

Bay Area Watershed Network

Working Groups Annual Report

2012

Policy Working Group

Co-chairs: Ariana Katovich, Earth Island Institute, and Caitlin Cornwall Sonoma Ecology Center

Feb 17, 2012: Conservation Finance Roundtable, City of Sonoma

This roundtable involved 33 participants who met to share financing strategies for watershed restoration and protection work in the context of a past heavy reliance on state bond act funded grant programs which are coming to a close within the next two years because of the lack of continuing resources bond acts. Earth Island Institute collaborated with the Presidio Graduate School to have MBA graduate students present creative investment models involving municipalities and investors. This concept links capital investment projects to water infrastructure needs beyond traditional water supply and flood control to include stormwater management and other “green” water quality and supply alternatives. The upcoming California AB32 cap and trade greenhouse reduction funds present another potential future source of watershed management funding. Quantification of ecosystem services is a part of this strategy to make a connection between needed ongoing infrastructure services, greenhouse gas reduction with watershed management activities such as stormwater infiltration, heat island remediation, floodplain protection and restoration and decentralized water supply systems. Participants at the roundtable included both urban and rural watershed managers and the range of financing options presented included private landowner incentives programs for stewardship activities.

Army Corps Levee Vegetation Management Standards

A policy issue which has been ongoing since 2007 is a coordinated response to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ proposed levee vegetation management standards. The Corps published new guidelines in the federal register in Feb 2012 addressing the process for attaining a variance to the vegetation management standards. This variance did not address a number of issues important for local agencies and stakeholders involved in managing and protecting riparian resources. As a result, stakeholders in BAWN, the Bay Area Flood Control Agencies Association, the CA State Association of Counties, environmental organizations and various state agencies drafted consensus legislation to help Congress better direct the Corps on how to address this issue. Congresswoman Doris Matsui introduced HR 5831 containing this consensus language which recently became part of Senator Boxer’s introduced Water Resources Development Act.

Outreach and Education Working Group

Co-Chairs: Teresa Eade and Mark Spencer, StopWaste.org.

Landscaping for the Watershed Workshop

On June 1 2012, StopWaste.org hosted a *Landscaping for the Watershed* outreach and education workshop which involved over 90 participants from around the Bay Area representing the landscape trades including nurseries, landscape maintenance professionals, designers and landscape architects. The workshop objectives were developed by the Bay Area Watershed Network which identified the need for continuing education about how to best design stream restoration and water quality revegetation projects to protect and enhance water quality, fish, wildlife and bird habitat functions. Habitat restoration design and horticultural practices guidelines were suggested based on years of project monitoring results for riparian restoration projects located in both urban and rural environments.

The workshop also included the topics of landscaping approaches for “low impact developments,” green landscape based stormwater projects, water efficiency including small scale water supply projects installation, and trash monitoring. The workshop instructed how each of these purposes requires different kinds of information and landscaping approaches. Demand for the workshop almost exceeded space limitations so similar future workshops may be planned to meet the demands for this type of information. Participants included representatives from local agencies, water agencies, regional and local park districts, the Natural Resources Agency, CA Department of Water Resources, and CA Department of Fish and Game. Presenters included staff from National Marine Fisheries Service, Golden Gate Audubon Society, PRBO Conservation Science’s STRAW Program, StopWaste.org, The Watershed Project, Prunuske-Chatham Inc., City of Oakland Rain Barrel Program, The Planning Center and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Assessment, Monitoring and Restoration Tools Working Group

Co-chairs: Roger Leventhal, Marin County, and Mitch Avalon, Contra Costa County

In 2011 the Assessment, Monitoring and Restoration Tools Working Group established the objective to better inform the watershed community on the big picture status of available watershed assessments for a variety of watershed management and communication needs. A working committee of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership, the State Water Board, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board and the Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment has drafted a workshop program for a 2013 workshop and has confirmation from proposed speakers who represent expertise in assessments for wetlands, stormwater, riparian environments, river restoration, fish habitat, and the application of valuation of ecosystem services and the use of assessments for communicating the status of resources. SFEP will be the workshop sponsor and a tentative date is set for May 20, 2013.