



June 15, 2021

Agenda Item: 3.b

To: Governing Board, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
From: Guangyu Wang, Chief Administrative Director
Re: **Consideration of Approval of Proposition 50 Grant Program Award Process and Request for Proposals**

Action Requested of the Governing Board

Approve the Proposition 50 (Prop 50) grant program award process and Request for Proposals (RFP). (See Attachment B).

Background

Prop 50 – the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 – allocated \$100 million to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to finance projects to restore and protect the water quality and environment of coastal waters, estuaries, bays and near-shore waters, and groundwater. Of that \$100 million, Section 79543, subdivision (c), of the Water Code allocated \$20 million to implement priority actions specified in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) of the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program (NEP), formerly known as the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan. Since 2004, 16 projects recommended for Prop 50 funding by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (Commission) have been completed. The Commission currently has \$3,227,000 remaining for grant funding recommendations. Of the remaining funds, \$3,190,000 is now available to encumber by June 30, 2023 and \$37,000 was requested for re-appropriation for fiscal year 2021-2022.

At its August 16, 2018 meeting, the Governing Board adopted Resolution 18-02 to establish implementation of the [Comprehensive Monitoring Program](#) and other monitoring needs identified in the CCMP as the funding priority for the remaining Prop 50 funds. The resolution also directed Commission staff to work with the Commission's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to develop a scope of work and project list for the Governing Board's consideration of adoption. In response to the direction of the Governing Board, the TAC recommended priority areas for Prop 50 funding in a memorandum dated October 15, 2019 ([Attachment A](#)).



The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission's mission is to restore and enhance Santa Monica Bay through actions and partnerships that improve water quality, conserve and rehabilitate natural resources, mitigate the impacts of climate change and sea level rise, and protect Santa Monica Bay's benefits and values.

As part of the CCMP revision process, the TAC led major revisions to the 2007 Comprehensive Monitoring Program with support from Commission staff, The Bay Foundation staff, and outside experts. At its April 15, 2021 meeting, the Governing Board approved the revised Comprehensive Monitoring Program, which includes new indicators, especially indicators for assessing climate change vulnerability, and correspondingly new monitoring programs, new technologies, a synthesis of new research and monitoring objectives, and directions for future studies.

Commission staff developed the May 14, 2021 preliminary draft of the RFP (preliminary draft) for soliciting project proposals for the remaining Prop 50 grant funds and submitted it to the Executive Committee and State Water Board staff for review. At its May 20, 2021 meeting, the Executive Committee recommended clarifying the composition and conflict of interest guidelines of the proposal review panel and how match funds will be evaluated. The preliminary draft was revised to specify that reviewers will not be able to review or participate in discussion of proposals for which they have a conflict of interest and that all reviewers will be required to submit a statement disclosing any conflict of interest. However, the June 15, 2021 proposed final draft (final draft; Attachment B) does not specify the composition of the review panel or how match funds will be evaluated as this level of detail is not needed in the RFP.

In addition, based on State Water Board staff's comments and suggestions and Commission staff review, the final draft includes editorial corrections and the following clarifications:

- The entities eligible to apply for grant funds consistent with Section 79148.2 of the Water Code;
- Proposals involving multiple organizations involved in similar or related activities are strongly encouraged, but these proposals should be submitted under one application and with only one organization as the applicant;
- The recipient will be responsible for completing the project in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and that any award of grant funds is contingent on an applicant accepting the State Water Board's final grant agreement;
- Commission staff will conduct a public workshop to provide information on the Prop 50 grant program after the RFP is issued;
- The review panel will evaluate and score proposals based on technical feasibility and ability to address the project priorities and develop two lists for the Governing Board's consideration: (1) a proposed Recommended Project List, which will include the highest scored projects up to the amount of available funds for this grant program, and (2) a ranked standby list of proposals;

- Reviewers will not be able to review or participate in discussion of proposals for which they have a conflict of interest. All reviewers will be required to submit a statement disclosing any conflict of interest; and
- Clarification of project eligibility based on applicable provisions of Section 79148 of the Water Code.

The redline version of the final draft Prop 50 RFP identifies all changes made to the preliminary draft (Attachment C).

Staff Recommendation

Commission staff recommends the Governing Board approve the final draft Prop 50 grant program award process and RFP (Attachment B), which is consistent with the funding priorities established by Resolution 18-02 and the TAC's recommendations for priority areas for Prop 50 funding with the goal of providing the greatest value for monitoring and assessing the state of Santa Monica Bay and its watersheds.

Attachments

Attachment A	October 15, 2019 TAC Memorandum regarding Recommendations for Prop 50 Priority Areas
Attachment B	June 15, 2021 Final Draft Prop 50 RFP
Attachment C	Redline Version of the May 14, 2021 Preliminary Draft Compared to the June 15, 2021 Final Draft Prop 50 RFP

ATTACHMENT A

Memorandum

October 15, 2019

To: Guangyu Wang, Chief Administrative Director, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission

From: Steven Bay, Chair, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Technical Advisory Committee

Re: TAC Recommendations Regarding Prop. 50 Priority Areas

Proposition 50 – “Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002” was approved by California voters in 2002. This bond measure has provided funding for many water supply and water quality protection programs throughout the state. A portion of these funds were allocated to the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (Commission) for implementation of priority actions specified in the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan. Approximately \$3.2 million of the bond allocation to Commission remains and the Governing Board has requested that these funds be used to support implementation of the Comprehensive Monitoring Program (CMP) and other monitoring needs identified in the Bay Restoration Plan (now known as the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan). The TAC was asked to provide recommendations to Commission regarding priorities and types of work that will provide greatest value with regards to monitoring and assessing the state of Santa Monica Bay (Bay). The TAC established a subcommittee to develop draft recommendations, which were discussed and revised at the TAC’s July 17 meeting. This memo presents the TAC’s recommendations, which are organized into three parts: (1) Topic Areas, (2) Priority Topics, and (3) Recommended Projects.

1. Topic Areas

The TAC has identified two topic areas related to the Proposition 50 goal of implementing projects that “provide comprehensive capability for monitoring, collecting, and analyzing ambient water quality, including monitoring technology that can be entered into a statewide information base with standardized protocols and sampling, collection, storage and retrieval procedures.” Multiple areas of emphasis within the topic areas were also identified.

A. Support of State of the Bay assessments:

- 1. Development of habitat assessment indices.** Several of the types of indices identified by the TAC’s Habitat Subgroups have not been developed to the point where they can be applied throughout the Bay. Projects in this category include the collection, compilation, and synthesis of information to develop quantitative indices needed to support assessment of Bay habitats for use in future State of the Bay reports.

October 15, 2019 TAC Memorandum

2. **New monitoring to support habitat assessments.** Projects in this category include conducting monitoring to fill data gaps and provide the information needed to facilitate application of Commission habitat assessment indices developed by the Commission habitat assessment subgroups. Management of new monitoring data is also included in this category.
3. **Compilation and management of existing monitoring data.** Data from ongoing monitoring programs may not be fully utilized in State of the Bay assessments due to the difficulty in locating and compiling this information in a timely manner. Projects in this category include work to compile, manage, and analyze data from ongoing monitoring programs to support application of standardized assessment indices by Commission.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation using indicators not included in indices.** Projects in this category include either new measurements (using established methods) or synthesis of existing information to assess biological condition or water quality and provide a more comprehensive evaluation of habitat condition.

B. Development and testing of new monitoring/assessment technologies:

New technologies, such as molecular assays or new types of sensors/sensing platforms, hold promise for increasing the efficiency, accuracy, and sensitivity of environmental monitoring of Santa Monica Bay. Projects in this category should apply these technologies to Santa Monica Bay (including the watershed) as a test case and demonstrate feasibility for use in monitoring programs.

2. Priority Topics

Several of the subtopic areas were identified by the TAC as priorities for funding:

- **Assessment index development.** Several Bay habitat groups either do not have assessment indices, or those indices need further development to improve their utility for the State of the Bay report.
- **New monitoring data.** There are gaps in either the spatial extent or completeness of currently available monitoring that limit the ability to assess condition in the Bay using the indicators identified by the habitat assessment subgroups.
- **Better habitat maps for the Bay.** The occurrence and extent of some habitats in the Bay is poorly documented. Existing information needs to be compiled and additional surveys conducted. These maps would also be useful for planning future restoration/enhancement activities.

October 15, 2019 TAC Memorandum

- **Develop tools to assess climate change vulnerability for Bay habitats.** The TAC has identified four categories of indicators needed to assess the condition of Bay habitats (e.g., spatial extent, biological/ecological condition, stressors, and climate change vulnerability). Of these categories, the tools and data needed to assess climate change vulnerability are lacking. While many types of indicators have been identified, the specific indicators, approach for interpretation, and monitoring data for most habitats are incomplete.

3. Recommended Projects

There are many potential projects that would provide information relevant for the priority topics described previously. However, the TAC has identified several projects that address the highest priority needs for improving assessment of the State of the Bay:

- Development of indices for assessing the biological/ecological condition of sandy shore and rocky intertidal habitats.
- Additional monitoring to provide the data needed to evaluate habitat-specific indicators/indices, or to provide a spatially more complete habitat assessment of biological/ecological condition. Data gaps are most pronounced for the following habitat categories: Wetlands, Sandy Shores, Rocky Intertidal, Rocky Reef, and Pelagic.
- Mapping the extent and characteristics of nearshore seagrass and nearshore rocky habitats in the Bay.
- Climate change vulnerability assessment of Bay habitats. The types of indicators identified for each habitat type need to be developed into specific tools/indices and then implemented to assess the current level of vulnerability for Bay habitats. These tools should also be useful for tracking changes in vulnerability over time.