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MEMO

DATE: August 19, 2021

TO: Implementation Committee

FROM: Darcie Luce, Environmental Planner

RE: 2022-2026 Estuary Blueprint Update – Progress Report and
 Equity/Human Dimensions Elements

OVERVIEW

The Estuary Blueprint Update Steering Committee and staff-led Working Groups have continued to meet through the summer. Staff have convened over 20 large group meetings and countless individual meetings to assess the continued relevance of each action topic and to discuss the best opportunities to make significant progress in the next five years.

Currently, staff are bringing draft updates to the Steering Committee for each Action. The next step will be to incorporate Steering Committee input into a draft for IC review prior to the November IC meeting. Staff will integrate IC input into a revised draft document which will be presented at the November IC meeting. Recommendations from the November IC meeting will be incorporated into the Final Draft Blueprint. A special IC meeting will convene in January 2022 (date TBD) to review and take action on approval of the final document. After IC approval, the updated Blueprint will go through Executive Council and EPA approval before its release in 2022. An updated timeline is attached at the end of this memo.

EQUITY AND HUMAN DIMENSIONS ELEMENTS

As part of this update to the Estuary Blueprint, the Steering Committee agreed to make a focus on equity one of the Guiding Principles. Staff drafted a plan to implement this principle through a multi-pronged approach, including:

- a) Directing Working Group Leads to consider equity questions in updating every Action,
- b) Holding listening sessions for underrepresented stakeholders including frontline communities and Tribes,
- c) Consulting with other regional planning processes on their engagement strategies, and
- d) Developing a new action focused on equity.

LISTENING SESSIONS

Staff convened two listening sessions this summer to solicit input from stakeholders who have been under-represented in previous versions of the Blueprint. The first session was held with Tribes and Indigenous groups whose traditional territories overlap with some part of the Estuary. The second session was intended for communities, specifically frontline communities, but drew attendees from very diverse sectors, including community-based organizations, water agencies, resource conservation districts, non-regulatory regional and conservation organizations and agencies, students, and interested citizens.

One recurring theme of both listening sessions was the request from Tribes and communities to be represented in the governance structure of the Estuary Blueprint and the Estuary Partnership. Staff learned that the place-based orientation of both Tribes and communities can make it difficult for these groups to engage in regional planning processes with only one designated seat or representative. Several alternatives were explored through the discussion, particularly in the listening session for Tribes.

The recommendations made at these sessions have informed the development of actions and tasks with an equity or human dimensions focus. Staff are currently working to respond to listening session attendees with the proposed outcomes of their recommendations.

DEVELOPING TASKS AND ACTIONS WITH AN EQUITY OR HUMAN DIMENSIONS FOCUS

A proposed new action, currently under development, focuses on regional strategies to support Indigenous and frontline communities in advancing Estuary health. To date, the process to develop this action has consisted of individual meetings with partners, review of the findings of draft Regional Needs Assessment of the Disadvantaged Communities and Tribal Involvement Program or DACTIP (part of the Bay Area Integrated Regional Water Management Program), and the listening sessions described above.

In addition to the proposed new action, several existing actions are also incorporating equity into the update at the task or milestone level.

A summary of ways that equity and human dimensions are taking shape in potential new or updated actions and tasks in the Blueprint follows:

- Establish and fund a community advisory board to integrate community needs and assets into the planning, policy, and implementation of the Estuary Blueprint.
- Fund projects that build the capacity of marginalized communities to participate in the planning and implementation of the Estuary Blueprint's tasks.
- Support and expand Estuary-oriented outreach and education programs provided by local and community-based organizations.
- In partnership with Tribes, develop Best Management Practices for incorporating cultural knowledge and resource needs into habitat restoration, adaptation, and other multi-benefit projects.

- In partnership with frontline and underserved communities, develop and implement strategies that initiate community involvement at the outset of project development.
- Update task milestones to track benefits to communities, community engagement, input, and visioning.
- Evaluate the social and cultural values of certain ecosystem services in both market and non-market terms.
- Develop education and management measures for both subsistence and culturally meaningful fish consumption.
- Develop Resilience and Equity Modules for the Bay Area GreenPrint.
- Explore ways to develop new social science.
- Conduct a racial equity analysis of the 2022 Estuary Blueprint to inform the next update or revision.

Finally, staff are exploring options for broadening Implementation Committee (IC) representation to include Tribes and community members.

Estuary Blueprint Update - Timeline

