

North Bay Watershed Association

Board of Directors Meeting - DRAFT Summary

September 10, 2021 | 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS N-25-20 AND N-29-20 WHICH SUSPENDS CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS OF THE BROWN ACT, THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY VIA REMOTE CONFERENCING SERVICE — NO PHYSICAL MEETING

LOCATION

Zoom Meeting

www.nbwatershed.org

1. **Welcome and Call to Order—Directors or Member Representatives Present Included:**

Michael Boorstein – Central Marin Sanitation Agency	Andy Rodgers – NBWA
Leon Garcia—City of American Canyon	Sabrina Marson – NBWA
Pierre Washington - City of American Canyon	Kate Powers - Marin Conservation League
Chris Choo – County of Marin	Susan Stompe - Marin Conservation League
Larry Russell – Marin Municipal Water District	Neil Hancock - ModularSensors
Rick Fraites – North Marin Water District	Aurora Mahassine - Public
Jean Mariani – Novato Sanitary District	Jeremy Lowe - SFEI
Megan Clark - Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District	Cheryl Howlett – Marin Water
Pamela Meigs – Ross Valley Sanitation District	Laura Chariton - Watershed Alliance of Marin
Elizabeth Patterson – Solano County Water Agency	Lucas Russell
Brad Sherwood – Sonoma Water	Nona Dennis

Nine NBWA board members attended the meeting comprised of 22 agency staff, stakeholders, partners, and interested members of the public.

Call to Order – Director Jean Mariani called the meeting to order at 9:32 am via Zoom.

2. **General Public Comment** - None

3. **Agenda Review and Approve Past Meeting Minutes**– Director Mariani asked for any Board members to speak up if there were requested changes to the agenda. No comments.

Director Fraites moved to accept the agenda - Director Garcia seconded. Unanimously accepted.

Director Mariani mentioned she sent summary edits to NBWA staff. Director Fraites moved to approve the past meeting summary. Director Garcia seconded. Unanimously approved.

4. **Treasurer's Report**

Director Clark moved to accept the Treasure's Report - Director Fraites seconded. Unanimously accepted.

5. **Guest Presentation— Integrating Watershed Resiliency and Transportation Planning in the San Pablo Bay**

*Jeremy Lowe, Resilient Landscapes Program,
San Francisco Estuary Institute*

Jeremy provided an overview of strategies to restore habitat, reduce flood risk, and increase resilience to sea-level rise and inform transportation planning in the NBWA region.

There are online resources at <https://www.sfei.org/projects/sonoma-creek-baylands-strategy>

CalTrans is holding stakeholder meetings for anyone interested.

The area is a transportation route, marshes, and ag lands. Simultaneously managing all three is a challenge.

Different land areas are drained and farmed. Some areas stay flooded. How can this area be transformed over time to be more resilient? For example, return some of the area to tidal marshes to take pressure off some levees.

Jeremy talked about a couple of studies: Sonoma Creek Badlands Strategy, funded by Bay Restoration Authority and Sonoma Land Trust. Purpose and Goals:

- Restorations: Support acquisition and restoration design. Some of the farms in the area may become available for acquisition, which will provide an opportunity for restoration.
- Infrastructure: Recommendations for protection.
- Goals:
 - Habitat: Mixes of subtidal, tidal, freshwater, transitional and upland habitats
 - Planning Horizon: 100 years (2100) assuming sea level rise up to 6.9ft. There are a lot of areas that can be restored to accommodate tides and they need to be protected and maintained. A breach will send in a lot of water to the area. Sonoma Land Trust wants to restore as much of the marsh as possible.
 - Urgency: Implement early more likely to succeed. It takes a long time to get funding and permits, planning for restoration, and for the landscape to modify.
 - Cost: Consider whole-life
 - Access: Provide guiding principles

Skaggs Island is available for restoration. Existing historical channels have silted up and contain about 1,273 acres of marsh. Potential for up to 10,000 acres of tidal restoration. Channels sized to serve remaining marsh.

Some ideas for maximum tidal:

- Restore maximum area of marsh and mudflat.
- Connect upland to marsh where possible.
- Remove levees to alleviate flooding.
- Use historical channels to convey tidal prism.
- Protect the railroad

What they came up with for enhanced tidal

- Use existing marsh in channels as nucleus of new marshes.
- Cut new channels across diked bay lands.
- Remove levees to alleviate flooding.
- Route more tidal prism through Tolay Creek.
- Place fill next to existing channel marshes.
- Focus on alluvial fans

SFEI has conversations with transportation engineers of the Sonoma Creek Bridge.

Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has been funding an Environmental Technical Working Group Wetland Restoration engineers and road engineers; discussions are still on going. CalTrans is also getting involved.

MTC suggests “Integrate, Not Mitigate”

- Present bridge crossings and embankments disrupt hydrologic and habitat connectivity.
- Habitat restoration can help manage extreme flows.

- Road and rail need to be raised to accommodate sea-level rise and modified to increase connectivity.
- Bridges need to be lengthened to accommodate future flows.
- Road and rail co-location and alternative alignments should be considered.

Petaluma: Same discussions are happening in regard to landscape, though not as advanced. Focused on managing publicly-owned land. And a more nuanced strategy for the area that is looking head for sea level rise.

Sonoma Land Trust and Sonoma RCD are running the project. Funded by the Wetland Conservation Board. The report will be out in another six months or so.

Hwy 37 is running a complicated process. One is MTC looking at the area between Sears Point and Novato; looking at alternative routes and designs. They will be finishing in December. There's a larger Caltrans effort looking at the whole corridor between Vallejo and Novato that is just getting started. There are regular stakeholder meetings that he encourages participation in. Various routes are being considered. Because the area has wide habitat, wherever the road is placed, it will have significant impact. There are a lot of constraints for building in the area.

Jeremy discussed the combination of the Sonoma and Petaluma ideas. SFEI is starting to look into these goals:

- Develop a preferred alternative to significantly reduce the frequency and duration of State Route 121/12 flooding.
- Restore and expand critical Sonoma Creek Baylands habitat.
- Increase community and habitat resilience to sea-level rise and future flood events.
- Protect SR121/12 as alternate route to SR37.

Actions needed:

- Acquire ~300 acres of property.
- Alter berms/levees to improve floodwater storage and release to San Pablo Bay.

SFEI's problem statement

- Diking of the Sonoma Creek marshes blocks natural dispersal of floodwater.
- Portions of Schellville are regularly flooded during relatively small winter storm events. Last time was 2019.
- Flood events often result in road closure of State Route 121/12. Caltrans has permanent detour signs to uncover when needed
- Sea-level rise and will reduce the ability to drain floodwaters. Intensified storms will result in more severe upstream flooding.

Jeremy ended with comments on thinking not just about wetland restoration but thinking together with flooding and how that can be incorporated to benefit everyone.

Comments and Questions:

Fraites: He has been attending the Hwy 37 meetings for a couple of years. He thinks the elevated causeway is a superior alternative. His question is regarding rail funding. It was brought up at a past meeting to upgrade SMART during this process. Would SMART need to find the funding separately from the HWY or is it going to be integrated into the project funding?

Jeremy: At the moment everyone is focused on the road. There are considerations in the design to make sure the rail is considered. He doesn't know at this time about funding.

Meigs: In the discussions, was there any talk about tunneling or ferries?

Lowe: There was a study in 2015 by UC Davis that explored all the different options, such as maintaining levees, tunnels, and ferries. The problem is the road does more than connect point A and B, it connects to other area and the new design would need to provide all the same connections.

Garcia: He has also been part of the HWY 37 meetings over the years. He sees there is more support of the rail recently. Jeremy's presentation is one of the most comprehensive he's seen.

Rodgers: Are there other utilities that use the corridor or new ones that might be part of the solution?

Lowe: Bike lanes are being incorporated in all the designs. PG&E has transmission towers that they need access to, but they have not been part of the meetings. There is FAA navigation aid in Skaggs Island that needs power and access. Although it may not be needed in ten years. There are ag lands, so yes there are a lot of items that need to be considered.

Chariton: One of her concerns is the transmission towers. Is there any plan to augment or redesign them?

Lowe: No, but in other areas he has seen towers needing to be raised, but he doesn't think in this project they will need to be.

Garcia: He wanted to talk about the traffic studies that have been done on HWY 37 three years ago. The morning and afternoon have significant difference and that is due to the bottle neck around Sears Point where it changes from a four lane to a two lane. People take the alternate route 121 to 12 alternative. That's part of the impact in trying to address traffic problem on HWY 37.

Rodgers: Commented on the "integration not mitigation" slide. Seeing that in transportation planning is exciting to see, especially for the reasons listed.

Russell: In regard to the agriculture land in the area, has there been any consideration given to using the land as flood control? Such as flooding for rice, which could offset flooding to HWY 37.

Lowe: There are farmers in the area whose fields flood regularly. A lot of HWY 37 is protected by individual farmers who, on their own dime, pump into their field. He doesn't think that's a sustainable way of managing the landscape. There are discussion for low level areas to farm large bulky plants to create organic material to build up elevations. Biosolids are also placed on the lands. Flooding other areas is currently happening but not by design.

6. Executive Director Report and Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Andy reported on activities that have taken place since the last meeting:

Updates since last meeting

- Met with Marin Wildfire Protection Authority on July 21- A detailed report out will come at a future meeting.
- Prepared/distributed summer 2021 quarterly newsletter
- Met with members and corresponded with regional partners
- Met with SFEI on July 27 regarding planned website updates

Administrative Activities

- FY 20/21 year-end

- AP – Subconsultants
- Updated website and meeting packet information
- Updated subcontracts with SFEI, Napa RCD, Data Instincts, and Marin County

Communications

- Updating member contact lists - Need new staff / contacts
- Drought conditions and response info gathering
- Board members and member agency staff
- Regional partners
- Subject matter experts and speakers
- Call for newsletter topics and highlights

Committees

- 2022 Conference committee met on September 1
Summary notes:
 - Tentative conference date: April 8, 2022
 - Tentative title: Climate ChangeD – Our New Normal of Weathering Extremes
 - Format: Virtual core with limited in-person outdoor experiences (before/during/after). Utilize local live stream/hybrid interface professional support. Leverage forum for creating result(s) and launch subsequent actions. Unveil north bay regional interactive map. Next meeting will be October 12.

If there are any other ideas or thoughts on the direction, please contact NBWA staff.

- Scheduling Regional GMs meeting in October
Goal is to launch development of a Regional One Water Drought Project Strategy and Funding Initiative with a broadly beneficial goal of identifying and executing creative and strategic one water solutions that prepare the North Bay for the next drought by prioritizing and implementing projects.
- JTC will implement outcomes of GMs meeting
- Confirming 2021 calendar dates

2021

October 1 (delaying plan for in-person to...)

November 5

December 3

2022

January 7

February 4

March 4

April 1

May 6

June 3

- Topics in development: State Water Board Drought Assistance Programs and Resources, DroughtSMART=FireSMART, SR37 Initiatives, One Water Initiative Highlights, What's Next in Environmental Education, Urban Scale Carbon Sequestration Initiatives, Funding Opportunities, Regulatory Compliance Collaborations, Water Management & Conveyance Innovations, Capital and Natural Assets Management
- Climate Resilience Budget Trailer Bills SB155 and SB170 passed September 9, 2021. Both are long and complex. A few preliminary take-aways from a very quick review:
 - \$3.7B package, \$440M for this fiscal year

- \$25M allocated for local and regional adaptation planning this year
- \$225M allocated for grants and local/regional adaptation planning and implementation in years 2 & 3
- Senator Dodd's office 'tentatively' available to attend next NBWA Board meeting on October 1

7. Board Information Exchange and Drought Updates

Mariani: (Novato Sanitary District) The Fire Safe Program is in effect; she is making adjustments to comply with her 3-page report.

Meigs: (Ross Valley Sanitary District) has a Ross Creek improvement project that involves Fish and Wildlife and the US Army Corps Engineers clearing the way for the fish habitat restoration project. They are also removing a 1926 sewer. She applied for and received a \$20,190 grant to make this ecologically beneficial.

Fraite: (North Marin Water District). They voted back in August to hire and deploy a firm to research any and all ways they can bring additional water to their customers. He is anxiously waiting the report.

Washington: (City of American Canyon) Nothing to report.

Garcia: (City of American Canyon) Recycled water is available. A water truck goes around to fill buckets and barrels for irrigation. 300+ people have taken advantage. They have a tool on their website to help residents monitor their water use. They anticipate repairing leak.

Russel: (Marin Municipal Water District) Was the regional water board alerted that you are allowing residents to use recycled water for irrigation?

Garcia: It's not piped, it's in a barrel. As long as it's not through plumbing.

Mariani asked that any members of the public who want to report out, to please raise their hand.

Mahassine: (public) She wanted to comment that she is on the Las Galinas Watershed Council in the Civic Center using biofilters to improve water quality in open water systems. She is also working on a polishing project for a sanitary district that is proving to be successful. She wants people to know that's an option for algae blooms and for channelized water bodies in concrete there's ways to attached biological systems. She suggests a speaker from BioMatrix speak to the group.

Mariani: Please send the information to Andy so he can be in touch.

Clark: (Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District) One of their board members (Rabi Elias) plans to retire in December.

Russel: (Marin Municipal Water District): They are getting a pipeline design to go across the Richmond bridge. There is a farmer who is selling his water to them rather than grow rice. They are talking with Sonoma Water about options for water, but it doesn't look good.

Boorstein: (Central Marin Sanitation Agency) They have two digesters, and the covers were recently inspected. One had to be taken out of commission. They ordered a new cover, and the digester has been cleaned and is being prepped to be back in line. Next weeks meeting will include an item on tertiary cleaning. They are also looking at direct potable reuse.

8. Announcements and Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 am

Next Meeting: October 1, 2021, Zoom

SUBMITTED BY: Andy Rodgers, Executive Director, NBWA