

**Fall Update Letter
October, 2011**

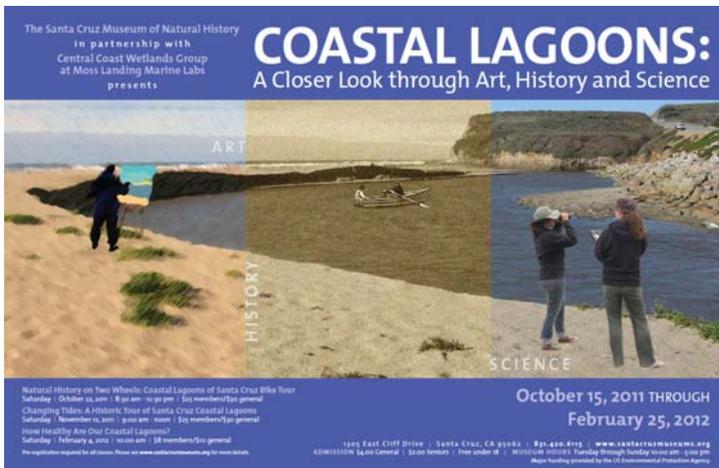
Dear Central Coast Wetland Managers and Scientists,

The members of the Central Coast Wetlands Group have been working hard since our last update in January, and we are excited to share our progress in building a collaborative community of wetland scientists and resource managers. Our current work includes the following:

Bar Built Estuaries Grant and Upcoming Exhibit

CCWG was granted funding from the EPA to study California Bar Built Estuaries (river mouth lagoons). Since our last update letter, CCWG has completed the first draft of our CRAM module for these systems and we

have tested it on 17 lagoons on the Central Coast. In addition, we have completed vegetation surveys, benthic sampling, stream profile measurements and water quality analysis at each of the sites. We plan to visit an additional 20-25 sites along the entire California coast, and revisit the existing sites in the Spring. In addition to the field work, CCWG has been working on historical analysis of habitat types by comparing the current aerials of the sites to the US Coast Survey maps done in the 1850s-70s.



And now for some exciting news! CCWG has partnered with the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History on an exhibit entitled *Coastal Lagoons: A Closer Look through Art, History and Science*. The exhibit includes art, historical analysis, and CRAM results for seven lagoons from Pescadero to Garrapata, as well as information about lagoons such as how they work, how we study them, and why they are important. Artists include Ann Thiermann, Susan Howe and Marie Gabrielle. Exhibit highlights include an interactive mural and video about how landuse changes overtime have impacted our coastal lagoons.

The exhibit will run from October 15th, 2011 through February 25th, 2012.

Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

CCWG has been working closely with the Regional Water Management Group for Greater Monterey County to develop and finalize the IRWMP necessary to be eligible for several funding sources including Prop 84. In addition to attending meetings and participating in multiple subcommittees, CCWG helped to write and is now working on both the Planning Grant and Implementation Grant. Read more below!

IRWMP Planning Grant

Due to delays at the State level, the Planning Grant for the IRWMP got off to a slow start. The grant is just starting to pick up now, and CCWG will be involved in the following:

- **Watershed Project Coordination:** The Gabilan Watershed is the site of so many projects in the IRWMP, the RWMG decided that the regular project integration process would not be sufficient to

ensure that all the potential conflicts and possible collaborations are resolved in advance. To address this, the Group requested funding for Watershed Project Coordination. This process, led by the Watershed Project Coordination Subcommittee, will invite all the project proponents and stakeholders in the watershed to facilitated meetings with the goal of moving as many projects forward as possible, and ensuring that those projects are successful. CCWG is participating as a project proponent, and we are in charge of coordinating actions required of the Subcommittee.

- *Climate Change*: CCWG is writing the Climate Change chapter for the IRWMP including a vulnerability analysis and risk assessment process.
- *Web Development*: CCWG hosts the current IRWMP website at <http://ccwg.mlml.calstate.edu/irwmp>. This website provides the basic information about the IRWMP, but it is not sufficient to handle all the project information when the Implementation Grant begins. We are working closely with the Data Management Subcommittee to design and build a website that can easily integrate general IRWMP information, project specific information, and some project data.

IRWMP Implementation Grant

CCWG was one of the organizations that submitted a project to the first round of IRWMP implementation funding through the Greater Monterey County. We are happy to report that the region was granted \$4.1 million. This is a reduction of 15% from our request, but all the groups plan to move forward. We are involved in two of the funded projects:

- CCWG is the lead on the proposal, *Water quality enhancement of the Tembladero Slough and Public Access for the Community of Castroville*, which is the first phase of a project that hopes to restore or enhance 20 acres of land in and around the lower Gabilan watershed. Some restoration will be designed for habitat and open space, but most will be specifically targeted at water quality improvements. This phase of the project will allow CCWG to identify parcels that would be ideal for restoration and begin the project design and permitting. Ideally at least some of these sites will be accessible to the public as open space, bird watching and educational settings. Coordination with all the affected stakeholders and finding willing landowners will be the key to success.
- *Watershed Approach to Water Quality Solutions* is a project in which we are partnering with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the Monterey County Resource Conservation District. Integrated Watershed Restoration Program funds provided by the Coastal Conservancy and distributed by Monterey County RCD are currently being used for planning and permitting of restoration along Santa Rita Creek in Salinas. The IRWMP funding allows us to implement the plans by doing the on-the-ground restoration. In addition to the restoration, the Sanctuary will be working with the community and doing water quality analysis, while the RCD works with the surrounding agriculture to reduce upstream inputs of tail water and sediment.



Restoration Success Grant

CCWG has recently completed our grant for the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board to assess State funded wetland restoration projects in Region 3. We used CRAM to assess the condition of 100

wetland stream, estuary and pond restoration sites and compared those scores to reference condition on the central coast. We have written our final report and presented our results to the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. To read the report, go to:

http://ccwg.mlml.calstate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Restoration_success_report.pdf

National Wetland Condition Assessment

We spent the summer assisting the USEPA in conducting the field data collection portion of the National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) in California. The NWCA is one in a series of statistically-valid National Aquatic Resource Surveys (NARS) conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to provide the public with a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the Nation's waters. In addition to wetlands, the NARS will also focus on coastal waters, lakes, and flowing waters in a revolving sequence.



The field work for NWCA has been intense; it has taken four staff members all over the state, visiting 43 sites over a five month period. Each site takes a full day to assess, as tasks include a complete vegetation survey of five 100m² plots, four soil pits dug 60cm deep and one sampled down to 125cm, water and algae sampling, buffer information and two rapid assessments. Additionally, some of the sites had obstacles such as deep channels, poison oak, arrundo thickets and occasionally cattle!

Statewide Wetland Monitoring Strategy

CCWG continues to represent the Central Coast at the meetings of the California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup and the Level 2 Committee of the CWMW.

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/monitoring_council/wetland_workgroup/

CRAM Reference Network

Over the past several months CCWG staff have selected reference sites on the central coast for estuarine (perennial and bar built), riverine, and depressional systems. For each of these 18 sites we have put together a site packet that describes the location, the CRAM score it received and justification for that score. These packets will be uploaded to the CRAM website for use by CRAM practitioners.

Upcoming CRAM projects

Starting this winter and going through next summer we will be working with the San Francisco Estuary Institute and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project to develop CRAM modules for arid streams, wet meadows, seasonal depressions and perennial depressions.

Website Remodel

If you haven't seen the CCWG website in a while, check it out at <http://ccwg.mlml.calstate.edu>. Content is being added regularly so keep checking back!

Do you have any questions? Want to contribute your ideas about the structure and function of CCWG? Interested in working together? Please contact Sierra Ryan at sryan@mlml.calstate.edu with any ideas, questions or comments – we'd love to hear your feedback.