



**SAN FRANCISCO BAY**  
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

**MEETING MINUTES**

**San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Advisory Committee Meeting  
November 13, 2020, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

Zoom Teleconference

Agenda and meeting materials are available at:

[www.sfbayrestore.org](http://www.sfbayrestore.org)

**1. Call to Order**

Luisa Valiela, Advisory Committee (AC) Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 am. She gave a brief overview of the agenda and shared information for participating on the Zoom platform.

**2. Determination of Quorum**

AC Member Attendance: Myla Ablog, Ana Alvarez, Sara Azat, Chris Barr, Bruce Beyaert, Carolyn Bloede, Erika Castillo, Steve Chappell, Arthur Deicke, Gregg Erickson, Letitia Grenier, Christopher Gurney, Beth Huning, Zahra Kelly, Shin-Roei Lee, David Lewis, Sally Lieber, Jessica Martini-Lamb, Lisa McCann, Mike Mielke, Ana Maria Ruiz, Rebecca Schwartz Lesberg, Luisa Valiela, Diane Williams, Beckie Zisser

Staff Attendance: Jessica Davenport, Erica Johnson, Maggie Jenkins, Moira McEnespy, Laura Cholodenko, Taylor Samuelson, Linda Tong, Amy Hutzal, Karen McDowell

Maggie Jenkins, AC Clerk, determined there was a quorum at 10:09 am.

**3. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**4. Approval of Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting Minutes of September 11, 2020  
(ACTION)**

**Decision:** There was consensus to approve the meeting minutes for September 11, 2020.

**5. 2021 AC Meeting Schedule (INFORMATION)**

Jessica Davenport, Deputy Program Manager for the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority) discussed the Proposed 2021 AC Meeting Schedule. The 2021 meetings will be held remotely on Zoom unless determined otherwise at a future date. Any changes to meetings will be shared on the Restoration Authority website.

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- The BRRIT monthly meeting is at the same time as the May meeting.
- How does the meeting schedule apply to AC members whose terms are expiring?
  - The November meeting is the last meeting for those with terms expiring.
- An AC member suggested double checking the scheduled meeting dates to ensure they avoid holidays and cultural heritage days relevant to the demographic that the committee represents.
  - The Authority Staff welcome suggestions for altering the schedule to accommodate holidays.

## **6. Chair Report (INFORMATION)**

Chair Valiela reported on the last Governing Board meeting. The Governing Board met on October 2, 2020 and approved two more projects, including the Oakland Shoreline Leadership Academy Project and the Invasive Spartina Removal and Tidal Marsh Restoration Project. Cindy Darling, Chair of Oversight Committee (OC), provided their annual review of the Authority's conformance with Measure AA and Authority's enabling legislation. More information is available on the Restoration Authority website in the OC section. Many AC members have terms expiring February 10, 2021. Members can reapply by submitting applications to Maggie Jenkins and Jessica Davenport by November 13, 2020. Chair Valiela and Vice Chair Ana Alvarez will step down from their leadership positions on the AC, but both will apply to be reappointed as AC members. The Chair and Vice Chair both thanked all the Advisory Committee members and Restoration Authority staff for their support over their past four years of service.

Staff thanked the Chair and Vice Chair for their leadership. The Chair and Vice Chair positions are 2-year terms. Once the Governing Board appoints the new AC members on February 12, 2021, Authority staff will send a message to new and reappointed AC members, and continuing AC members, to ask who would like to be considered for the Chair and Vice Chair positions. At that point members can nominate others or self-nominate and the members can discuss at the February 26, 2021 AC meeting. The Governing Board will then appoint the new Chair and Vice Chair at its April meeting. More written details on the selection process will follow.

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- An AC member asked to clarify the submission deadline for AC member applications.
  - The deadline was November 13, 2020.
- Several AC members thanked the Chair and Vice Chair for their leadership and for keeping the intention of the measure alive.

## **7. Montezuma Wetland Restoration Project Breach (INFORMATION)**

Jim Levine, Chief Engineer for the Montezuma Wetlands LLC presented an update on the Montezuma Wetlands Project. See Appendix A for details.

## 8. Competitive Grant Round 4 and Community Grants Program Update (INFORMATION)

Jessica Davenport, Deputy Program Manager for the Authority, presented an update on Competitive Grant Round 4 and the Community Grants Program. For the first time this year, the authority had a formal pre-app form that was used to start a discussion for both programs. Authority staff received 19 pre-applications for the competitive grant round and held consultations with each prospective applicant. The meetings were useful for advising prospective applicants and for staff to learn more about the projects. The Authority received 18 full applications for the competitive grant round, representing all 4 regions, with \$25 million in funding requests. For the Community Grants Program, the Restoration Authority received three applications, but only one project was eligible because this program targets community-based organizations located in economically disadvantaged communities. Some additional community-based organizations have expressed interest in applying in the near future. Authority staff are doing additional outreach, including four upcoming networking sessions to help facilitate the formation of partnerships between conservation focused organizations and community-based organizations. Information on networking sessions is available on the website.

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- How many AC members are participating in the review of the competitive grant around?
  - There are nine AC reviewers. (Jessica)
- Are the applicants that were not eligible for the community grants program considered for the competitive grant round?
  - The pre-application consultations were held prior to the competitive grant round deadline, which gave applicants from the community grants program the opportunity to submit a full application for the competitive grants program, if interested. The applicants that were found ineligible for the Community Grants Program have the option to find a community-based partner who is willing to lead the project and reapply with the community-based organization as the project lead. The Authority wants to stay true to the equity recommendations from the AC to build capacity among community-based organizations in the Bay Area.
- Are additional reviewers needed for the current grant round?
  - Those interested in participating as a reviewer can contact Authority staff.
  - There is a conflict-of-interest policy that excludes those whose agencies are applying for a grant from participating in the review process.
- Is there a list available showing the applicants for the Community Grants Program?
  - All applications are public information. Authority staff will create a list of the applicants for the Community Grants Program to share.

## 9. Communications Update (INFORMATION)

Taylor Samuelson, Public Information Officer for the Authority, presented a communications update. The draft one-pager was previously produced in the spring with

the full annual report, but Restoration Authority staff have drafted a one-pager closer to the end of the fiscal year in response to feedback from the AC. Taylor thanked the members of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Annual Report, who provided feedback on one-pager and the outline for the annual report. The annual report will highlight the importance of nature during COVID, the human health benefits associated with outdoor recreation and open spaces, and the importance of restoration work in supporting the economic recovery of the region. The one-pager includes a summary, overview of projects funded in the fiscal year, milestones, equity and community engagement metrics, and two charts showing progress towards Measure AA campaign goals and funding allocations compared to regional 20-year funding objectives. The Ad Hoc Subcommittee suggested standardizing charts across years to allow for easy comparison between fiscal years and to track funding by fiscal year rather than grant round. Discussions will continue with the Ad Hoc Subcommittee to get any additional feedback. The map of restoration projects will be included in the annual report.

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- Arther Diecke, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Annual Report, thanked Taylor for her open communication.
- An AC member suggested that the colors should be changed in the funding-by-region plot to more easily differentiate between Round 1 and Round 2.

#### **10. South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project Update (INFORMATION)**

Dave Halsing, Executive Project Manager for the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project, presented an update on the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project. See Appendix A for details.

#### **11. Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT) Update and Request for Suggestions on Permitting Process Improvements (INFORMATION)**

Amy Hutzal, Deputy Executive Officer for the Authority, and Luisa Valiela, Environmental Protection Specialist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), presented an update on the Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT). See Appendix A for details.

#### **12. Announcements (INFORMATION)**

Jessica Davenport thanked all the AC members who are completing their four-year terms for their time and efforts.

#### **13. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

#### **14. Adjourn**

Chair Valiela adjourned the meeting at 12:22 p.m.



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**APPENDIX A: PRESENTATION SUMMARIES**

**San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Advisory Committee Meeting**

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**1. Montezuma Wetland Restoration Project Breach  
(INFORMATION)**

Jim Levine, Chief Engineer for the Montezuma Wetlands LLC presented an update on the Montezuma Wetlands Project. He recognized the instrumental role of the Authority. They launched the project in 1990 and recognized a beneficial use for dredged sediment in the San Francisco Bay that could benefit wetland restoration projects. The project restores 1,600 acres of historical tidal marsh in the null zone (junction of fresh and saltwater) of the San Francisco Bay Estuary, which is recognized as a nursery area for young fish. The project provides an efficient alternative to ocean disposal of dredged sediment. They have received 9 million cubic yards of sediment to date and are able to operate 24/7, 365 days a year. The project area includes farmland and transition zone habitat, as well. Within the project site, the water depth is 22 feet, and also includes seasonal wetland habitat. The area was historically tidal wetland habitat, but immediately prior to the restoration there was little life in the wetlands.

At the south end of the site there are two ponds which can hold over 64 million gallons of water. They are able to safely take non-cover sediment with higher concentration of heavy metals or organics due to the anerobic soil layer that lies below the aerobic soil layer. Under anerobic conditions, cationic heavy metals (cadmium, lead, copper, zinc) form insoluble salts and other chemicals (i.e., DDT) bind to lower soil layers and are sequestered. In a non-erosive environment, they can capture and sequester chemicals in these lower soil layers.

Montezuma Wetlands LLC enacted a conservation easement this year (2020) to protect vernal pools at the project site. They also obtained several regulatory approvals and completed an overhaul of the Liberty sediment offloading system in 2020, including installation of monitoring devices and service of fish screens. In addition to the environmental benefits, the project supports good-paying union jobs.

They recently breached the Phase 1 area in October, which restored tidal connection to 550 acres of wetlands. They have had great success with least tern colonization and there was good survival of least tern chicks this year. They have been filling at the Phase 1 restoration site since 2003 to raise elevations and are on track for wetland target elevations. The Phase 1 site was breached on October 27, 2020 at 8:00 a.m using

excavators. To prepare for the breach, they did transplanting and levee work based on modeling.

After the Phase 1 breach, channels and low marsh cells were filled with water, birds started coming in, and a herd of elk was also observed. A monitoring station was installed 200 yards up from the breach site which collects data on salinity and water depth and has a camera. The salinity was similar in Montezuma Slough after the breach compared to before the breach. They see their site as providing an important role in the recovery of endangered fish species.

The sediment off-loader is available to use for other projects. San Francisco Bay is a leader in sediment reuse due to environmental advocates pressing for new sediment policy, visionary local congressional and Port of Oakland leadership, support from the Bay Planning Coalition and Bay Area Council, willingness of the dredging community to adapt, collective wisdom of several agencies, and a highly innovative and competent project team.

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- An AC member congratulated Jim Levine on the breach and added some historical context. The AC member shared that Save the Bay had sued to stop this project due to contaminant concerns using non-cover material. The lawsuit failed and the eventual success of the project showed the importance of adjusting thought processes to accept some inherent risks in order to meet the urgent needs of restoring wetlands and see the higher benefit of climate change and sea level rise resiliency.
- An AC member asked about the economics, availability of suitable sites, and future plans for similar projects. The AC member also asked how the land will be protected and managed in the future.
  - The project was personally financed in the beginning because bank financing was not available. They relied on private funding. They later won \$75 million in competitive projects to take dredged material after establishing themselves. They established a financial assurance plan where they paid 42 cents for every yard collected into a bank account, which is controlled by the Solano County Treasurer. This has allowed for \$2.4 million for future monitoring. There will be a conservation easement established for all future wetlands. The site was relatively easy to restore due to having a deep-water site for the off-loader and its ecological value. The federal and state wildlife agencies were fast to respond to the project submittals. Other sites in shallow water will require a similar off-loading system. There is a benefit in public-private partnership, which they developed first with the Port of Oakland. These partnerships can accelerate the goals of regional and state agencies. (Jim Levine)
- An AC member congratulated Jim Levine and others that are a part of the project team on the breach. The AC member emphasized the unique ecology of the site and voiced support for the Authority funding this project.
- Chair Valiela asked about how data will be downloaded from the monitoring station and how it will be maintained.

- The data is wirelessly downloaded every 5 seconds and stored in the cloud. They have 24-hour access to the data and cameras. They plan to coordinate with regional wetland monitoring efforts to make the data accessible and useful. (Jim Levine)
- An AC member asked: is it more cost effective to have one regional off-loader for the San Francisco Bay Area or to have two off-loaders given the travel and maintenance costs?
  - Operating a second off-loader would be less cost effective than maintaining and moving a single off-loader to different sites when needed. (Jim Levine)

## 2. South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project Update (INFORMATION)

Dave Halsing, Executive Project Manager for the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project, presented an update on the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project. He emphasized the importance of being flexible rather than single-focused. The South Bay Salt Ponds Project is a multi-phase, multi-decadal project that includes over 15,000 acres, which was acquired from Cargill in 2003. The first goal of the project is to restore a mix of habitat for special status species, primarily tidal marsh habitat. The second goal is to maintain or improve flood protection, which is done in partnership with flood management agencies. The third goal is to provide wildlife-compatible public access opportunities.

The project was started in 2003 with the transfer and purchase from Cargill to federal agencies of 16,500 acres. The acquisition and transfer included the present-day Eden Landing Ecological Reserve, managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Alviso and Ravenswood Ponds of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Some other areas are still owned and operated by Cargill. The project wants to manage ecological trade-offs between tidal marsh species (e.g., CA Ridgway's rail) and salt pond species (e.g., western snowy plover). They established an adaptative management plan, where they work in phases to restore a mix of tidal marsh and managed ponds. In Phase 1, about 25% of the total area was restored to tidal marsh. Phase 2 is currently underway and at the completion of Phase 2, they will reach 50/50 between tidal marsh and managed ponds. The project will end when there is restoration of between 50% and 90% tidal marsh.

Phase 1 was completed in 2014 and resulted in over 3,000 acres of tidal and muted tidal restoration, and over 700 acres of managed ponds enhancements. They have done monitoring and experiments on island shape and salinity to inform restoration, such as studying birds that can be supported by salt ponds. Phase 1 also resulted in public access improvements, including 7 miles of new trails, the Eden Landing kayak launch, and interpretative platforms. The project team is currently in the early stages of implementing Phase 2, which includes 4,000 acres across five locations throughout the bay. Phase 2 also includes flood management and public access components.

The Island Ponds were breached and restored to tidal flows in 2006. As a part of the adaptative management approach, they monitor and modify previous actions. They plan to breach Pond A19 to improve connectivity and benefit native fish. Work on Pond A8

allows gradual recirculation to address uncertainties associated with mercury and they plan to build ecotones for transitional habitat to prepare for future tidal marsh restoration here. They recently partnered with Valley Water to put together a planning grant proposal, which was submitted to the Authority, to reconnect the creek to Pond A8. At the Ravenswood Ponds in San Mateo County, they have been raising the center levee to create hydraulic separation to allow for tidal marsh restoration in Pond R4, enhancement of snowy plover habitat in Pond R3, and improved circulation in managed ponds R5 and S5 for shorebirds and waterfowl.

They are working with the City of Mountain View to address concerns about traffic impacts and how changes to circulation will affect the adjacent landfill at the Mountain View ponds. The goal is to make the 700 acres of the Mountain View ponds fully tidal and to build transition zones. In addition, they will create a public access trail and maintain PG&E access. At Southern Eden Landing, levee enhancements are planned, which take into account flood risk to the neighboring community and public access. They plan to build up berms, install water control structures, restore tidal marsh, improve circulation, and manage it as a muted tidal system along the flood control channel. Additional permitting is needed to alter connection with the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel, a federal levee. Improving nursery habitat connectivity to Alameda Creek here could serve as benefit to salmonid recovery.

The main Phase 2 accomplishments include initiating construction at the A8 and Ravenswood Ponds, the Island Ponds going to bid, and completing 30% designs and beginning 60% designs and permitting at Eden Landing in consultation with the Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT). They have also continued to collaborate with the Bayfront Canal Project and establish easements. The challenges have been importing material and meeting grant timelines. Grants have been used for design and permitting, science, monitoring, adaptive management, and funds will be applied to construction. Future funding will be needed for Eden Landing (\$25-35M).

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- Which of the ponds at Eden Landing are a part of the mitigation for repairing levees and raising levees to protect against sea level rise and what is the status of that project?
  - There are ongoing discussions currently. One restoration mitigation opportunity that is being looked at involves acquiring Pond 3C from Cargill and integrating into the larger Eden Landing area.
- Are there partnerships with indigenous people in the area? Do you get advice on public access?
  - The South Bay Salt Ponds Project was put in motion a decade ago and outreach on public access was done at that time. Native American tribes were not specifically targeted in the outreach effort, but outreach was conducted broadly within the local communities. They recognize the need to expand their reach in the future and will consider targeting outreach to tribes and other communities.
  - Diane Williams volunteered to help make the connection to the appropriate tribes.



- What is being done in Phase 2 to improve restoration target for terns, avocets, and stilts?
  - They are continuing to build islands and are spacing them out more. The original hypothesis was that they could put many islands in a single pond, but that did not work, so they are adjusting the approach. The social attraction experiments and island topping treatments have been successful, and they will continue these. They also learned the importance of terrestrial and avian predator control. They plan to devote energy to make that piece more efficient.

### **3. Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT) Update and Request for Suggestions on Permitting Process Improvements (INFORMATION)**

Amy Hutzler, Deputy Executive Officer for the Authority, and Luisa Valiela, Environmental Protection Specialist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), presented an update on the Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT). The purpose of the BRRIT is to improve the permitting process for multi-benefit habitat restoration projects and associated flood management and public access infrastructure in the Bay Area. The BRRIT is comprised of six state and federal agencies and has ad hoc participation from U.S. EPA. The effort to create the BRRIT started in March of 2017 after Measure AA passed in 2016. The major milestones thus far include developing a proposal for a dedicated permitting team (January 2018), beginning meetings with the Policy and Management Committee (PMC) (September 2018), securing funding (March 2019), and staffing the BRRIT (August 2019). The BRRIT has now permitted a couple of projects and has funding in place through June 2024, which includes about \$1.2 million per year plus in-kind services from agencies. Funders include the Bay Area Toll Authority, San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, State Coastal Conservancy, East Bay Regional Park District, and Santa Clara Valley Water District.

The BRRIT is actively working on 16 projects in different phases. As BRRIT started, they had three projects already in the permitting phase without robust pre-application meetings. Projects that were already at a permitting phase in 2019 did not have the benefit of pre-application discussion and had permitting challenges. Permitting challenges of two projects in 2019 provided for learning lessons that will benefit future projects. The ability to conduct site visits has been impacted under COVID, but the BRRIT continues to serve projects despite these challenges. They had a one-year check-in with the PMC and BRRIT staff. The PMC developed the permit and policy improvement list and is working to resolve issues. They plan to share this list on the BRRIT website. The goal of the BRRIT is to assist restoration projects, and projects should consider getting on the BRRIT project list early on so that the pre-application consultation can help work through issues that may hold up permitting otherwise.

The BRRIT asks for project submissions every six months. To get on the list, applicants need to be on the Authority email list, the project needs to be in EcoAtlas Project Tracker, and the project needs to be eligible for Authority funding. Email sign-up is available on the Authority website. The project does not need to receive funding from the Authority to be added to the BRRIT list but does need to be eligible for Authority funding, as determined by Authority staff. At this point, all eligible projects have been

added to the BRRIT list. The BRRIT provides feedback while the project is in the planning and design phase through pre-application meetings. The BRRIT typically conducts site visits, but these are on hold due to COVID. In addition to the BRRIT, the PMC is also available as a resource to help address issues.

The BRRIT requires sufficient information describing the current conceptual approach to the project. The BRRIT expects that the project proponents identify how agency feedback was incorporated or provide an explanation if it was not and that the project proponents have complete applications. Thus far, the BRRIT has learned the importance of addressing permitting issues early on in the pre-application phase. The BRRIT is open to feedback. More information is available on Authority website.

The following comments and questions were raised by the AC:

- How has participation in the BRRIT helped projects align agency expectation for monitoring and address differences in monitoring requirements between agencies? Has the BRRIT process been helpful in coordinating monitoring requirements between agencies from the perspective of the regulatory agency representatives (BRRIT members)?
  - We recognize the importance of the monitoring component. We are involved with the Wetland Regional Monitoring Program (WRMP) development and we hope to improve monitoring expectations across agencies moving forward. (Valary Bloom, Chair of BRRIT).
- Why is there an emphasis on having non-Authority projects added to the BRRIT list? The focus should be on the Authority projects, priorities, and issues.
  - There is not an emphasis on supporting non-Restoration Authority projects. The BRITT decided not to require projects to be Authority grantees because a project may not seek Authority funding until the construction phase, but they would benefit from pre-application consultations with the BRRIT. These projects could end up being a future Authority grantee. In a future presentation, they will share information on how many projects under BRRIT review are funded by the Authority.