



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

**August 21, 2024  
4:00 pm**

## **Staff Report**

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1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of May 15, 2024 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** EC Membership Vote

EC members representing specific stakeholder groups serve three-year terms. Several members have terms that are ending in August: Ethan Bell (Environmental Interests seat), John Flaherty (Tourism/Recreational Interests seat), Crow White (Science and Research seat), and Trudy O'Brien (Local Fisheries seat).

Several alternates are also coming up on the end of their terms: Virginia Flaherty (Tourism/Recreational Interests seat), Emily Bockmon (Science and Research seat), and Jeremiah O'Brien (Local Fisheries seat).

Staff reached out to all members and alternates up for election, and all indicated their interest in continuing to participate with the group.

Staff recommend approving an additional three-year term for these EC members and alternates.

6. **ACTION:** Community Project Review and Approval (see attached)

Each summer, staff develop Community Projects with partners to advance CCMP goals. This year, a project has been developed with California State Parks (CSP) to reprint their [Discover MPAs Activity Guide](#), a popular 20-page education tool targeted towards youth. The booklet provides information on wildlife, ocean safety, marine stewardship, responsible recreation, and tribal cultural knowledge. CSP has not had printed copies of this popular resource for some time now and is interested in reprinting them for distribution at their museums and parks and at Junior Range programs, campfire programs, school groups, and special events. CSP has been a long-time reliable partner in E&O efforts, and we're excited for an opportunity to work with them again.

The annual budget for Community Projects for FY25 is \$15,000. In the past, the maximum project amount has typically been \$10,000. Due to lack of staff availability to develop a second project and the reliability of CSP as an E&O partner, staff propose allocating the full \$15,000 budget to CSP for the proposed project.

Details of the project are written up in the attached Community Project Summary.

Staff recommends funding the project at the requested amount of \$15,000 to print approximately 24,000 guides for distribution in the San Luis Coast District.

**7. DISCUSSION: FY25 BIL Workplan Discussion (see attached)**

The Estuary Program is beginning the process of creating a budget and workplan for the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding. We are expecting \$917,000 in BIL funding for FY2025.

Our approach to kick-off this process is to present to the EC the existing workplan tasks and include any new tasks planned. These new tasks were identified as priority needs through partner communications, conservation planning, and existing efforts to secure other grant funds. This discussion is an opportunity for the EC members to bring up project areas that they feel are missing from the workplan. Several multi-year, ongoing projects under BIL will be included in the FY25 Workplan. We will need to narrow the list for the final workplan to meet the budget limitations.

Note that BIL funding match requirement has been waived as we submitted our Equity Strategy prior to the June 1, 2023 deadline.

**Workplan Task Categories for BIL: (Projects for possible additional funding marked with \*)**

**Capacity Building**

- Personnel
  - Additional support for E&O\*
- BIL Management and Equity Strategy Coordination

**Monitoring**

- Tracking Bay Health
  - CeNCOOS water quality sensor calibration support\*
- Tracking Creek Health
- Eelgrass Monitoring & Research
  - Genetic analysis of wasting disease in Morro Bay\*
  - Bay-wide eelgrass map\*
- Data Analysis & Management

**Restoration**

- Invasive Species Management
- Climate Research, Planning & Adaptation
- Fish Habitat Monitoring & Improvement
  - Support for the Pennington Creek Rainwater Catchment project\*
- Implement BMPs in Watershed
  - Culvert replacement at Cal Poly Escuela Ranch\*
  - Urban tree planting with EcoSLO\*
  - Hands on the Landscape with Creek Lands Conservation\*
  - Bioreactor on Chorro Creek with Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation Dist\*
  - Monitoring lower Chorro Creek with Coastal San Luis Resource Cons Dist\*

## Water Infrastructure

- Stormwater Improvement
- Groundwater Monitoring

## Education & Outreach

- Communications
- Environmental Education
- Nature Center Updates
- Community Engagement and Stewardship

### 8. **DISCUSSION:** Habitat Restoration and Protection Strategy Discussion (see attached)

There are several ancillary documents required for our program's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), one of which is a Habitat Restoration and Protection Strategy. This plan was developed to guide protection, restoration, research, monitoring, education, and climate resiliency efforts in the watershed and estuary. It lists the key species, health, and extent of each major habitat type, which are estuarine, freshwater, sandy shores & dunes, upland, and urban & agriculture. While this is a lengthy and dense document, staff encourage the EC members to review the Summary to get a sense of the contents as the plan might serve as a resource for their own work in the future. The plan will be submitted to EPA in late summer for approval.

### 9. **DISCUSSION:** Program Evaluation (PE) Status Update (see attached)

Every five years, each National Estuary Program undergoes a review process with EPA, the end result of which is a PE letter. The letter highlights areas where the program is doing well and identifies some areas for improvement. At the August and February EC meetings, staff provide an update of program activities to address the areas for improvement from the 2020 PE letter. Of note, staff have made substantial progress on the CCMP tracker and have robust outreach in place to reach visitors.

### 10. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Community Project Updates:** One Cool Earth's outdoor education curriculum has been completed. Their assessment indicates a strong improvement in student knowledge of outdoor education topics. The program is so popular that the school and OCE were able to work together to develop funding such that the program can continue at Baywood for the next two years. This project was a great example of utilizing the Community Project program to kick-start an effort that can then continue on with increased community support.
- **Monitoring Updates:** The bioassessment season was completed in mid-June. Bay fish data and eDNA results have just arrived and are undergoing analysis in comparison to historical fish data before, during, and after the eelgrass decline and recovery. We are partnering with Cal Poly to conduct drone flights in late 2024/early 2025 to assess eelgrass conditions.
- a. **Restoration Updates:** The new Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) Coastal Watershed Grant (CWG) agreement has been finalized and staff are working with USGS on an updated contract to transition funding of our sea level rise modeling work from BIL to CWG. Staff will be presenting at the RAE conference on this project as part of a CWG special session. Ongoing projects include riparian invasive species mapping within parts of Chorro Creek watershed, San Luisito Creek fish passage barrier initial studies and alternate designs, stormwater planning on Camp SLO, historical ecology study with SFEI, and several smaller projects. Additionally, staff have been making progress on the organization's Habitat Planning and Conservation Strategy, which is due at the end of the summer.

- **Communications, Outreach, & Education Updates.** Staff read environmental-based stories at the Arroyo Grande and Morro Bay Library Storytime events and led educational programming for both Creek Lands Conservation Youth Environmental Stewards Summer Program and Morro Bay Jr. Guards. Our June Science on Tap event included an eelgrass presentation and eelgrass trivia, which reached about 30 attendees. Cleanups were held at Morro Bay in June and July, collecting 45 pounds of trash total. Assemblymember Dawn Addis attended the July clean up event which was also featured on KSBY.

11. Adjourn to next meeting of November 20, 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 May 15, 2024 EC meeting
- Community Project Summary
- Habitat Protection and Restoration Strategy and Summary
- PE Update
- FY24 BIL Workplan

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