

North Bay Watershed Association

Board of Directors Meeting - Draft Summary

December 4, 2020 | 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	Jon Connors – Hack For Earth Founder/Contra Costa Resource Conservation Team
Paul Jensen – City of San Rafael	Ann Thomas – Marin Conservation League
Susan Gorin – County of Sonoma	Stephen Keese – EFD CORP
Larry Russell - Marin Municipal Water District	Pam Reeves – Climate Action Working Group
Ryan Gregory – Napa County	Steven Lee – Sonoma Ecology Center
Rick Fraites – North Marin Water District	Amy Hutzel – State Coastal Conservancy
Amy Peele – City of Novato	Ali Weber-Stover – NMFS
Jean Mariani – Novato Sanitary District	Luisa Valiela – USEPA Region 9
Pamela Meigs – Ross Valley Sanitary District	Erica Yelensky – USEPA Region 9
Kate Powers – Marin Conservation League	Andy Rodgers – NBWA
Damon Connolly – County of Marin	Sabrina Marson – NBWA
Mary Sackett – County of Marin	
Chris Choo – County of Marin	

Eleven NBWA board members attended the meeting comprised of 25 agency staff, stakeholders, partners, and interested members of the public.

Call to Order – Jack Gibson called the meeting to order at 9:32 am via Zoom.

2. **General Public Comment** - None
3. **Approval of Agenda** - Unanimously approved
4. **Approval of November 6 Summary** - Fraites moved. Mariani seconded. Unanimously approved
5. **Accepted Treasure's Report** - Mariani moved. Keese seconded. Unanimously accepted
6. **Guest Presentation– Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT) Update**
Amy Hutzel, Deputy Executive Officer, State Coastal Conservancy
Luisa Valiela, EPA Region 9, San Francisco Bay Program Lead
Ali Weber-Stover, BRRIT NOAA representative

Amy, Luisa, and Ali provided an overview of the San Francisco Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT) process formed to improve the permitting process for multi-benefit wetland restoration, associated flood management and public access infrastructure projects in the San Francisco Bay and along the bay shoreline.

BRRIT was created to improve the permitting process for multi-benefit habitat restoration projects and associated flood management and public access infrastructure."

Geographic extent is the nine Bay Area counties, excluding the Delta Primary Zone. BRRIT chair rotates every two months.

Since inception, BRRIT has worked with 16 project applicants, permitted two projects, and is close to permitting three other projects. Projects that were already at a permitting phase in 2019 did not have benefit of pre-application discussions and experienced some permitting challenges. Permitting challenges in 2019 provided for learning lessons that will benefit future projects. Tools and guidance developed by BRRIT available on the website.

The Policy & Management Committee (PMC): Developed the Permit and Policy Improvement List - issues identified as limiting the flexibility of design and/or permitting of multi-benefit restoration projects - and are working to resolve the identified issues; Reviews substantive issues raised by the BRRIT or others in project specific cases and propose resolutions at a management or policy level where appropriate; and manages the financial agreements needed to support BRRIT staff.

SFBRA staff asks for project submissions approximately two times per year via email. Projects must qualify for funding under the SFBRA's definition of multi-benefit wetland restoration projects and their associated flood management and public access infrastructure features. A project does not have to be receiving SFBRA funding. Projects need to be in EcoAtlas or added to EcoAtlas. SFBRA staff determines Measure AA eligibility and adds projects to the BRRIT's list.

<http://sfbayrestore.org/san-francisco-bay-restoration-regulatory-integration-team-brrit>

BRRIT assists by providing pre-application meetings with their team; coordinates questions and comments in writing from all the agencies on your project design and suggestions for permitting pathways; provides feedback while your project is in the planning and design phase; completes site visits as a team (impacted by Covid); a prioritized, coordinated review of your permit applications; and BRRIT may elevate issues to the PMC as needed. BRRIT members now provide a unified, coordinated comment letter to project applicants after the pre-application meetings.

BRRIT's ongoing remote coordination and collaboration has risen to the challenge of working productively under Covid restrictions and is still expecting to meet the permitting demands of future projects. The BRRIT is always looking to improve and they want your feedback and suggestions emailed to BRRIT@sfbayrestore.org.

Questions:

John Connors: Introduced himself to the BRRIT and thanked them for the initiative and will reach out after the meeting.

Gibson: Do you have any data on the average time frame efficiencies? Does it make sense to standardize the process across the board?

Hutzel - Corps of Engineers has some data. There is some other project specific data. The average is about two-years for the permit process; so far BRRIT has seen projects get through in under a year. BRRIT is beginning to track and will have better data as time goes on.

Valiela - Changing regulations has been in communication with Cutting Green Tape and will coordinate with them. They are trying NOT to tackle regulation. If there are regulations that need to be addressed, they will be through the Policy & Management Committee.

Cutting Green Tape report is here:

https://calandscapestewardshipnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/CGT_FINAL_hires.pdf

Gibson: Are there complications with multi-jurisdictional permits?

Valiela - Yes, all the projects will touch all six agencies plus EPA. BRRIT is a way to better serve and expedite restoration community projects.

Jensen: NEPA and CEQA review- Is there a way to collectively handle the reviews in a more efficient way?

Hutzel - Cutting Green Tape report has discussion on seeking exceptions for NEPA and CEQA.

Weber-Stover - Two projects have come in that meet that requirement. NEPA team and BRRIT are working together and seems there will be efficiencies that will come from that.

Gregory - In terms of streamlining NEPA and CEQA, he mentioned CALTrans is piloting a project for state and federal reciprocity that could be folded into CEQA and taking NEPA out of the equation.

Valiela - acknowledged she is hearing from the group that NEPA and CEQA assistance would be beneficial.

Jensen: yes. It's really about timing and that streamlining the process would be helpful.

Rodgers: Does working with the BRRIT provide a competitive advantage or differentiator for State and federal funding?

Hutzel - Some projects have listed the BRRIT on projects. Ultimately the BRRIT is meant to be a benefit for the project in reducing back and forth. Could be a good thing to mention for funding as BRRIT screens for restoration compliance and with approved projects, there is more certainty the permitting will go faster.

7. **Executive Director Report**

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

Administrative Activities— FY 21/22 work plan development started; Updating distribution lists; and Updating website.

Communications, and Committees—Andy requested that any changes to Board members, member agency staff, and regional partners be emailed to NBWA staff for distribution list updates; Continue to send him subject matter experts and speakers and newsletter topics

and project/program highlights. NBWA staff will send out calendar save the dates for 2021 Board meetings:

- January 8
- February 5
- March 5
- April 2
- May 7
- June 4
- July 9
- September 10
- October 1
- November 5
- December 3

Scheduling JTC meetings to resume early 2021. Andy planning to highlight, build on and track NBWA and member OneWater successes. He also wants to explore how NBWA's structure can bring more value(s) to members and region?

- Leverage insights and experiences of pan-sector agencies: Mine knowledge, strategies, frameworks, practices, technologies and solutions that address shared challenges
- Collectively address requirements-in-common
- Position collaboration for competitive funds
- Consider other synergistic partnerships/associations

Upcoming meeting with Napa RCD to plan and strategize. Interested to get sense of Board for general options for NBWA Conference:

- Spring/summer 2021 (virtual)
- Fall/winter 2021 (possibly virtual)
- Spring 2022 (hopefully in-person)

Mariani - Her recommendation is to wait until Spring 2022.

The board unanimously supports delaying to 2022.

8. **NBWA Information Sharing - Board members**

Gibson: Watching water supply closely. Reservoirs are 60% capacity and are 93% of where they would be normally this time of year. Staff is planning on water purchases as needed. He is hopeful the upcoming rain season will provide more supply. Wildfire planning and protection is still going strong. He is looking into finding out if an evacuation plan is being considered and if not, he will look into moving one forward.

Meigs: Adopted a resolution approving expanded eligibility for the sewer service charge assistance program to nonprofit low-income affordable housing. They already have a plan for individual homeowners for a few years now, but they are expanding it. They have about 100 people in the program so far.

Mariani asked how they can charge a reduced fee and get around Prop 218 restrictions? Gregory wanted to know the same.

Borstein: The program is not being funded by the tax revenues but by lease revenue from various. It's a program that they are funding from other non-fee sources.

Meigs: Looking at reserve policies in the next few months to see how the pandemic will impact revenues.

Fraites: Still struggling with saltwater intrusion. Still under regulation and are working hard to remedy. They should have it under control in the next few months. They are drilling another well.

Gregory: Prop 218 process mailer coming mid-January with the hearing in March. Commercial fees will be impacted more so than residents.

Connolly: Board meeting on Tuesday will take up Climate Action Plan update for the county; concurrently they are unveiling a strategic plan for climate mitigation initiative. Preparing a response to recent grand jury report on sea level rise adaptation in Marin and how that related to on-going initiatives. In Santa Benicia, a big issue is to repair a levy (6 million total, 3 million from a FEMA grant). Flood Zone and County will also help. One million is still needed- They plan to go to voters to ask for a parcel tax for seven years. Special election in March. They feel well positioned for it.

Peel: She just finished her first year in council. Climate emergency resolution was passed. They are moving forward with Zoom committee meeting regarding deliverable for that. Homeless challenge along a creek and are finding ways to protect part of the area, the other part of it is county owned and they are collaborating on addressing those issues.

9. Agenda Items for Future Meetings

January/February: Water quality impacts from the wildfires; Regional Monitoring Program update; San Pablo Bay fisheries and habitats

10. Announcements and Adjourn

- NBWA Distribution list update process

DRAFT

Meeting adjourned at 11:01

Next Meeting: January 8, 2021, Zoom

SUBMITTED BY: Andy Rodgers, Executive Director, NBWA