

California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup
August 25, 2008 Meeting Minutes
SCCWRP, Costa Mesa

Attendees

Bill Kirchner, USFWS
Bill Orme, SWRCB
Bryant Chesney, NOAA Fisheries
Chad Dibble, CA Dept. Fish and Game
Chad Roberts, Humbolt Bay Harbor District
Cliff Harvey, SWRCB
Craig J. Wilson, CA Dept. Fish and Game
David Castanon, USACE Los Angeles District
Derrick Adachi, CA Dept. Water Resources
Eric Gillies, CA State Lands Commission
Eric Stein, SCCWRP
Genevieve Sparks
Jon Marshack, SWRCB
Josh Collins, SFEI
Kevin O'Connor, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
LB Nye, RWQCB Los Angeles
Martha Sutula, SCCWRP
Melissa Scianni, USEPA
Paul Jones, USEPA
Peter von Langen, RWQCB Central Coast
Robert Solecki, RWQCB Central Valley
Ross Clark, CA Coastal Commission
Shin-Roei Lee, RWQCB San Francisco

Meeting Minutes from 7/18/08

Meeting minutes were approved by the group.

Charter Document (Eric Stein, All)

Mission Statement: Add statement regarding improved information access to the public and an overarching goal statement such as: development of a comprehensive wetland monitoring program for the State of California.

Membership: The group decided not to include local governments or NGO's as members, but instead to include a specific objective to facilitate communication, information transfer, and coordination with these groups. If desired, we can form local government workgroups. The group agreed that SCCWRP, SFEI, UC Davis, and MLML

are not actually representing traditional NGO's in the CWMW, rather they are functioning as data centers. The term NGO should be changed to "data center management organizations" in the Charter Document.

Objectives and Activities: The long list of objectives and activities is not necessary for a charter document. Include a few overarching/priority objectives and use the more detailed list as a starting point for a work plan to accompany the charter. Priority objectives for the group were identified as:

- Develop a comprehensive wetland monitoring program for the State of California
- Agree upon core wetland and riparian monitoring and assessment tools and methods
- Compile information on existing wetland monitoring programs/activities
- Communicate wetland monitoring information to agency staff and wetland decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels
- Agreement among partner agencies on data sharing

Governance: The group discussed the need for a governance document and decided not to include a section on governance in the charter document. Instead, a companion governance document will be drafted. This document may be added to the charter document in the future. Important items to include:

- Chairship and tenure of chairs
- Setting agendas and getting items onto agendas
- Facilitating meetings
- Decision making
- Recording minutes/notes
- Ongoing communication among group
- Representing workgroup at other meetings – only chairs can represent group, but any members can report on activities.
- Separation of policy vs. technical issues

Next Steps for Charter: EPA, in coordination with the co-chairs, will update the charter document and provide to the group at least two weeks in advance of the next meeting for adoption at the meeting. EPA will also bring a draft governance document to the next meeting for discussion.

Federal Compensatory Mitigation Rule^{*} (Paul Jones, David Castanon)

Paul and David presented an overview of the new Rule. Highlights included:

- This rule does not change when mitigation is required, only where and how it is done (i.e. doesn't change avoidance, minimization, compensation sequence).
- The goal remains no net loss.
- The Rule emphasizes using a watershed perspective.
- In-kind compensation is stressed over out-of-kind.

* PowerPoint presentation emailed out to the group.

- In-Lieu Fee programs were retained as viable options for compensation; however they were reformed and brought up to the standard of banks.
- The Rule establishes a preferred compensation hierarchy: Banks, In-Lieu Fee, Permittee Responsible. However, this hierarchy is not absolute.
- In the absence of a functional assessment the new Rule establishes a minimum compensation ratio of 1:1. Functional assessments can result in an increase or decrease this ratio.
- The Rule establishes 12 elements that must be part of every mitigation plan.

There was a discussion on how most watershed plans are focused on streams and fish or TMDLs rather than wetlands and how these plans are inadequate to plan wetland compensation. There was also a discussion of monitoring requirements, the time period for which monitoring reports must be submitted, and how CRAM might fit into monitoring under the new Rule.

There is a lot of potential overlap between the Federal Mitigation Rule and the objectives of this group. A future agenda item is to identify how elements of the mitigation rule relate to the goals of this group and to the emerging monitoring requirements under the new State policy.

Tools and Results of WDP Project * (Martha Sutula)

This project started the implementation of the assessment toolkit for CA, which was adopted from the EPA Level 1,2,3 Assessment Framework. In this framework, Level 1 is resource inventory and mapping (e.g., NWI), Level 2 is rapid assessment of resource condition (e.g., CRAM), and Level 3 is intensive studies of resource function. There were six products from the project: create a state wetlands steering committee, update statewide wetland inventory, refine toolkit for agency use, establish 3 regional wetland trackers, publish a white paper and CRAM implementation guidelines, develop CRAM training curriculum and materials, and demonstrate toolkit via watershed and estuarine ambient assessments. The presentation focused on the estuarine ambient assessments, but there was interest in discussing the project and resulting products in more detail at a future meeting.

Inter-team variation in CRAM scores from the estuarine ambient assessment was less than 10%, demonstrating that CRAM scores are repeatable. However, training is required to reach this level of precision. Statewide CRAM scores were broken up into quartiles, which are based on the spread of the data not regulatory requirements. In general, CRAM scores were the highest in the north coast and dropped as you moved south. Stressors identified for a particular wetland varied by region, but dikes/levees were an important stressor identified in all regions. These stressors can help interpret scores and inform management decisions. The ambient assessment showed a full range of scores in each region and there was no obvious regional bias in CRAM. The most difficult part of this type of study is data interpretation. There was a discussion on the

* PowerPoint presentation emailed out to the group.

best way to present findings of ambient assessments and comparison of ambient and project data. This group can provide input on the interpretation of CRAM scores in a regulatory context.

Update on State Water Quality Monitoring Council (Jon Marshack, Steven Weisberg)

The State Water Quality Monitoring Council is an advisory group to the Resources Agency and CalEPA. The Council must make recommendations for maximizing efficiency and access of data collection by December 2008. The Agencies are responsible for ensuring that the recommendations are implemented. The Council has identified three challenges to developing a comprehensive monitoring plan for CA: Poor data consistency between programs, the need for tools to better interpret data into information usable to the public, and better access to data collected across programs. The Council has recommended a series of themed data portals for better dissemination of information to the public. The Council will identify a series of subcommittees, of which CWMW is the first. The first web-based portal developed will be for beach water quality. This group would work on the wetlands portal.

The overall goal of the portal is to inform the general public on the overall status/health of wetlands and how effective our investment in wetland programs has been. The portal needs to answer high level questions, not just be a data dump. There is a desire by the public to see general condition thresholds (e.g., good, ok, bad or better, worse). The Water Quality Council would like to start now with the portals and identify data shortcomings rather than wait until all of the data across programs are aligned. A major concern is funding and long-term maintenance of the portals.

The Water Quality Council is meeting October 15 at SCCWRP. The group decided to meet at the same time and location to allow the groups to meet. How to proceed with the wetlands portal will be an agenda item for future meetings.

Products for CWMW* (Josh Collins)

Josh presented potential components of a comprehensive CA wetland monitoring and assessment plan. The fundamental aspects of the plan presented included: comprehensive habitat and project mapping, standardized ambient assessment, standardized project assessment, standardized policy and program assessment, applied and targeted basic research, and public data and information management. This plan follows EPA's 1,2,3 Level Framework. Regional data centers (SFEI, SCCWRP, MLML, UC Davis) would be used for training purposes, data QA/QC, and to communicate data to the public. These data centers already have standardized data collection and management, so they could communicate with each other independently or through an already established database such as CEDEN. It needs to be worked out how these regional centers would link into federal databases such as ORM. Additional data centers will also be needed in other areas of the State, such as the central valley and north coast.

* PowerPoint presentation emailed out to the group.

The monitoring plan needs to clearly identify a long-term strategy, short-term products, and a roadmap for progress. Identifying long-term funding will be an important task for this group. It was suggested that Project Tracker be used as the wetland portal. This presentation will be reorganized and presented to the State Water Quality Council on Oct 15. Josh will send to the group the presentation given on this day and an updated presentation for comment prior to the next meeting.

Future Meetings/Agenda Items

Next meeting will be on October 15, 2008 from 9:00-3:00 at SCCWRP. (Please see information at the end of these minutes regarding SCCWRP and travel to their offices.) The State Water Quality Council is also meeting this day at SCCWRP. Holding the two meetings at the same location will provide the opportunity for the CWMW to meet with the State Council.

EPA, in coordination with the co-chairs, will update the charter document and provide a copy via email at least two weeks in advance of the next meeting for adoption at the meeting.

Josh Collins will update the CWMW Products presentation and provide to the group for comment in advance of the next meeting. It is anticipated that this updated presentation will be shown to the State Water Quality Council on Oct 15.

Eric Stein, in coordination with the other co-chairs, will draft a governance document and provide via email in advance of the next meeting for discussion at the meeting.

Topics for Future Meetings

Adoption of the Charter.

Governance document.

Development of a work plan to accompany the Charter.

More detailed presentation and discussion of the WDP products.

Further discussion of the wetland portal including an update on the State Water Quality Councils' thoughts on the web portals.

Provide the updated CWMW Products presentation to the State Water Quality Council.

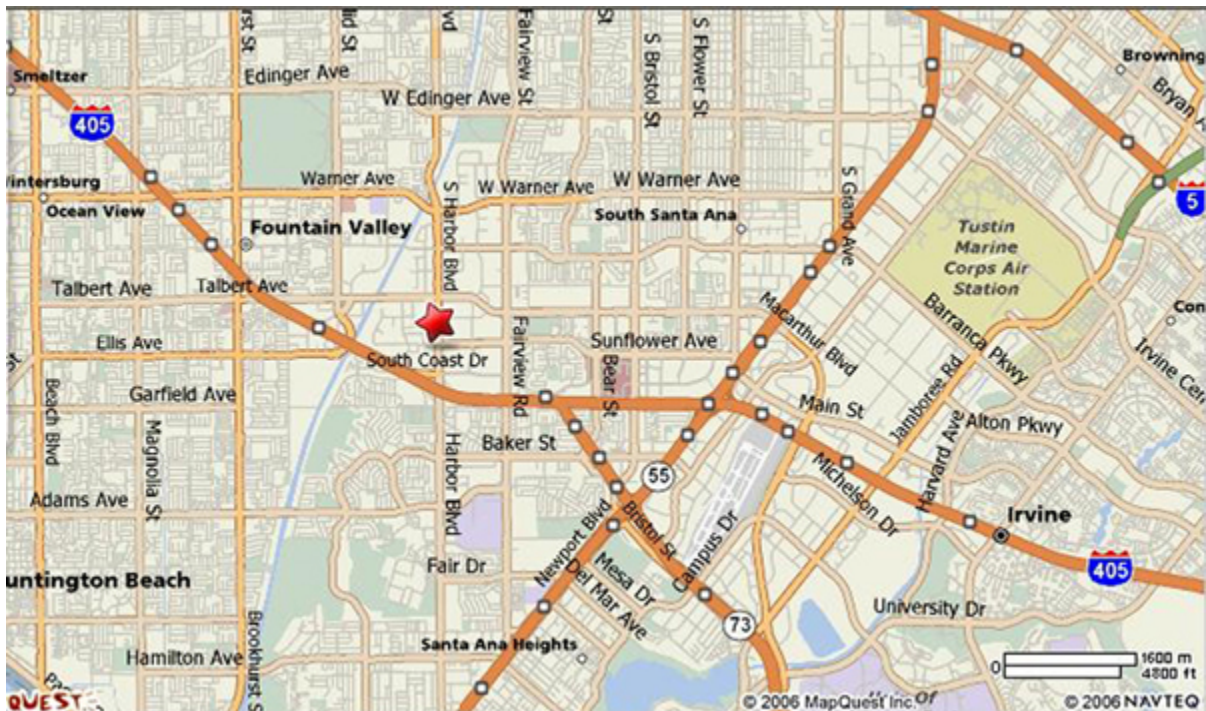
More detailed discussion of the new Federal Compensatory Mitigation Rule and identification of how elements of the mitigation rule relate to the goals of this group and to the emerging monitoring requirements under the new State policy.

Discussion of the State of the States Wetlands Report.

For online information on SCCWRP, visit www.sccwrp.org.
For directions (which are copied below) visit <http://www.sccwrp.org/contact/map.htm>.

DIRECTIONS to SCCWRP

**Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
3535 Harbor Blvd., Suite 110
Costa Mesa, CA 92626**



Directions from Orange County/John Wayne Airport (SNA):

Proceed north on the 405 Freeway

Exit at the South Coast Rd./Fairview Rd./Harbor Blvd. offramp

Follow the ramp (in the left lane) to the Harbor Blvd. exit
(third exit)

CWMW
8/25/2008 Meeting Minutes

Exit the freeway, turning right onto Harbor Blvd. Take Harbor Blvd. to Sunflower Ave.
(third stoplight)

Turn left onto Sunflower Ave.

Turn right into the first driveway

Proceed past the first stop sign

SCCWRP is in the building immediately to the left

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Surface Street Directions from Orange County/John Wayne Airport (SNA) -
Recommend from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.:

Proceed north on MacArthur Blvd. to Harbor Blvd.

Turn left onto Harbor Blvd.

Continue on Harbor Blvd. past one stoplight (Scenic Ave.)

Turn right into the first driveway past Scenic Ave.

Turn left at the first stop sign

SCCWRP is in the building immediately to the right

Directions from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX):

Proceed south on the 405 Freeway

Exit at Harbor Blvd., turning left onto Harbor

Take Harbor Blvd. to Sunflower Ave.
(fourth stoplight)

Turn left onto Sunflower Ave.

Turn right into the first driveway

Proceed past the first stop sign

SCCWRP is in the building immediately to the left

Directions from Ontario International Airport (ONT):

Proceed west on the 10 Freeway to the 57 Freeway south

Take the 57 Freeway south to the 5 Freeway south

Take the 5 Freeway south to the 55 Freeway south

Exit at MacArthur Blvd., turning right onto MacArthur

Take MacArthur Blvd. to Harbor Blvd.

Turn left onto Harbor Blvd.

Continue on Harbor Blvd. past one stoplight (Scenic Ave.)

Turn right into the first driveway past Scenic Ave.

Turn left at the first stop sign

SCCWRP is in the building immediately to the right