



Bay RMP Steering Committee Meeting

April 13, 2026

San Francisco Estuary Institute

Hybrid Meeting

Meeting Summary

Attendees

SC Member	Affiliation	Representing	Present
Eric Dunlavey	City of San Jose	POTW-Large	Y
Amanda Roa	Fairfield Suisun	POTW-Small	Y
Karin North**	City of Palo Alto	POTW-Medium	Y
Adam Olivieri	BAMSC / EOA, Inc.	Stormwater	Y
Xavier Fernandez	SF Bay Regional WQCB	Water Board	Y
Tom Mumley*	SF Bay Regional WQCB (retired)	Water Board	Y
Maureen Dunn	Chevron	Refineries	Y
Luisa Valiela	Environmental Protection Agency	USEPA Region 9	Y
Laura Tam	Bay Planning Coalition	Dredgers	Y
Ellie Covington	US Army Corps of Engineers	USACE	N

* Chair, ** Vice Chair, alternates italicized

Staff and Others:

- Amy Kleckner, SFEI
- Jay Davis, SFEI
- Michelle Azurin, SFEI
- Emily Corwin, SFEI
- Rebecca Sutton, SEFI
- Noah Rudko, SEFI
- Sierra Garcia, SFEI
- Kelly Moran, SFEI
- *Setenay Frucht*, SFBRWQCB
- Melissa France, USACE
- Tom Hall, EOA

1. Introductions and Review Goals for the Meeting (00:00:00)

The meeting commenced with Chair Tom Mumley framing the session as a "bridge meeting" within the annual cycle. He noted that while the spring agenda didn't contain high-stakes items, it served as a critical transition point for planning the upcoming year. The primary objectives identified for the session included routine business updates and necessary financial decisions

regarding the reallocation of funds. Participants in the meeting introduced themselves. Following the introductions, the Chair confirmed there were no major changes to the proposed agenda and moved to proceed with the scheduled items.

2. Decision: Approve Meeting Summaries from January 26, 2026, Review/Confirm/Set Dates for Future Meetings (00:02:55)

The meeting moved quickly into administrative approvals and scheduling. The summary from the January 26, 2026, meeting was approved without correction. Amy Kleckner provided an update on action items from the previous meeting, specifically addressing requests to optimize meeting efficiency. To accommodate this, the team abbreviated financial reporting and opted for a "working lunch" format. Additionally, updates to the Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) proposal list are underway, incorporating feedback received via email for a revised release next quarter.

The committee then coordinated dates for future sessions, with a particular focus on the Multi-Year Planning meeting. While three dates were initially proposed for November, the committee immediately ruled out November 23rd due to the Thanksgiving holiday. The group reached a consensus to hold the all-day planning session and Autumn Steering Committee meeting on Monday, November 16, 2026. The section concluded with a brief overview of the "workgroup season" schedule and a reminder that the RMP Annual Meeting is set for October 21 at the Brower Center in Berkeley.

Decisions:

- Approved the January 26, 2026, meeting summary.
- Scheduled the Multi-Year Planning Meeting and Fall Steering Committee meeting for November 16, 2026.

Action Items:

- Amy Kleckner to incorporate comments into the SEP proposal list and recirculate it next quarter. (Due 7/31/26)

3. Information: TRC Meeting Summary from March 25, 2025 (00:08:12)

Amy provided an overview of the March Technical Review Committee (TRC) meeting, highlighting several key informatics and data accessibility initiatives. Adam Wong updated the TRC on the data services queue, noting that Mercury and PCB datasets—including 2024 bird eggs and sport fish—are being prioritized for upload. Per a request from Tom Hall, the 2021 and 2023 water cruise data are slated as the next priorities and are expected to be available on the Contaminant Data Display and Download (CD3) tool before the June TRC meeting. Additionally,

Christina Grosso presented prototypes for new topic-based RMP data dashboards. These interactive tools, starting with mercury sediment trends, are designed to bridge the gap between high-level visualizations found in the RMP Pulse and raw tabular data, making the information more accessible to stakeholders.

The discussion also touched on the State's Integrated Report and 303(d) list process. Tom Mumley and Xavier Fernandez noted that the data solicitation period for Region 2 has begun and will conclude on August 10, 2026. Because the process has become more streamlined following a significant "catch-up" period in previous years, no major surprises are expected in the upcoming data pull. To further assist with regulatory data needs, the RMP team plans to create a preloaded query on CD3 to allow users to access California Toxics Rule (CTR) data with fewer clicks.

4. Information/Decision: RMP Financial Update for 2026 Quarter 1 (00:14:15)

Michelle Azurin presented the first-quarter financial update, highlighting the integration of the 2026 budget, which currently holds a balance of \$2.8 million and a surplus of \$77,000. A primary focus of the discussion was the management of "Tracking Bay Health" (EPA) funds alongside core RMP funds. While there was a previous attempt to combine these into a single view, the team has returned to separate reporting to better accommodate how the Institute tracks these specific allotments. Tom Mumley noted that as these grant resources grow over the coming years, the committee may eventually need to reevaluate how funding is tracked to ensure continuity, but for now, the priority remains drawing down EPA funds expeditiously before tapping into core fee-based RMP funds.

Regarding budget execution, 10% of the 2026 budget has been expended, and invoicing is still pending. For the 2025 budget, which is 49% expended, the team is working to collect outstanding payments, including from Caltrans. The committee also addressed two specific funding requests: an increase for the Mercury Synthesis project and a reallocation of unused microplastics strategy funds. The Mercury Synthesis project required an additional \$50,000 to cover coordination and technical drafting ahead of a June deadline set by the Water Board. Additionally, Diana Lin requested to repurpose \$18,000 in unused strategy funds to cover tire storage for the tire rubber marker analysis, manuscript writing with partner NIVA, and vessel charter costs. Tom Mumley emphasized that while he supports the manuscript in principle, the group needs to check in again once the study results are available toward the end of the year. This will allow the committee to confirm that the findings warrant a formal publication before the RMP fully commits to funding the manuscript production. Additionally, Diana will use the remaining unused Microplastic strategy funds from 2024/2025 to cover 2026 strategy costs instead of making a request to the committee for additional funds.

Decisions:

- Approved the request to pull \$50,000 from undesignated funds for the Mercury Synthesis project.

- Approved the request to use \$18,000 of unused Microplastics Strategy funds (2024/2025) for tire study storage, a NIVA manuscript/open access fees, and vessel charter costs, on the condition that an update be provided to the committee in late 2026 (likely the January 2027 meeting) regarding the Tire Rubber Marker study results to confirm a final decision on funding the manuscript with NIVA.

Action Items:

- Michelle to follow up with Jazzy at the Water Board and/or Caltrans regarding the outstanding 2025 payment, noting potential personnel turnover at the agency. (Due 4/30/26)
- Diana Lin to provide an update in late 2026 (likely the January 2027 meeting) regarding the Tire Rubber Marker study results to confirm the final decision on funding the manuscript with NIVA. (Due 1/31/27)

5. Information/Discussion: RMP Planning Update (00:38:00)

Amy announced that the EPA officially awarded the RMP its full Tracking Bay Health grant of \$23.5 million on March 10, 2026, which included a no-cost extension through September 2031. This significant funding allows for long-term planning through 2030, with the first nine months of 2031 serving as a buffer. Next steps include a semi-annual progress report due at the end of April and the launch of RFPs/RFOs for modeling, field support, and lab analyses. The committee discussed using these funds to enhance communications, data services (including new dashboards), and multi-year special studies, which provides workgroups with greater funding certainty compared to the traditional year-to-year RMP cycle.

The committee also engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the "dredger deficit" and the 18.2% fee contribution target set in 1993. Xavier Fernandez noted that in-bay disposal volumes have dropped from 6 million to 2.8 million cubic yards over two decades, making the original percentage-based target difficult to reach. Tom Mumley proposed moving away from the "deficit" framing by "right-sizing" the expectations and potentially absorbing the difference, which is possible with grant funds from the EPA, rather than increasing fees for other stakeholders. Members of the group preferred to maintain the current fee structure for now while the Regional Water Board and LTMS work on a more predictable, consistent funding model to be presented later this year.

Jay Davis updated the committee on the "Protecting Bay Fishers" proposal, a \$3.2 million EPA request with \$1.1 million in RMP and partner matching funds. The project will focus on a major fish monitoring effort in 2027, consumption surveys, and risk communication related to PCBs, mercury, and PFAS. To manage the growing complexity of such requests, Beth Birmingham has developed an RMP Grant Match Project Tracker. The program will continue to ensure commitments are properly tracked, and do not circumvent the program's governance structure or overextend future budgets.

Decisions:

- Agreed upon a joint review process for rapid, off-cycle grant match decisions that includes both the Steering Committee and the Technical Review Committee (TRC) via email.
- Confirmed that RMP will not "advertise" the availability of match funds to external groups to prioritize its own strategic needs, though it will entertain specific high-nexus partnerships.

Action Items:

- Xavier Fernandez and the dredger fee subgroup to develop 2–3 alternatives for a revised dredger fee structure (e.g., flat fees vs. volume-based) for committee discussion later this year. (Due 10/31/26)

6. Information/Discussion: Workgroup Planning Update (001:37:17)

Amy provided an update on the RMP's workgroup planning, emphasizing the program's shift toward better integration across focus areas. A primary focus is the coordination of projects that cross workgroup boundaries, such as the "Mapping Mudflat Morphodynamics" study, which originated in the PCB workgroup and was presented to the Sediment workgroup. To manage this complexity, the RMP is identifying "Secondary (S)" and "Secondary Plus (S+)" advisors—technical experts from one workgroup who provide formal review for projects in another. The committee also reviewed the distribution of strategy funds, which typically account for 6% to 8.5% of the total special studies budget. These funds are used by workgroup leads for essential non-administrative tasks, including literature reviews, stakeholder coordination, and tracking emerging scientific trends.

A significant portion of this discussion was dedicated to the long-term funding and governance of Bay modeling. The Sediment workgroup recently finalized a comprehensive study plan totaling \$7.2 million, sparking a debate on how the RMP should sustain such high-cost, multi-year technical efforts. Tom Mumley and other committee members advocated for treating Bay modeling as a core RMP function rather than forcing it to compete annually for limited special studies funds. Discussion centered on a proposed \$500,000 annual commitment for the next 3–4 years to support a Bay modeling team involving SFEI, USGS, Stanford, and private contractors. While some funding options like reallocating Nutrient Management Strategy (NMS) funds were met with resistance from POTW representatives, there was strong support for exploring a mix of undesignated reserves, multi-year special study pool adjustments, and future EPA grant opportunities, which would support a longer term strategy.

Action Items:

- Amy Kleckner and Tom Mumley to develop a funding recommendation for Bay modeling—including a mix of reserves and multi-year budget adjustments—and add it as an agenda item for the August Steering Committee meeting. (Due 8/15/26)

7. Information/Discussion: 2026 S&T Monitoring Update (02:22:20)

Amy presented the findings from the 2025 aquatic toxicity testing, which was conducted at nine open Bay stations. The results showed no significant reductions in survival or growth, continuing a decade-long trend of zero observed toxicity in these areas. Based on these consistent results and the high logistical burden of preparing for Toxicity Identification Evaluations (TIEs), the Technical Review Committee (TRC) recommended that the Steering Committee evaluate whether to suspend or eliminate this specific monitoring task and reallocate the cost toward higher-priority items.

The Steering Committee engaged in a nuanced debate regarding the "value of proving a negative." While some members suggested suspending the testing or extending the frequency to once every 10 years, others argued that maintaining a recurring validation is essential for regulatory attainment and for telling a successful "good news" story of the Bay's recovery. The discussion also touched on the potential to modernize the program by shifting focus from traditional species to endpoints more relevant to emerging contaminants (CECs). Ultimately, the committee decided not to "pull the plug" yet, opting instead to have the RMP team design a more strategic, cost-balanced approach for future consideration.

The section concluded with operational updates on selenium and stormwater sampling. For 2026, the RMP is utilizing EPA TBH funds and collaborating with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for collecting sturgeon muscle plug samples, which is critical due to new endangered species constraints. Additionally, Kelly Moran, a long-time champion of pollution prevention and stormwater science at SFEI, announced her retirement effective summer 2026. The committee recognized her foundational contributions to the program, particularly in strengthening relationships with the DTSC and the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Action Items:

- Amy Kleckner to report back at the August Steering Committee meeting with a proposed approach for the future of toxicity monitoring (e.g., revised species, scale, or frequency) for the 2027/2028 multi-year plan. (Due 8/15/26)

8. Discussion/Decision: AI Use on RMP Products (02:54:35)

Amy introduced the RMP's strategy for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into its workflow, based on internal guidance developed at SFEI. The Institute has equipped staff with Gemini and established a set of guidelines, including requiring all AI-assisted outputs to be reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure technical accuracy and the preservation of SFEI's "intellectual labor" standards. While the Technical Review Committee (TRC) supported using AI for meeting summaries and administrative tasks, they strongly advised against using it for formal reports, literature reviews, or technical scientific interpretation at this stage.

The Steering Committee discussed the practical benefits and pitfalls of AI based on early trials. Michelle noted that while AI-assisted meeting summaries save initial drafting time, the need for humans to verify technical details against long recordings remains a significant workload. Adam Olivieri shared cautionary examples of AI generating circular logic and falsifying scientific references. Despite these risks, the committee acknowledged AI's strength in non-technical areas like slide deck aesthetics and its transformative potential in software coding for remote samplers. Luisa noted that the federal government is beginning to shift toward promoting AI use and there appears to be no requirement for AI clauses in contracts from the EPA at this time.

Decisions:

- Approved the adoption of SFEI's AI policy for RMP products, emphasizing that a human must remain the lead intellectual contributor.
- Approved a "summary trial" for meeting summaries, where note-takers will focus on documenting specific decisions and action items while using AI to draft the general narrative of the discussion.

Action Items:

- Amy Kleckner to share the SFEI AI guidance slides with Luisa for internal EPA review. (Due 5/31/26)

9. Discussion: Communications (03:12:05)

Jay and Sierra Garcia provided an update on the RMP's multi-channel communication efforts. The 2026 Pulse of the Bay, focused on nutrients, is currently in progress with draft articles slated for review on May 11th. A notable feature of this edition will be a custom set of illustrations identifying the top 24 phytoplankton species in the San Francisco Bay. The committee reviewed the proposed agenda for the Annual Meeting (October 21, 2026), which will feature two sessions on nutrients, one on legacy contaminants/modeling, and one on CECs. Tom Mumley suggested considering sediment explicitly as an agenda given its recent strategic importance. He also stated that the Statewide Plastic and Microplastic Monitoring Strategy might not be worth presenting but will reach out directly to Jay to discuss further.

Sierra introduced a new plain language summary template designed to make technical findings more accessible to non-expert stakeholders. This initiative responds to consistent feedback that the program's highly technical reports can be a barrier to engagement. Sierra also highlighted recent media successes, including an ABC 7 news segment on remote stormwater samplers that was triggered by a reporter who was part of SFEI's email list reading an article on the SFEI website. SFEI is also onboarding a freelance social media editor in May 2026 to increase the consistency of RMP's digital presence.

Recent surveys of the Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group (BAPPG) indicated that "less engaged" stakeholders still find RMP information difficult to navigate. Sierra is addressing this through "coffee chats"—semi-structured interviews to identify barriers to information access. Tom Mumley noted that the website still features dated content (e.g., "help us name the

stormwater robots") and requested a protocol for archiving old stories. The session concluded with the introduction of Noah Rudko, PhD, the newest member of the emerging contaminants team, who will focus on PFAS and stormwater projects.

Decisions:

- Approved the general structure of the 2026 Annual Meeting agenda, with the June TRC meeting tasked to fill remaining speaker gaps.

Action Items:

- Steering Committee members to review Pulse articles during the three-week window starting May 11, 2026.
- Sierra Garcia to ensure the new "Non-target Analysis of CECs in Sediment" fact sheet is prominently pinned to the CECs publication page. (Due 5/31/2026)
- Steering Committee members to share communications survey with stakeholder networks
- Sierra Garcia to develop a "content lifecycle" protocol, for implementation by future new RMP staff, to ensure dated website stories are periodically archived or removed. (Due 8/15/2026)

10. Information: Status of Deliverables and Action Items (03:44:38)

Amy Kleckner concluded the meeting with a "lightning round" update on RMP deliverables. While several key milestones have been reached—including the completion of the Stormwater CECs Strategy approach report—a significant number of deliverables remain overdue or delayed due to staff capacity and lab communication challenges. Notably, the reporting for OPEs, Bisphenols and Other Plastic Additives in Wastewater is being delayed as SFEI transitions the contract from a less responsive academic partner to a new collaborator at Michigan Tech. Similarly, the PFAS NMR Analysis at the University of Minnesota is being rerun due to unexpected initial results, with a revised timeline pending a check-in with the lab.

Data prioritization remains a focus, particularly regarding Mercury and PCB datasets needed for upcoming syntheses. Progress is being made on the PCBs in Sediment and Fish report, with a final draft expected in May. For projects involving external partners, such as the Suspended Sediment Flux at Richmond Bridge, publication is now anticipated for late April or May. Additionally, the Wet Season Water Pilot Report, originally drafted by Martin Trinh, will be finalized and posted by Amy shortly.

11. Discussion: Plan Agenda Items for Future Meetings (03:52:28)

The meeting concluded with a brief preview of the August Steering Committee session. Key priorities for the next meeting include making final decisions on the 2027 special studies and reviewing the formal agenda for the Annual Meeting, which Jay Davis will circulate in advance. Additionally, the committee will begin preparations for the Multi-Year Planning workshop by reviewing the management drivers table. There were no comments from the committee.

Action Items:

- Jay Davis to email the committee the 2026 RMP Annual Meeting agenda ahead of the August Steering Committee meeting. (Due 8/1/26)

12. Discussion: Plus/Delta (03:53:00)

In the final wrap-up, the committee reflected on the meeting's format and time management. Tom Mumley noted that while the team intentionally planned a shorter agenda to reduce the burden on attendees, the depth of dialogue on several key items caused the meeting to run approximately 15 minutes over the scheduled time.

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