

MINUTES

North Bay Watershed Association Joint Technical Committee

July 22, 2020

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

10:00 – 10:15	Introductions	<i>All</i>
10:15 – 10:45	Final Report on Re-Oaking North Bay <u>Link to report</u>	<i>Frances Knapczyk</i> (Napa RCD) <i>Keith Abeles</i> (Sonoma RCD) <i>Sean Baumgarten</i> (SFEI)
10:45 – 11:00	NBWA Updates	<i>Judy Kelly</i> <i>Chris Choo</i>
11:00 – 11:30	General Updates and Informational Items	<i>All</i>

Meeting attendees:

Keith Abeles, Sonoma RCD

Sean Baumgarten, SFEI

Rob Carson, MCSTOPPP

Chris Choo, Marin County

Kristine Gaspar, GHD

Jack Gibson, MMWD

Minona Heavliand, SEC

Judy Kelly, NBWA

Frances Knapczyk, Napa RCD

Steven Lee, SEC

Lucas Patzek, Napa RCD

Kate Powers, MCL

Valerie Quinto, Sonoma RCD
Andy Rogers, Sonoma Co. Flood Zone Advisory Committee
Laurette Rogers, Pt. Blue, STRAW
Judy Schriebman, LGVSD, Gallinas Watershed Council
Ken Schwarz, Horizon Water
Will Stockard, MCSTOPPP
Susan Stompe, MCL
Erica Yelensky, EPA
Noemi ?? (arrived after introductions)

Introductions

Chris began the meeting by explaining she will record the call. If anyone is not OK please turn off your video. She then did introductions and talked about the continued focus on the NBWA on developing the concept of One Water, i.e. better integration of all water resources across the region

Final Report on Re-Oaking North Bay

Frances began the overview of the NBWA work on the Strategic Plan for Re-Oaking the North Bay. This work was completed earlier this year and was to be presented at the March conference that, of course, had to be cancelled.

History. For thousand of years the California Native peoples lived in the North Bay valleys and the estimate is that over native oaks dominated 40,000 acres. When SFEI published its Historical Atlas, and that prompted the Sonoma RCD to develop the Acorns to Oaks program for school-age children. The RCD is now organizing community-planting days, and stewarding the planted landscapes. They have planted over 5,000 sites with acorns, and involved over 4,000 people.

The 2017 fires burned 30,700 acres of oak woodlands. There was an outpouring of interest in replanting these woodlands. The Sonoma RCD wanted to take advantage of this energy, and began to partner with other organizations on oak efforts. An initial meeting was held among interested North Bay organizations to begin to create the best blueprint of where to plant strategically. The group received a grant from NBWA to do a part of this work. The objectives were to make the information accessible and visually exciting.

Sean continued the presentation by reminding us that very little of the original oak woodlands remain and that the focus of the investigation and strategy was the valley floors of Napa and Sonoma. The Re-Oak partners see this as an initial piece that can be expanded over time. The work was based on historical analysis of the two valleys - historical ecology underpins the work. Large oak trees dominated the valleys in the late 1800's. White oaks, Blue, black, coast live oak. The oaks were a major resource for the native peoples who actively managed these landscapes. Over time, many oaks were removed for agricultural- and the analysis shows a drop from 45,000 to 1,000 today in Napa. The strategy therefore focuses on restoration of valley oaks.

The project has a set of scientifically based goals related to ecosystem benefits. The oaks provide a structure for other plant and animal communities and are resilient to climate change. Oak ecosystems provide a complex ecology on their own, supporting many insects, plants, animals and birds.

First, the project compared past and current oak distribution. They then analyzed the landscape seeking the most suitable sites for a focused strategy for re-oaking. SFEI used heritage oak surveys from the past to see oak loss. Then they looked for existing large oaks where "oak nodes (15-20 acres, with 20-plus large oaks) were identified. Connectivity was another factor considered. Riparian corridors are opportunities for creating oak replanting. Finally they looked at constraints like soils and depth to groundwater. Site scale assessment is still needed.

Sean explained the color-coding of the assessment materials. The work will fall into several strategies:

- 1) Expand existing nodes (spaced to allow cross pollination, no more than 500 feet apart)
- 2) Increase density within nodes
- 3) Create corridors, along creeks etc. Or widen existing corridors
- 4) Restore areas of oak loss, like alluvial fan areas
- 5) Protect existing oak systems

The strategy can be applied to many types of landscapes- agriculture areas, urban, tributary corridors. The final PDF is available on the SFEI website.

Frances and Keith followed up by discussing how the data is being used by the partner RCDs. They are applying the data to the site-scale level. Happily, a large landowner in Sonoma wanted to do re-oak on their property so the RCD was able to begin scale level testing. The Wine Auction organizers were also wanting to offset their carbon footprint with re-plantings. The initial work identified many areas of possible effort, but practically not all of these lands will be available. The RCD is gathering new local partners for the work and Frances is making presentations around the region. She is especially excited about working with marketing organizations, which can bring additional energy to the efforts. They will be looking at the maps at the ownership scale and thinking about who would most likely be interested partners in planting. The NRCS is helping as well in evaluating the specific needs of each property.

Frances talked about how much they hope to have events soon, perhaps a virtual tour of oaks and a symposia in the fall for the vineyard audience. They hope to attract good speakers, perhaps from around the world.

They are looking for new grant opportunities to work with Marin and Solano to bring the strategy across the North Bay and have held conversations about ways to find regional funding.

Keith finished up with a review of what Sonoma RCD has been doing on this effort. He reminded the group that the RCD did a 150-acre planting after the last fire. That site is doing very well. The RCD also worked with Glen Ellen and Kenwood to get trees to willing landowners. They continue to do outreach to find bigger sites. There has been a big response from small acre sites, but the RCD was really hoping to find some larger sites. The vineyard folks were very interested initially. Sonoma RCD has

limited ability to do the landscape level work so are looking for partners who can and they are keeping their eyes open for additional funding.

Re-Oaking Question and Answer

Kate asked why there has been oak mortality in the undeveloped areas. Her experience was that tree trimmers would come in and rebalance the tree and when limbs fell owners would sometimes then take the tree out. Homeowner education should be part of future work. Frances said they are interested in suburban and rural workshops for landowners who have mature trees with ideas on how to protect them. Sean explained some of the pests that have been attacking oak trees. For example a new beetle is now attacking the valley oaks. Frances noted that we can't count on these 300 year old trees forever, we need new stock.

Laurette asked if they had been in contact with the California Wildlife Foundation. Yes, they funded a small part of the work early on. Judy K. asked why the interest by the vineyard community dwindled. Keith thinks that vineyard folks have propagation background and got excited about that as a possible support role for the industry, but the reality of making it happen gets swamped by the seasonal timing of wine work. Plus the complexity of propagating oaks is great. He thinks that getting people out and thinking about the issue on the ground will really help. Frances notes that the ABA's and wineries need to distinguish themselves, and the oak restoration work could help. Also Luke mentioned the carbon farming efforts could also help with the marketing of the oak work. Susan S. asked about the salinity of groundwater near the bay as an impediment; yes in general but there still may be many suitable sites near the baylands.

There was a discussion about how to perhaps better use the mapping tools to get people interested. Ken S. mentioned that development projects often need to do significant mitigation- and there is often not sufficient acreage on site to accomplish this. Can a mitigation bank be created for projects that need provide replanted trees? Napa RCD is very interested in supporting these small replant requirements. If there are local government examples of this kind of mitigation support, Luke would love to see them.

NBWA Updates

Judy noted that she is retiring the end of September and that her replacement will be announced soon. Ken S. talked about the latest work that NBWA is doing in interviewing regional folks on ideas about how to better integrate water resources across the region. Kate P. commented there is a currently a huge focus on transportation needs and these planning efforts are an opportunity to explore the integration of water and restoration efforts.

General Updates and Informational Items

Chris mentioned the [Wildlife Conservation Board has a grant opportunity](#) for streamflow enhancements. Erica mentioned the annual [San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund](#) EPA RFP that went out in May and grants will be announced in October. There is likely to be another round of \$5M that would either go to the existing projects on the list, or depending on timing, issue another RFP. Chris noted that the next round of Prop 1 was supposed to be coming but now expect in mid 2021.

After the meeting, the [San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority](#) announced the launch of their 2020 Measure AA grants.

It was noted that the SEC is not going for the WCB this year, but they are working with WCB funds on an existing Streamflow Stewardship Program, working with landowners to enhance stream flows. There is a major opportunity to work with Sonoma on the re-visioning of the Sonoma hospital site and the goals of the oak strategy and One Water could be integrated into the early planning stages of this work. Minona mentioned the restoration vision document that is coming out soon and will be looking to do outreach with this group for input. Chris said she would send that out to the JTC list when it is forwarded to her.

Lucas noted that a groundwater GSA region webinar for grant funding is coming. Napa will likely be applying. Frances noted a workshop tonight about Highway 37.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.