RMP PCB Workgroup Meeting

April 20, 2020 (teleconference)

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Nina Buzby (SFEI)
Jay Davis (SFEI)
Luisa Valiela (USEPA)
Marco Sigala (MLML)
Craig Jones (Integral Consulting)
Xavier Fernandez (SFBRWQCB)
Jon Konnan (EOA)
Yeo Myoung Cho (Stanford)
Ned Black (US EPA)
Setenay Frucht (SFBRWQCB)
Bridgette DeShields (Integral Consulting)

Biruk Imagnu (SFEI)
Yuyun Shang (EBMUD)
Tom Mumley (SFBRWQCB)
Jalyn Babitch (City of San Jose)
Jan O'Hara (SFBRWQCB)
Bryan Frueh (City of San Jose)
Mary Lou Esparza (CCCSD)
Lester McKee (SFEI)
Don Yee (SFEI)
Anne Balis (City of San Jose)
Alicia Gilbreath (SFEI)

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Jay Davis began the meeting by acknowledging the key stakeholders participating in the call and asked any other participants to introduce themselves and their affiliation. Jay then reviewed the desired goals, most importantly to provide insight on which proposal ideas to develop for 2021 Special Study funding consideration.

2. Discussion: Perspectives on Information Needs in Support of Re-Opening the TMDL

To begin the discussion, Jay briefly reviewed a table of study ideas that were organized by how the findings would relate to any possible TMDL revision or management action. For example, Jay noted that a segment-specific management approach would be well served by the potential development of a multi-box fate model. Jan O'Hara introduced Setenay Frucht, a Water Board staffperson that is new to the Workgroup. While explaining her experience in fate and transport modeling work, Setenay noted an interest in studying responses of load reduction from high-leverage watersheds (i.e., PMU watersheds) to observe responses. Jan indicated that the Water Board continues to have an interest in establishing baselines and monitoring PMU trends in response to watershed load reductions. Jan also noted that action on the Union Pacific Railroad property in San Leandro Bay is on hold at present as the responsible party is looking

for partners. Actions on Pulgas Creek and Redwood Creek are in process. Setenay indicated that the Water Board is also interested in PCB movement from PMUs into the open Bay.

Jon Konnan noted that stormwater agencies are concerned about the achievability of a 90% reduction in loads by 2030. Small reductions in uncertainty around the TMDL target are not that important. A key question about multibox modeling is whether it would reduce uncertainty. He expressed in interest in tracking whether load reductions that do occur result in actual changes in concentrations in Bay fish.

Tom Mumley expressed interest in exploring modeling improvements, including consideration of the one-box model or multibox modeling. When considering previous multi-box model efforts, the members noted that there were limitations in the underlying sediment model developed by Schoellhamer et. al. and that results were similar to that of the one-box model. Setenay, Ned Black, and Craig Jones suggested making use of shear stress data to improve both multi-box and conceptual model updates. Reflection on other modeling proposal ideas (e.g. updated sensitivity analysis of the one-box model) led to an idea for an overarching task to update a modeling strategy in order to explore model improvement, building on the Conceptual Model for Contaminant Fate in the Bay Margins written by Craig Jones and SFEI staff in 2012, leveraging the modeling efforts of the Sediment Workgroup and NMS, and incorporating new RMP margins data into the conceptual model.

The group then discussed a more fleshed out proposal idea developed by Bridgette DeShields to conduct a statistical evaluation of new margins and open-bay data. This sort of effort could potentially be used to establish cleanup targets for nearshore sediment. Tom Mumley asked about PCB influence on dredged disposal decisions, to which Bridgette responded that the study would primarily inform nearshore cleanups. The discussion also brought up three other considerations. The first being carefully defining what areas should be considered as 'margins' (different from the RMP sampling definition) and harvesting data accordingly. Additionally, looking through a variety of datasets will require some sort of aggregation to correct for areas that have been sampled more than others and random versus targeted designs. Lastly, Jay noted that the North Bay margins data will not be available until late in 2021, meaning that the work would either have to occur at the end of the year or be split between 2021 and 2022.

Ned Black commented that a food web model update will eventually be needed to incorporate new data and to have a technical foundation for the TMDL that withstands peer review. Luisa Valiela noted that we should make use of the data that has been generated over the years.

After discussing Bridgette's, Jay brought up that so far priorities have boiled down to evaluating modeling efforts and developing a plan to answer questions about fate and transport relating PMUs to the open Bay. With the latter idea in mind, Jay asked the stakeholders if they supported additional baseline monitoring. Participants were in agreement that monitoring with passive samplers in San Leandro Bay, similar to what is being done in Steinberger Slough,

would be a worthwhile effort. Yeo Myoung from Stanford expressed interest in partnering again with SFEI. Craig Jones expressed interest in working with SFEI on a PCB modeling strategy.

Jay agreed to clean up the table summarizing study ideas and related management decisions and distribute it to the group.

3. Next Steps and Future Agenda Items

When outlining the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, Jay noted that stakeholders would have an opportunity to provide their perspectives on the information needs that they believe the RMP could meet. This desired meeting outcome in combination with group discussions surrounding the goal to reach 90% reductions of PCBs in urban runoff by 2030, prompted a conversation on multi-year planning for the workgroup. All the stakeholders agreed that use attainability analysis is not a high priority based on progress in load reduction to date. Additionally, there was a consensus that working on the food web model was not time critical for 2021, but given the 2030 threshold, it will be a necessary effort for the future.

After reiterating the group's consensus to prioritize studies on modeling strategy, passive sampling in San Leandro Bay, and statistical analysis of margins data, Jay told likely collaborators Yeo Myoung and Craig Jones that he would reach out to them soon about developing proposals. Jay then presented his proposed agenda items for a future meeting to be held in early June. These included updates on stormwater monitoring, passive sampling and core work in Steinberger Slough as well as further discussion of 2021 proposals and future workgroup priorities. Luisa suggested that it would be valuable to add an item to discuss contingency options for field work, given the current obstacles posed by health concerns.

Action Items:
- Send updated table of special study ideas to PCBWG (Jay Davis, 5/1/20)
- Contact Yeo Myoung and Craig Jones about proposal development (Jay Davis, 5/1/20)
- Schedule June Workgroup meeting (Jay Davis, 5/8/20)

Adjourn