



**Executive Committee Quarterly Meeting
Estuary Program Offices, Morro Bay, CA
via Video Conference Call**

**May 15, 2024
4:00 pm**

Staff Report

1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of February 14, 2024 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** FY25 320 Workplan Approval (see attached)

We are expecting \$850,000 in 320 funding for next year. The workplan tasks for FY25 are substantially similar to recent workplans, in particular because the 320 funding is focused on operational base funding expenses while BIL funding is focused on project work. Changes to the FY25 320 workplan include funding for restoration work on Walters Creek and Chorro Ecological Reserve and analysis and event planning for the 2026 State of the Bay. Additional funding will also support increasing laboratory and supply costs and staff compensation.

Staff recommend approving the FY25 320 workplan.

6. **DISCUSSION:** FY24 BIL and 320 semi-annual reports (see attached)

Twice a year, the Estuary Program submits a semi-annual report to EPA, which provides the program status on budgets and tasks laid out in our workplan. As we are now managing funding from our 320 and BIL grants, two separate semi-annual reports are now required.

For our 320 funding, we have expended 71% of our funding since the cumulative grant began October 1, 2021 and met 194% of our match requirement.

For our BIL funding, we have expended 33% of our three years' of funding. The BIL funding does not have a match requirement.

7. **DISCUSSION:** EPA/ANEP Updates

Suzanne Marr will be retiring at the end of May. This will be Suzanne's last EC meeting. Vivian Lopez will be taking over as the Morro Bay NEP Program Officer. Vivian has been with EPA for ~3 years, previously working as a Remedial Project Manager on Superfund sites. Prior to that she was an environmental consultant for EPA and a Staff Research Associate at the University of CA Cooperative Extension working in agriculture sciences.

Mel spent the week of May 26 at the Washington, DC Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) meeting. Topics included administrative updates, several sessions with EPA, and discussion topics related to climate resiliency, equity strategies, tribal engagement, and BIL administration. ANEP

has circulated Dear Colleague letters in the house and senate for signatures. It is expected that a continuing resolution will be enacted later in the fall, stalling potential budget updates for FY26. This means that the NEPs may hold steady with \$850,000 in base funding and/or experience slight decreases based on continuing resolution rules. The fall NEP meeting will be a director's meeting and tech transfer between NEP staff and held at the New Jersey NEP.

8. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Community Project Updates:** One Cool Earth's outdoor education curriculum continues at Baywood Elementary. The Community Project wraps up this summer. We are seeking to develop projects for FY25, so please reach out to staff if you have any project or partner ideas.
 - **Monitoring Updates:** The bioassessment season has been delayed slightly due to the unexpectedly heavy April storms. The bay fish monitoring work will happen in May. The 2023 Morro Bay eelgrass map identified 750 acres of eelgrass. The map was created with data from sonar surveys and drone flights conducted in April through June of 2023. The map was created per the California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy (CEMP), which defines eelgrass cover as one or more eelgrass plants per square meter. The past two years of colder La Niña conditions were particularly favorable for eelgrass, resulting in eelgrass expansion into higher elevations than normal. When comparing this record high eelgrass acreage to available habitat in the bay, it's likely that the bay is at or close to a maximum carrying capacity for eelgrass. Thus, it is likely that eelgrass acreage will decrease in the coming years. We are partnering with Cal Poly to conduct drone flights in late 2024/early 2025 to assess eelgrass conditions.
 - a. **Restoration Updates:** Riparian invasive species mapping effort within parts of Chorro Creek subwatershed was completed in early May, a draft map of priority areas expected in late summer. Additional drone surveys for areas not accessible on foot are expected to occur in winter 2024. We are finalizing the workplan for a \$250,000 grant from the Restoring America Estuaries Coastal Watersheds Grant program to continue and expand our partnership with the United States Geological Survey to address vulnerability and adaptation strategies within Morro Bay's tidal marshes. We are continuing to work steelhead passage project on San Luisito Creek, project development for CCER and Walters Creek geomorphic assessments, and stormwater improvements and project prioritization on Camp SLO.
 - **Communications, Outreach, & Education Updates.** The 3rd and last session for our teacher training workshops was successful. Teachers engaged in a hands-on restoration event removing invasive species with the goal to enable them to teach environmental stewardship in youth. We had several Earth Day/month events, including tabling at the SLO and Morro Bay farmers markets, hosting a cleanup at Morro Rock, and participating in the Surfrider Make Waves film festival.
9. Adjourn to next meeting of August 21, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., which will be hybrid with some attendees participating via Zoom and others meeting in the Estuary Program office.

Attachments:

- Minutes from February 14, 2024 EC meeting
- FY25 320 workplan draft
- FY24 320 semi-annual report
- FY24 BIL semi-annual report