

**REGIONAL MONITORING PROGRAM FOR TRACE SUBSTANCES  
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
October 24th, 2005**

**Members Present:**

Dave Allen, USS POSCO Industries  
Kevin Buchan, WSPA  
David Dwinell, US Army Corps of Engineers  
Robert Hale, BASMAA  
Ken Kaufman, SBSA  
Jim McGrath, SFEI Board of Directors  
Trish Mulvey, SFEI Board of Directors (by telephone)  
Dan Tafolla, Vallejo Sanitation and Flood Control  
Chuck Weir, East Bay Dischargers Authority  
Dyan Whyte, SFB RWQCB

**Others Present:**

Mike Connor, SFEI  
Jay Davis, SFEI  
Andy Gunther, AMS  
Meg Sedlak, SFEI  
Dave Tucker, City of San Jose (by telephone)

**1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

Kevin Buchan opened the meeting and asked for comments on the July 2005 minutes (Item 1 Attachment 1). Meg Sedlak indicated that most of the action items had been addressed; Kevin Buchan, Dyan Whyte, and Meg were continuing discussions on the development of a policy for decision-making processes within the RMP. Ms. Sedlak indicated that a proposal would be presented at the January 2006 meeting. The SC minutes were then unanimously approved.

**Action item: Meg Sedlak to present a proposal on the RMP decision-making process at January 2006 meeting.**

**2. Committee Member Updates**

There were no member updates.

**3. Information: Technical Review Committee (TRC) Meeting Summary**

Meg Sedlak summarized the minutes from the TRC meeting on September 20th (Item 1 Attachment 2). Ms. Sedlak indicated that the major discussion items were a presentation by the authors of the 10-yr synthesis articles, a discussion of prioritization of Status and

Trends elements, approval of the South Bay Salt Pond funding, and approval of the USGS suspended-sediment sampling locations. Ms. Sedlak noted that prioritization of Status and Trends and the SBSP project were items for today's agenda. The presentations of the 10-yr synthesis articles included recommendations for future directions for the RMP. Rainer Hoenicke suggested that the RMP consider convening an outside panel of experts to recommend new and emerging contaminants for the RMP. Russ Flegal recently participated in a national review of status and trends program and commented how in many ways the RMP was a model program. Brian Anderson noted in his presentation on sediment toxicity that increased toxicity is observed in winter. A recommendation for evaluation of sediment toxicity in the winter has been made to the toxicity workgroup and the winter sampling workgroup.

Ms. Sedlak noted that four fixed USGS stations would be funded by the RMP next year: Benicia, Mallard, Dumbarton Bridge, and Point San Pablo. A temporary station would be installed near the Hamilton Air Force base and the remaining funding would be used to develop sediment flux calculations at Dumbarton. Meg stated that several Port members had requested that Alcatraz be substituted for one of the fixed stations. Jim McGrath questioned what new information would be obtained from continuing to monitor at Alcatraz. He and several other members indicated that the USGS had collected data at Alcatraz in the past suggesting that dredging has little to no impact on suspended sediment concentrations observed at the Alcatraz site. A request was made for Ms. Sedlak to discuss this with the Port members.

**Action item: Meg Sedlak to present USGS findings to Port members and request clarification on the importance of the Alcatraz site.**

#### **4. Information: Budget Status**

Meg Sedlak presented an updated summary for the RMP Budget (Years 2003 – 2005) (Item 4 Attachment 1) and stated that there were no changes from the previous quarter for RMP years 2003 and 2004. Ms. Sedlak indicated that approximately \$19,622 in unpaid fees from Loch Lomond Marina remains outstanding. The RWQCB has sent a letter to Loch Lomond requesting payment. Kevin Buchan asked whether the Board could issue a 13267 letter to Loch Lomond. Ms. Whyte indicated that it is difficult to pursue this as there are not on-going activities at the site. Ms. Sedlak indicated that she would follow-up with Beth Christian at the Board to see whether the Board had received a response from Loch Lomond.

For 2005, approximately \$160,000 remains outstanding for participant fees. Caltrans owes approximately \$35,000; Marin Stormwater approximately \$50,000, SF Dry Dock approximately \$46,000, and City of Vallejo Marina \$21,000. Dyan Whyte is working with Caltrans; however, it could be several years before a mechanism for transferring these funds is in place. Marin Stormwater has indicated that they would be combining 2005 and 2006 fees and that the RMP should receive payment shortly. SF Dry Dock indicated that the invoice will be paid by December 1. City of Vallejo Marina has indicated that the RMP invoice has been given to their finance department for payment.

Expenses for 2005 are on track. Labor expenses are approximately 75 percent of allocated funding for 2005. Approximately \$1.4 million subcontracts have been written of an approved total of \$1.6 million. Approximately \$200K was set aside for the Exposure and Effects Pilot Study (EEPS) in 2006. Approximately \$120K of subcontracts and labor has been allocated. In an August 2005 conference call, the advisory panel approved contracts for the remaining \$80K, most notably \$50,000 for a small fish study to determine mercury in benthic and pelagic fish in the estuary margins. Ms. Sedlak indicated that \$140K had been set aside in 2005 for the episodic toxicity program. Approximately \$40K had been spent on labor associated with the April sampling; however, the remaining \$100K will not be spent in 2005. These funds will either be used to offset shortfalls in participant fees or will be carried over to 2006.

Ms. Sedlak noted that the revenue for 2006 will be approximately \$8K less than projected, due to a shortfall in dredger fees.

**Action item: Meg Sedlak to follow up with the RWQCB regarding unpaid participant fees for Loch Lomond Marina.**

## **5. Information: Prioritization of Status and Trends**

Jay Davis presented a brief overview of the rationale for evaluating the Status and Trends program and the process for the evaluation. Dr. Davis commented that there were several reasons for evaluating the Status and Trends program now – the advent of new RMP objectives, the recommendations from the synthesis articles, the recommendations from the Steering Committee and EEPS to incorporate new elements, and the recommendations of the 2003 Program Review. A table summarizing the program elements was prepared for the September TRC meeting and distributed to SC members. For each element, a brief summary of the priority of the program, the objectives that it fulfills, possible alternatives, and costs is presented. As example, Jay Davis explained the water chemistry element of the program. He indicated that one possible option for reducing costs in this element would be to eliminate analysis of dissolved organics. This might free up funds to examine the variability associated with wet weather events or to include new elements in the program. Another option would be to conduct water chemistry in alternating years for each season (e.g., wet season sampling in odd years; dry season in even). Jim McGrath stressed the importance of winter sampling. Kevin Buchan asked that as this exercise is carried forward that the permit condition to provide regional monitoring data be kept in mind. Jay Davis briefly discussed the sediment sampling element of the Status and Trends program and noted that an argument could be made for increase in sediment sampling (e.g., the shallow sediments along the margins) or a decrease in surface sediment sampling in favor of cores for which there is little data. Kevin noted that substantial benthos and sediment monitoring had been conducted in the past. Jay noted that several benthos programs are proposed under the EEPS program and Status and Trends and that part of this impetus was due to the promulgation of SQOs in 2007.

## 6. Information: Long-term Strategy for RMP and CEP

Dave Tucker gave the SC an update on the most recent CEP meeting where it was proposed that RMP would takeover some of the more technical aspects of the CEP. It is hoped that by doing this it would free the CEP staff up to focus more on the administrative aspects of the TMDL process.

Dyan Whyte questioned how this would affect the master contractor list developed for the CEP as part of the contracting process and whether SFEI would need to develop a similar list. Dave Tucker indicated that CEP would provide SFEI with a list of projects to be completed.

Andy Gunther indicated that the next steps would be to develop a proposal that would be circulated to the CEP's EMB and SC at a joint meeting.

## 7. Action: Program Plan for 2006

Meg Sedlak provided details on the draft program plan that was sent to committee members for review. For each of the major program elements, Ms. Sedlak presented examples of activities that would be undertaken. Examples of select activities are presented below:

- Program management – Program management will consist of program oversight, staff coordination, contracting and invoicing. External coordination - the RMP will continue to be involved in NorCal SETAC, will have a large presence at the National Water Quality Monitoring Council meeting in San Jose, and will continue to host the annual mercury coordination meeting. Program Planning - SFEI will develop a five-year plan for the RMP.
- Information management – Information dissemination will occur through newsletters, conferences, website, and annual meeting and associated reports. In addition to information dissemination, several QA/QC studies that were conducted in 2005 will be summarized in 2006.
- Data integration – This year will continue to develop the multi-box model and a water quality index. A review of mercury atmospheric deposition work will also be performed.
- Status and Trends – In addition to the core elements, it is possible that several new elements such as cormorant egg sampling and benthos monitoring will occur. Episodic toxicity will be coordinated with the winter pilot study. The triennial sportfish monitoring will occur in 2006.
- Pilot studies consist of the Exposure and Effects Pilot Study (EEPS) and the Winter Sampling Pilot Study. Under EEPS, three studies will be continued: a study of mercury in small fish, contaminant effects on shiner surfperch, and a possible egg injection study.
- Special studies consist of the Mallard Island study, small tributary loadings (Guadalupe study), and a sediment coring study. The first two projects represent continuation of existing work. The latter represents a new study that would collect sediment cores from the Bay to better understand historic loads, to

characterize chemical contamination with depth, and to provide better input data for the multi-box model. Dave Dwinelle indicated that as part of the installation of a trans-Bay cable, sediment cores were being collected and analyzed. Dave indicated that he would get the sampling plan and forward it on to Don Yee.

The 2006 Program Plan was approved by the SC.

#### **8. Action: South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Monitoring Proposal**

Jay Davis handed out a brief summary of the South Bay Salt Pond (SBSP) restoration project and explained that the TRC had approved the plan. The SBSP project is requesting that the RMP contribute \$25,000 to the \$740,000 project. Several members commented that on the importance of this work and the need for the RMP to participate in the evaluation of the restoration of the SBSP. The committee members agreed that in principle, this work was important and complemented many of the existing RMP studies (e.g., the EEPS small fish study); however, many committee members were uncomfortable with the circumvention of the standard study selection process and of the use of contingency funding for this project. It was thought by several committee members that the use of contingency funds should only be for urgent circumstances such as a high water flow year that would necessitate additional sampling. Based on these concerns, the committee approved the project but stated that it would not be funded from contingency funds but rather appear as a special study in the 2006 program.

#### **9. Action: 2008 Program Review**

Jay Davis presented a handout that outlined several conceptual ideas for review of the program in 2008. He suggested that most elements of the program be reviewed including the management questions, Status and Trends sampling design, data management, etc.; however, he recommended that the pilot and special studies projects and administration and finances not be reviewed. Jay envisioned that invited experts from the workgroup would be involved in the review as well as select outside experts. He suggested that the review be coordinated by Jerry Schubel or Steve Ritchie and that the review be conducted over the course of a week with a summary presentation at the end of the week and report due several weeks later. Jay Davis estimated that the cost to conduct such a review would be approximately \$75,000 for panelists and \$25,000 for SFEI staff. The SC agreed in concept to such a review although several members indicated that they would recommend other individuals to coordinate the review.

#### **10. Information: Program Update**

Meg Sedlak handed out the Scorecard and noted that a major deliverable this quarter had been the 10-yr Synthesis articles and Lester McKee's Interim Mallard Island Report. The date for the next SC meeting was tentatively scheduled for January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.