



SAN FRANCISCO BAY
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 18, 2021

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

FROM: Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer; Caitlin Sweeney, Program Manager
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

SUBJECT: Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program Preliminary Funding Proposal

Background

The San Francisco Bay Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program (WRMP) is an ongoing collaborative effort that responds to the needs of the region to:

- Support efforts to meet regional tidal wetland restoration goals;
- Develop information needed for sea level rise and climate change adaptation and use monitoring data to answer questions of regional importance;
- Inform and facilitate wetland restoration project specific monitoring;
- Support project design and adaptive management by centralizing data management and analysis and adding value to existing monitoring data; and
- Promote greater efficiencies in wetland protection and restoration through regional coordination.

Investments in a region-wide monitoring program can lead to cost and permitting efficiencies over time. The WRMP will improve wetland restoration project success by putting in place regional-scale monitoring, increasing the impact, utility, and application of permit-driven monitoring to inform science-based decision-making.

The WRMP has been in development for the past several years with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as well as in-kind support from a suite of partners. The WRMP is not an entity; it is a collaborative program of a diverse suite of agency and non-profit partners, co-administered by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership and the San Francisco Estuary Institute. To date, the focus has been on developing the framework for the WRMP, both in terms of governance and science. The WRMP partners are now seeking funding to move from program development to implementation.

Advisory Committee Engagement

During the development of performance metrics for the Authority, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Governing Board consider coordinating with the WRMP. A first iteration of performance measures was developed by the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Performance Measures and were presented to the SFBRA Advisory Committee on August 22, 2018. WRMP staff participated in discussions, and the recommendation was made to continue coordination with the WRMP moving forward. Additional caveats listed in that report align with the WRMP approach, including the need to ensure the greatest efficiency and cost effectiveness possible in monitoring requirements.

Staff presented a WRMP briefing and a preliminary funding proposal to the Authority's Advisory Committee on May 14, 2021. The Advisory Committee expressed general support for the preliminary proposal and an interest in continuing to provide input as the proposal is further refined.

Independent Citizens Oversight Committee Annual Review Letter FY 2019/20

The Authority's Independent Citizens Oversight Committee's Annual Review Letter FY 2019/20 recommends the Authority "evaluate updated information regarding optimum restoration goals, then use this analysis to inform and nurture restoration projects as well as to document the value of the sum of the restoration work." The letter identifies the WRMP as a useful tool in this effort. The Annual Review Letter further suggests that the WRMP is the best mechanism to help the Authority answer system-wide questions about ecosystem function, and thus track progress towards contributing to broader ecosystem goals and suggests the WRMP should work closely with the BRRIT to align monitoring requirements. Finally, the Oversight Committee recognizes the limited capacity of Authority staff in implementing their recommendations and endorses pursuing contractual assistance.

Preliminary Funding Proposal

Staff is bringing to the Authority a preliminary proposal for authorization of disbursement of Authority funds to the San Francisco Estuary Institute to advance the Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program (see Attachment 1). After receiving feedback on the preliminary proposal from the Authority, staff will return to the Advisory Committee with a refined proposal in September 2021 and plans to bring a staff recommendation to the Authority at its October 2021 or December 2021 meeting.