

**California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup
Level 2 Assessments Committee
Quarterly Report
Fourth Quarter of 2020**

Message from the Chair: *I will be retiring from the Water Boards on Dec. 2, 2020. A nominee from the State Water Board is expected to be named soon.*

When L2 was established, a State Water Board staff person from the wetlands permitting program was assigned as Chair for the simple reason that the wetlands permitting program needs consistent and reliable wetland assessment methods and a broad base of technical guidance was needed to ensure orderly development and maintenance of assessment methods that might be applied to regulatory decisions. A wetlands program staff person could devote time to this purpose as part of their regular duties.

The chair is an ex officio position that functions more as a secretary than as a presiding officer. It should be filled by one who can creatively facilitate communication and statewide coordination among the members and those we work with, or at least be willing to try. I have tried to serve that role, but I am confident that the committee will continue with progress toward its goals because of the dedication and talent of our members more so than because of the efforts of whoever holds the chair.

It has been an honor to work with all of the L2 members and CRAM trainers, and I greatly appreciate the support, friendship, teaching and encouragement and, at times, patient forbearance that they have given me. I look forward to continuing those friendships as a regular L2 member, and through continued help with CRAM trainings and events.

L2 Committee Quarterly Report – Fourth Quarter of 2020

The Level 2 committee of the California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (L2, CWMW) respectfully submits this report of its fourth quarter activities.

New Chair and New Charter:

The committee continues to support appointment of a chair by the State Water Board. A nomination is expected soon.

The Level 2 Committee is reviewing its charter, which is now 10 years old, and which still exists only as a draft (attachment 1 of this report). The upcoming appointment of a new chair seems like an opportune time to review and update the committee's goals and purpose.

It was noted that an updated charter should include more explicit recognition of many substantial past and ongoing contributions to the Committee's work by our private sector members.

The committee will be preparing a new draft charter and hopes to have a version for consideration and comment by the CWMW at the February, 2020 meeting. We propose that approval of a final version be expected for the May, 2020 CWMW meeting.

CRAM cost-effectiveness and utility:

The Committee is aware of ongoing concerns about cost-efficacy and utility of CRAM data that have recently come up again. The committee will be drafting a compilation of recent case studies to present to CWMW over the next few weeks that may help with these concerns.

Valley Water 10-Year Ambient Resurvey:

The final report of the 10-year ambient resurvey of Coyote Creek for the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) will be compiled over the winter, with new a Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF) plot and a new Habitat Development Curve (HDC) to be part of the final product. Sarah Pearce of SFEI notes that the field work was completed just before the SCU Complex burned much of the study area. About 10 of the 78 study AAs were in the burned area. It has been noted that a post-burn survey would be informative if funding can be obtained.

New Vernal Pool Study:

The USEPA funded Central Valley vernal pool studies, including updated maps (by Carol Witham) and a CDF and HDC that is in progress. Field work was slowed due to the past dry winter and COVID-19 restrictions. Field work was conducted by SFEI and Vollmar consulting. Fieldwork will continue in the Spring of 2021.

Carol Witham is nearing completion of a final updated map, with delivery expected in November. It is expected that these products will be of great utility for conservation and mitigation planning in the Central Valley.

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Online Data Forms:

Digital data forms for the Episodic Riverine Module are now updated and on line at the [CRAM website](http://www.cramwetlands.org) (www.cramwetlands.org). It has been noted that the next urgent need is an update of the Slope Module's online data forms; Version 6.1 data forms are currently available, but funding for Slope version 6.2 data forms – a much improved version – has still not been obtained.

It was also noted that SCCWRP is working with USEPA funding to develop methods for identification of episodic and intermittent streams as called for under new USEPA Clean Water Act rules.

Delta Aquatic Resource Inventory

It was reported that SFEI staff are making significant progress in mapping the Delta Aquatic Resource Inventory (DARI), a comprehensive mapping effort that will become a part of the greater California Aquatic Resource Inventory (CARI). The new DARI will serve many functions as the best available Level 1 data source for the Delta region.

CRAM Training and CRAM-A GANZA:

Training for the year 2020 was severely disrupted by COVID-19 travel and contact restrictions. Ironically, interest and enrollment numbers were up considerably.

Two small classes were conducted by SFEI, one in Richmond and one at South Lake Tahoe, with online lectures and socially distant field practice. All other 2020 classes were indefinitely postponed. This included 2- and/or 5-day classes in Orange County, Riverside, Santa Rosa, and Moss Landing.

The annual look-ahead telephone meeting of trainers will be scheduled for late this year to discuss potential dates for classes next year for those same locations, with the recognition that delays may still be necessary well into the new year. In addition, introductory classes are in planning with the Water Boards Academy, and a RipRAM training curriculum is under development by Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG).

CRAM-A-GANZA:

Similarly, the annual intercalibration exercises for trainers, aka CRAM-A-GANZA, was postponed for 2020 due to COVID-19. It was to be hosted in the Santa Rosa area, with planning led by Dr. Chuck Striplen of the North Coast RWQCB and John Mack of the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department. We are cautiously optimistic that we can reschedule this postponed event for 2021.

Sarah Pearce reports that she will be submitting formal documentation for journeyman trainer status for Leticia Morris and Terry Adelsbach soon. Both are well-qualified practitioners. Leticia has completed 5 days of training with Sarah so far. Terry is an inactive vernal pool trainer who was instrumental with the development of the vernal pool module; he is now seeking to reactivate as a trainer and is seeking qualification for training other modules.

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NWI 2021:

Cara Clark of Central Coast Wetlands Group at Moss Landing reports that a replication of the National Wetland Inventory is being planned for next year. California will be represented by 74 assessment sites, and CRAM will be conducted alongside the NWI protocols at those sites.

Concerns about the sampling strategy from the first NWI in 2012 were largely resolved by the 2016 effort, and are expected to be improved for 2021. The final report for the 2016 NWI is reported to be nearing completion.

As with all planning for next year, it is still unknown how COVID-19 impacts will affect the project.

Publication of Interest regarding Rapid Assessments in Oklahoma:

Chad Roberts has forwarded a journal article on validation of a rapid assessment method for Oklahoma's depressional wetlands: *Validation of the Oklahoma Rapid Assessment Method (OKRAM) in Depressional Wetlands Using EPA'S Three-Tiered Framework* (Gallaway, et al., 2020, *Wetlands* 40:925-937, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13157-019-01238-8>). The members of L2 may find this interesting, in that it is one more study that shows the efficacy of rapid assessments for providing results that correlate with level 1 and level 3 data. A pdf of the article is attached to this agenda.