



# bay restoration commission

STEWARDS OF SANTA MONICA BAY

santa monica bay restoration commission / 320 west 4<sup>th</sup> street, ste 200; los angeles, california 90013  
213/576-6615 phone / 213/576-6646 fax / www.smbrc.ca.gov

## MEETING OF THE SANTA MONICA BAY RESTORATION COMMISSION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Contact: Lia Protopapadakis (310-216-9826)

**Date:** Thursday, June 2, 2011

**Time:** 9:30am – 2:30pm

**Location:** Loyola Marymount University, Malone 460C (The Hill)

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** The Chair convened the meeting at 9:45am followed by round-the-table introductions.
2. **Order of Agenda.** The agenda was reorganized, as noted below, to accommodate presenter's schedules.
3. **Public Comment.** Public comment was taken informally throughout the course of the meeting.
4. **Presentation: Overview of Ballona Watershed by Dr. Shelley Luce** (formerly item # 9, to be given by Sean Bergquist)

Shelley discussed the reasons the Ballona Watershed is a high priority for the SMBRC. The approach SMBRC takes is comprehensive and integrated and encompasses research, planning, policy, projects, and outreach. Research projects conducted or underway include the historical ecology of the watershed, a water budget, monitoring biological conditions, and modeling the effect of alternative solutions in the watershed. Planning activities include the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force and Management Plan, Ballona Greenway Plan, the Beach Bluffs Restoration Project Master Plan, Ballona Wetlands Restoration Plan, and the Lower Ballona Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study. Policy activities include the stream protection ordinance, Low Impact Development as retro-fits, Green Streets Standards, and TMDLs. Projects underway or in development include a commercial-scale rain garden in the flood control right-of-way in Culver City, residential rain barrels, stormwater treatment at Mar Vista Park, stormwater treatment and irrigation at Westside Park, Catch basins and tree wells, storm drain diversions, and dune restoration. Outreach activities include open houses and tours of the Ballona Wetlands, a booth at farmers' markets in the watershed, environmental science education with school groups. SMBRC's next steps for the watershed include breaking ground on the Ballona Wetlands restoration project.

5. **Presentation: Ballona Water Budget and Historical Ecology by Dr. Eric Stein and Sharon Liu** (formerly item # 5 without Sharon Liu)

Sharon Liu discussed urbanization's impact on the long-term water balance by discussing each of the components. Inputs into the system include precipitation and imported water while outputs include evapotranspiration, runoff, and exiting deep ground water. The 73-year study period runs from 1938 to 2010. Variables such as precipitation and runoff had better estimates because they were directly gauged and their accuracy was not impacted by

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development. Urbanization had a more significant impact on imported water, evapotranspiration, and exiting deep groundwater, thus these components had more associated uncertainty. Dry season runoff exceeded precipitation throughout the study period. Both native (springs and seeps) and non-native (imported water) sources contribute to the difference. Imported water contributes to runoff through outdoor uses such as overwatering and car washing, which lead to direct runoff. Overwatering also leads to infiltration/recharge which produces artificial springs. The partition between the sources is currently under investigation. Preliminary results for the annual water balance were shown and the annual residual of the water balance showed a slight increasing trend over the study period.

Eric Stein discussed results from the SMBRC- funded project on the historical ecology of the Ballona Creek watershed, ca 1870. The results of this project will provide insight to the historical extent and distribution of wetlands, riparian zones, and seeps and springs. It will also provide a frame of reference for monitoring, help inform decision about future restoration, and help guide management actions. Historically, the watershed was characterized by the estuary, which was much larger than it is today, the large interior La Cienega wetlands and a series of springs bounded by faulting at the base of the foothills. The coastal wetlands bear clear signatures of the Los Angeles River which flowed to the ocean through, what is now, Ballona Creek until 1825. The coastal wetlands were bordered by large expanses of seasonal and alkaline wetlands that were separated from La Cienega by only about 1.5 miles. The main creek flowing into the wetlands ca. 1870 was the perennial Centinela Creek, which was fed by a well-documented year-round spring. The draft report and web products from this effort will be available in October 2011.

## 6. Presentation: Ballona Greenway Plan by Jessica Hall (formerly item # 8)

The Ballona Greenway Plan was developed by a team of community members and concerned citizens as an activity of the Ballona Watershed Task Force. After walking the creek looking for open space opportunities along the channel rights-of-way, the planning team conducted design charrettes to visualize and add detail to the opportunities they saw. They were able to re-think ways to contain water within the existing channel, while allowing improved aesthetics, recreation, and water quality. Engineering analyses determined that the recommended alterations to the creek and banks result in improved flood protection channel (in hydrological models of a 100-year storm event). The current channel is predicted to overflow at the 10 Freeway crossing. The first Greenway Plan project to be implemented is a pair of rain gardens built in the flood control right-of-way at the top of the Ballona Creek banks in Culver City. These rain gardens are bioswales that will collect, treat and infiltrate 22 acres of industrial and residential properties during average storms. They include 10,000 native plants and educational signage as well.

## 7. Presentation: Ballona Wetlands Monitoring by Karina Johnston (formerly item # 10)

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The Baseline Monitoring program will complete the second year of assessment at the end of September (2011). This presentation summarized the goals of the program, parameters evaluated, methods used, and the preliminary results from the first year and a half.

## 8. Discussion: How can Ballona monitoring inform development of tier 3 wetland monitoring? (formerly item # 11)

How will the program transition from monitoring Ballona to monitoring wetlands on a regional scale? The key is to focus on the goals of the program, and the future uses of the data. Baseline monitoring was broad in order to assess the site comprehensively and evaluate all possible futures of the restoration process. This makes it difficult to pare down the scope of the monitoring. Time scale is often used to make broad-scoped monitoring more manageable. For example, sediment metrics won't change very much or very quickly, so this can be monitored infrequently. In addition, broad goals do not translate into clear and specific reasons for collecting certain data. At the present time, a better use of resources may be to focus on synthesizing data rather than developing a long-term program. Evaluating what was measured and interpreting those data is the next step.

Other wetlands can be used to set priorities. Also a long-term monitoring plan can be constructed based on a synthesis of the baseline monitoring data. Collecting information costs extra effort and takes time and resources away from synthesizing the data. One way to determine interim monitoring strategies is to use the data obtained to assess gaps in monitoring methods. One suggested example was enclosure traps for gobies (which are used in San Dieguito Lagoon, Mugu Lagoon, Tijuana Estuary, and Carpinteria Salt Marsh) and continuing to monitor the seed bank for temporal changes instead of full-scale vegetation surveys.

Another approach will be to evaluate the data from year one and year two together. If they are significantly different, monitoring should continue so the normal range can be established before restoration occurs. Finally, consider whether shifting time of the study will give additional confidence (as in a sensitivity analysis) in the protocols. In summary, good reasons to conduct additional monitoring are 1) to improve protocols and fill gaps; 2) if there is important variation due to temporal patterns such that more data points will help; or 3) if there are specific goals identified by the restoration plan for which new data must be collected. The Year-2 baseline monitoring report should identify if there is temporal variation and discuss whether additional monitoring will help reduce the variability. Revisit the baseline monitoring plan when the Report is finalized, paying attention to which methods were most valuable and informative.

SMBRC received an EPA Wetlands Development Grant and will be proceeding with the start of that grant in October 2011. SMBRC will be partnering with SCCWRP and CSUCI, and will be coordinating with similar programs throughout the region and state.

9. Approval of Meeting Minutes (formerly item # 4) – Approved with minor edits.

10. Reports from the Chair, Subcommittees, and Staff (formerly item #5)

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Rich Ambrose gave the Chair Report. At the Governing Board meeting, he discussed the TAC review of the Proposition 84 grant proposals and the TAC discussion about the need for consistent monitoring under a common framework and noted that the Governing Board received this enthusiastically.

The MRAC has not met since the last TAC meeting, so there was no subcommittee report.

Lia gave the staff report. Regarding Prop. 84, staff conducted site visits and received supplemental modeling reports. Staff anticipates bringing the recommendations to the Governing Board in August and asking the TAC to develop a framework for monitoring these projects later this year. The judge granted an injunction in the Malibu Lagoon lawsuit because the State lawyers could not produce the administrative record, required under CEQA. Staff continues to work on a framework for habitat health indices and anticipates bringing a draft to the TAC later this year. Staff provided comments on the latest draft of the MPA Monitoring Plan. It is somewhat improved from a previous draft, but still contains what staff sees as fatal flaws, including the disconnect between ecosystem feature assessment and the MPA design and management evaluation, and the piecemeal data they will generate by funding different methods of collecting similar, but not identical, data in different years.

## 11. Discussion: review of current membership, direction for new membership, and need for new subcommittees. (formerly item # 6)

Lia described the current arrangement for appointing and maintaining TAC membership and presented a draft policy for renewing TAC membership, which features automatic renewal unless staff believes the Governing Board may be better served by replacing a current member. The TAC discussed this and suggested refinements to this policy. One suggested idea was for TAC members to be reappointed on a staggered cycle, but on a consistent schedule (for example, during December meetings). Appointments would be for 2 years. If for some reason a member needed to resign before the 2-year term ended, staff would initiate a review process and the TAC could vote on it. Another was for a formal process in which appointments/renewals were an annual item and the TAC would vote on a staffing recommendation to Shelley. This would be similar to the process proposed by staff, but would be more transparent. In addition, in this way, the TAC is still serving at the pleasure of the Executive Director of the Governing Board.

## 12. Member Comment - None

## 13. September Meeting Date TBD, announcement will be made in July.

## 14. Adjournment

### Attendance

#### TAC/MRAC Members

Rich Ambrose (TAC Chair)  
Steve Bay (TAC)  
Mas Dojiri (TAC)

#### Staff Members

Lia Protopapadakis  
Shelley Luce  
Guangyu Wang

#### Public Members

Jim Allen (ECORP)  
Eric Miller (MBC)  
Sean Anderson (CSU-CI)

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Burt Jones (TAC)  
Karen Martin (TAC)  
Dan Pondella (TAC)

Elena Tuttle  
Karina Johnston

Sharon Liu (UCLA)  
John Dorsey (LMU)  
Jessica Hall (RDG)  
Eric Stein (SCCWRP)

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