan would identify “those monitoring, assessment and reporting mandates of governmental agencies and non-governmental partners that can be addressed more effectively through utilization of the Monitoring Council’s collaborative workgroup processes, tools, and the My Water Quality Portals.”

ACTION ITEMS:

- The subcommittees will add an agenda item to the next strategic planning meeting to address and correct the business plan to reflect the requests outlined in the triennial report.
- Monitoring Council staff will create a template for each of the workgroups to use that will increase consistently and specifically outline what is expected in the business plan.

- The committee chairs will populate the provided template as best they can as a starting point for discussion at the strategic planning meeting.

L2 Committee Update (Cliff Harvey)

The L2 – Rapid Assessments Committee distributed the quarterly report to the CWMW. Final edits were made to the document that was distributed to the workgroup and the final version will be posted to the CWMW website. The Quarterly Report outlines:

- **Riparian Condition Assessments:** Developed by the Urban Creeks Council, the Riparian Vegetation Reference Index (RiVR) is a quantitative assessment method which seeks to use data from best attainable condition riparian reference sites in California to help set restoration goals, and to help design and assess restoration sites.
- **National Wetlands Condition Assessment (USEPA):** The update states that preparations are being made for the 2016 assessment with changes made from lessons learned from the 2011 survey.
- **SFEI Caltrans Contracts:** Contracts are being studied to examine the relationship of wetland size and assessment area size to condition for Depressional wetlands.
- **Vernal Pool Module Update and Issues:** Validation of the existing Vernal Pools modules is set for spring, 2016. Minor revisions to the module are expected in advance of the field work.
- **CCWG Updates:** Efforts are in place to update the bar-built estuary study for California State Parks along with coordination with the Estuary Monitoring Workgroup to get research results into the Estuary Portal.
- **CRAM validation of Slope Wetlands Module:** Representatives from SFEI and MLML are preparing for Slope Wetland Module work in the coming 2015 field season. A draft study plan for L2 consideration is forthcoming, including various sites on National Forest lands.
- **Arid/Episodic Stream Module Development:** Arid stream module development continues. A more complete and informative update is expected for the next quarterly report.
- **CRAM Training Update:** The update for CRAM training includes: four new Journeyman Trainers are currently being qualified as CRAM trainers; Cram-a-Ganza will be held in San Diego on May 18-19, 2015.
- **Proper role of L2 in Academic Settings:** Grant proposals to develop curricula that would incorporate CRAM into academic courses or programs have been proposed, and L2 has been asked to provide letters of support for those proposals. As of yet, those requests have been declined.

Riparian Vegetation Reference Index or RiVR (Kristen Van Dam, Urban Creeks Council)
Senior Ecologist at the Urban Creeks Council, Kristen Van Dam, gave a presentation on the Riparian Vegetation Reference Index (RiVR) to the CWMW to outline a L2 quantitative assessment method which seeks to use data from best attainable condition riparian reference sites in California to help set restoration goals, and to help design and assess restoration sites. This is in response to mitigation and restoration sites that do not perform in accordance with permitting criteria in the long-term due to inadequate application of data to inform recovery goals, short-term performance phases, and lack of support for long term maintenance. RiVR consists of structural vegetation metrics and detects detailed aspects of site composition. The four basic forest structure attributes include species richness, species relative abundance, size class distribution, and stem density. The presentation outlined results of the application of the above listed methods and measurements. For specific data, please refer to [the presentation slides](#) posted to the CWMW website.

Riparian Rapid Assessment Method (Ross Clark)

The goal of the Riparian Rapid Assessment project is to develop a tool to assess stream riparian areas remotely and onsite. This provides the flexibility to assess areas that are not accessible. Currently, the focus is aimed at the Central Coast, specifically the Morro Bay watershed.

Restoration Performance Curves (Eric Stein)

A briefing was given to the CWMW outlining the use of performance curves for CRAM assessments in tidal wetlands and wadeable streams' restoration sites to evaluate restoration projects. Analyzing performance curves can indicate future performance of restoration sites, predict average project condition, and inform adaptive management measures. This use of performance curves for CRAM assessments was recommended by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during a CRAM peer review. For specific information about this study, please refer to [the presentation slides](#) posted to the CWMW website.

There was agreement that performance curves should developed for all CRAM modules. It was also suggested that the use of CRAM assessments in agency regulatory and grant funding activities should be encouraged by creating fact sheets and/or giving presentations to interested agencies. Furthermore, efforts should be made to encourage agencies to require baseline CRAM assessment monitoring in Prop 1 funded projects.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Eric Stein will begin work on a fact sheet that will provide information on the use of performance curves for restoration site evaluation.

Updates

- 2016 NWCA (Paul Jones)
Preparations are being made for the spring 2016 assessment; EPA is expecting the Moss Landing Marine Lab to take the lead on the assessment. MLML is working on finalizing the results from the 2011 assessment and will present the findings at a future meeting.
- S&T Funding (Chris Potter)
A consistent source of funding for S&T is still being pursued. Discretionary contract funding from the State Water Board was investigated, but annual funding would not be guaranteed. Better alternatives appear to be funding through the BCP processor or through the Water Board Supplemental Environmental Project program where violators voluntarily agree to support beneficial projects as settlement to enforcement actions.
- Ongoing Outreach Efforts (All)
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board is moving forward with a wetland policy. It was suggested that language be added to the Board resolution referring to WRAMP wetland assessment tools.
- Prop 1 Monitoring and Reporting Requirements (Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon)
The Delta Conservancy worked with MLML and SFEI to develop suggested WRAMP and SWAMP language to incorporate into Prop 1 Guidelines, and shared this standardized language with all Departments that administer the Proposition 1 Grant Program. The Delta Conservancy has initiated coordination with WCB, Coastal Conservancy, State Water Board, DFW and other agencies. DFW has agreed to incorporate some reference to WRAMP. The Coastal Conservancy will incorporate reference to WRAMP in their grant agreements for appropriate projects, but will have more general language in their guidelines. The Delta Conservancy will also work with the Delta Science program to help projects with monitoring and assessment. .

Announcements

Paul Jones announced that CWMW co-chair Melissa Scianni will be taking some extended personal leave and moving to USEPA's Los Angeles office. The CWMW are considering nominating an acting co-chair in her absence. This will be addressed at the next meeting.

104(b)(3) Grant Proposal Coordination

CWMW shared and facilitated collaboration on specific grant proposals. EPA was not present for this discussion.

Potential Topics for Future Meetings

- WRAMP Strategic Plan Meeting Outcomes
- Report out on S&T Pilot Final Report
- T-Sheet Analysis

- Updates on WRAMP Pilot Efforts
- Corps presentation on Monitoring Guidelines and other SOPs
- 104(b)(3) grants awarded
- Report on 2011 NWCA results
- Discuss federal chair position
- Carbon sequestration in wetlands

Next Meeting:

August 4, 2015