

Delta RMP Steering Committee Meeting

September 23, 2013

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Central Valley Regional Water Board

Training Room

11020 Sun Center Drive, #200, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Summary

Attendees:

Voting Steering Committee (and/or Alternate) members present¹:

Gregg Erickson, Coordinated Monitoring (IEP/CDFW)

Kenneth Landau, Regulatory – State (Central Valley Regional Water Board)

Mike Wackman, Agriculture (San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition)

Tim Vendlinski, Regulatory – Federal (U.S. EPA)

Linda Dorn, POTWs (SRCSD)

Dalia Fadl, Alternate-Stormwater, Phase I Communities (City of Sacramento)

Erich Delmas, POTWs (City of Tracy)

On phone:

Stephanie Reyna-Hiestand, Stormwater, Phase II Communities (City of Tracy)

Casey Wichert, POTWs (City of Brentwood)

Others present:

Brock Bernstein, Facilitator

Thomas Jabusch, SFEI-ASC

Stephen McCord, MEI

Brian Laurenson, LWA

Meghan Sullivan, Central Valley Regional Water Board

¹ Name, Representation (Affiliation)

- Vyomini Upadhyary, SRCSD
- Joe Domagalski, USGS
- Rachel Kubiak, Western Plant Health
- Patrick Morris, Central Valley Regional Water Board
- Debbie Webster, CVCWA
- Jay Davis, SFEI-ASC
- Meredith Williams, SFEI-ASC
- Michelle Hladik, USGS
- Tessa Fojut, Central Valley Regional Water Board
- Jay Simi, Central Valley Regional Water Board
- Lynda Smith, MWD
- On phone:*
- Karen Ashby, LWA
- Stephen Clark, Pacific Ecorisk

1.	<p>Introductions A quorum was established.</p>
2.	<p>Approval of agenda and minutes Agenda Item 7 (Initial RMP Priorities) was moved up to allow sufficient time for discussion. Agenda Item 5 (Initial Program Operating Entity) was moved up front. Erich Delmas was added to the list of phone attendees for the Aug 21 meeting.</p>
3.	<p>Decision: Initial Program Operating Entity A decision was sought on whether to approve Aquatic Science Center (ASC) as the lead operating entity for the Delta RMP for the initial implementation phase. The contract would need to be developed by October to secure funding that the Regional Board is making available to support program implementation.</p> <p>Brock Bernstein suggested clarifying questions regarding the source of funding and contracting limitations that have been raised in a conference call of the discharger group prior to the meeting. Meghan Sullivan, Ken Landau, and ASC senior staff (Meredith Williams, Jay Davis) provided answers and explanations to questions asked by the SC and other participants.</p>

	<p>The intent is that ASC is to be directed by the SC and not the Regional Board. Ken Landau acknowledged concerns over ASC being too attached to the Regional Board and ascribed those as being inherent to the situation up until now where Meghan has been working closely with ASC to move things along. The contract currently being developed has to be executed by March 2014. With the new contract, Meghan has deliverables to meet but the Regional Board is not in a decider role. This would be similar to the San Francisco Bay RMP, where the SC provides oversight. Ken Landau added that there would be less flexibility with the next contract with ASC or whatever other entity might be eligible and suitable than with the current contract with regards to subcontracting and other contracting procedures. The funding is not budgeted, however, the Regional Board has a certain pot of general funds that is discretionary. The total contract amount is \$250,000. The current challenge is to write the contract from a 10,000-ft view without having a fully defined scope. Meghan attempts to write the contract such that funds go towards implementation. Dahlia Fadl asked whether there is enough flexibility to move money around as needed. Meghan responded that there is some flexibility within the contracting limitations. Brock Bernstein suggested that the SC could start talking about how the money would be allocated once they have the program priorities figured out. Tim Vendlinski asked about the timing of funding through the current and pending contact. Ken Landau responded that the spending rate is the decision of the SC.</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ASC is the operational entity for the beginning period of the Delta RMP
<p>4.</p>	<p>Decision: Initial RMP Priorities</p> <p>The purpose of the agenda item was to provide a basis and initiate the decision-making process on the initial RMP priorities among five priority topics (methylmercury, nutrients, pathogens, pesticides, toxicity). The TAC co-chairs (Joe Domagalski, Stephen McCord) oversaw the development of 5 factsheets (name changed by request to information sheets) describing these topics. Stephen McCord started the discussion by reviewing the findings and recommendations summarized in the cover memo that was distributed to the SC together with five information sheets describing the topics.</p> <p>It was clarified that information generated by the Delta RMP is expected to influence policies and decisions by other programs. Restoration projects are an example. The RMP data are going to be part of the bigger picture of Delta science.</p> <p>Brock Bernstein focused the discussion by suggesting that the most important questions to decide what topics should be high up on the list of priorities are:</p>

1. What are the most important management questions for you?
2. Where do you feel a lot of pressure?

Mike Wackman responded that for agriculture, methylmercury is one of the most important issues. A situation specific to the Delta is that agricultural groups are not monitoring in the main channel. Most of the Monitoring and Reporting Plans (MRPs) for irrigated lands upstream of the Delta are also monitoring in the main channel. Agricultural groups in the Delta monitor close to the point of discharge, which is typically inside ag drains. None of the agricultural groups in the Delta are monitoring in the main channels. This is different from rice growers. Tim Vendlinski noted that some baseline measurement of methylmercury would be useful. He also commented that he would want to make sure a proposed methylmercury priority adds value to the methylmercury TMDL.

Linda Dorn commented that the information sheets provided interesting material and expressed particular interest in the concept of considering nutrients as ancillary data. Joe Domagalski explained that the USGS maintains 6 “superstations” in the Delta (Cache Slough at Ryer Island, Liberty Island at Hastings, Sacramento River at Decker Island, Sacramento River at Freeport, Sacramento River at Walnut Grove, San Joaquin River at Vernalis) that collect continuous data on chlorophyll a and nutrient species. USGS expects to get one or more additional stations funded, but it is not known where and when the stations would be installed. One of the planned next steps will be leveraging of existing funding.

A discussion ensued about whether there is a need to prioritize a constituent such as nutrients that gets monitored by default as an ancillary constituent. There was agreement that it would be important to prioritize nutrients if it is an important issue to management.

The discussion was then directed to winnow down further the list of potential priorities by identifying the most important management questions of SC members relative to the 5 topics. Three generic questions appeared to rise to a higher level of importance, although there was no consensus on the relative importance of each:

1. What are the ambient water characteristics of methylmercury? (Useful for restoration activities and control measures)
2. What are the basic patterns and trends of toxicity across the Delta?
3. What are the baseline conditions for nutrients across the Delta?

Several clarifications were needed: Ancillary data are not a matter of prioritization, since they need to be collected anyway to interpret other data. Ancillary data are not identical with the ambient background characterization of water quality, which is needed to determine ambient background of priority pollutants for reasonable

	<p>potential analyses and discharge impact.</p> <p>The decision-making process was touched on but no decision was made on how to proceed. Linda Dorn suggested three options: 1) straw votes, 2) dots (everybody gets two), 3) get 3rd dot to weight one of the two issues. Tim Vendlinski suggested it might be better to have grades.</p> <p>Brock Bernstein reiterated the idea for funding the RMP, which is to use efficiencies to fund studies and fill data gaps.</p> <p>Tim Vendlinski noted that a good function of the TAC would be to provide recommendations for the top three priorities. Stephen McCord suggested an iterative process that comes out with 1-2 priorities, and then get back to look at the data and see where the data gaps are. Asked which ones he were to recommend, he noted that toxicity is technically more challenging than others and that the technical team is now also linking the issue more to pesticides, which often do not have known thresholds.</p> <p>Brock Bernstein suggested taking the results of the discussion and framing management questions relating to the top three topics and dropping the others. Jay Davis commented that the Delta RMP management framework is a good logical framework but has not been prioritized. He advised the SC to prioritize carefully and to craft specific statements that can be used to direct questions to answer, such as “What is the effect of nutrient controls on ambient nutrient concentrations?” He also advised to allow spending time on iterating the management questions to make sure they are specifically stated to be useful.</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. The planning team (Brock, Meghan, Thomas) and TAC co-chairs will send out more concise questions before the next meeting. 3.2. The SC will have a more focused discussion at the next meeting. 3.3. The SC will have votes on the priorities at the next meeting.
<p>5.</p>	<p>Information: Proposed Resolution for October Board Meeting</p> <p>Ken Landau provided a brief overview of the proposed Board resolution. The proposed result of the Resolution is that the Regional Board is looking at cutting back at discharger monitoring and that regional monitoring would go in lieu of individual monitoring. The big issue remaining to be addressed is what does participation mean? He noted that he doesn’t see the Regional Board “dictating” the terms of participation and funding mechanisms for the program, which would be SC decisions. He pointed to other RMPs, where financial issues got worked out once the Regional Board left the room. Ken also clarified that he spent a lot of</p>

	<p>thought on the existing language regarding cost and cost neutrality and does not intend to formulate the concept of rising costs. Otherwise, the Regional Board would dictate. However, he would not envision that the RMP would always be the same cost as in 2013. With regards to participation, other groups like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will need to be involved at some point, but not in lieu of their current monitoring. Caltrans will be expected to be included but would not be envisioned to actively participate.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Action items:</p> <p>6.1. Stephen McCord to edit summary memo (due: Sep 27):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Distinguish and describe the two additional information sheets on ancillary data for water quality (leads: Linda Dorn and Tony Pirondini) and for the ambient background characterization (lead: Meghan Sullivan). b. Include a rationale for why contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) and salinity were not prioritized. <p>6.2. Thomas to send short-listed panel questions to panelists (due: Oct 3)</p> <p>6.3. Brock Bernstein to consult with Gregg Erickson about a grading system for ranking priorities (due: Oct 10).</p>