

Winter Update Letter January, 2011

Dear Central Coast Wetland Managers and Scientists,

We provide these periodic update letters to keep you informed of our ongoing work to enhance wetland research and management on the Central Coast. Many of the projects we work on are in collaboration with the California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup, where we provide input on priorities for Central Coast wetland monitoring and protection. We are excited to share our progress in building a collaborative community of wetland scientists and resource managers and enhancing regional programs. Our current work includes the following:

Seasonally Tidal Estuaries Grant

CCWG is taking the lead on state efforts to inventory and characterize Seasonally Tidal Estuaries (coastal river-mouth lagoons) along the entire California coast using the guidelines developed by the California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup ([CWMW](#)). Our current focus is on developing a landscape assessment and inventory (EPA defined Level 1) and condition assessment (Level 2). Our coast wide effort will inventory the over 400 coastal confluences in California, and choose 30 sites to characterize their current condition. To complete the condition assessment, CCWG has created a Seasonally Tidal Estuaries Technical Advisory Committee to oversee the development of a California Rapid Assessment Method module for these estuaries, and once completed (using State guidelines) a characterization of these 30 systems will be done. In addition, we will complete a landscape stressors analysis and a preliminary Historical Ecology analyses to estimate wetland loss and conversion over time. All of this information will be integrated with other state assessment projects through the [California Wetlands Portal](#). A preliminary analysis of Central Coast systems shows how recent restoration of the Carmel Lagoon has returned much of the historically lost wetland.



Figure 1: Historical ecology map of Soquel lagoon.

Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

CCWG continues to work closely with the Regional Water Management Group for the Greater Monterey County IRWMP to write the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan based on Department of Water Resources guidelines. And there is good news to report! The planning grant application by the Monterey Bay Sanctuary to complete the Plan and begin identifying funding for over 50 projects was successful. CCWG will be involved in the data management, web portal, water project reconciliation and climate change aspects of this grant. We will also continue to participate as the Group moves from planning to implementation of various “integrated” projects that protect water resources for people and the environment.

Initial IRWMP project implementation

CCWG was one of seven organizations that submitted a project to the first round of IRWMP implementation funding through the Greater Monterey County IRWMP workgroup. Our project, *Water quality enhancement of the Tembladero Slough and Public Access for the Community of Castroville*, is the first phase of a project that hopes to restore 20 acres of land in and around the lower Gabilan watershed specifically targeted to improve water quality before draining to Moss Landing Harbor. If funded CCWG will identify parcels ideal for restoration and begin project design and permitting. Ideally some of these sites will be accessible to the

public as open space, bird watching and educational settings. Coordination with all the affected landowners and other stakeholders will be the key to success of this phase of our effort to enhance the lower Gabilan Watershed.

Restoration Success Grant

CCWG has been working to inventory former wetland restoration projects throughout the Central Coast and evaluate their progress using the standardized CRAM method. Current efforts have been to re-visited several sites that were first assessed in 2007-2008 to evaluate changes in CRAM scores as the restoration projects matured. Over one hundred and fifty sites have been inventoried and 90 have been evaluated. We have also compiled many of the reports and documents prepared for these restoration projects and uploaded them to wetland tracker to be publicly available indefinitely. A final report and presentation to the Central Coast Regional Board is forthcoming.

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. Please send us comments regarding the states wetland tool development process.



Figure 2: Map of restoration projects on the Central Coast

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



Figure 3: Conducting a CRAM assessment

Other CRAM Work

This past field season we collaborated with SWAMP and SCCWRP to conduct CRAM assessments at a suit of perennial stream reference locations around the State to establish the Reference Condition Monitoring Program (RCMP) developed by SWAMP. This field work tied in closely with ongoing efforts among CCWG, SCCWRP, SFEI and others to develop a CRAM reference network in California for multiple types of wetlands. Additionally we are assisting in the development of a new depressional wetland module for CRAM.

National Wetland Condition Assessment

We are assisting the USEPA in 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 USEPA to provide the public with a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the Nation's waters. In addition to wetlands, the NARS also focus on coastal waters, lakes, and flowing waters in a revolving sequence.

USEPA is collaborating with state, tribal, federal, and other partners to implement the NWCA to meet three goals:

1. Produce a report that describes the ecological condition of the Nation's wetlands.
2. Assist states and tribes in the implementation of wetland monitoring and assessment programs that will guide policy development and aid project decision-making.
3. Advance the science of wetlands monitoring and assessment to support management needs.

CCWG is helping the State and USEPA to make this national assessment a success and a valuable exercise for California.

Other Grant Applications

In our ongoing efforts to improve the wetlands of the lower Gabilan watershed, CCWG has written several grant applications with our partners to help support collaborative restoration of these watersheds.

- **Integrated Watershed Restoration Program**

IWRP funds are provided by the Coastal Conservancy and distributed by Monterey County RCD. CCWG recently learned that we will be granted funding for planning and permitting of restoration along Santa Rita Creek in Salinas. We see this restoration as a small but important component of the watershed approach to improving the Alisal/Tembladero Slough 12-Digit HUC. While we work towards improving water quality and providing natural habitat through restoration, partners are working with upstream landowners to reduce pollutant inputs, and with the community to develop the sense of ownership for the creek necessary to improve community stewardship.



Figure 4: Santa Rita Creek in Salinas - selected for restoration

- **Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Grant**

Working in collaboration with other regional partners, CCWG applied for the opportunity to act as watershed coordinator for the Tembladero Slough 10-Digit HUC. Due to the multiple land uses in the region, numerous conflicts have arisen over the years between the agriculture industry, municipalities, urban residents, scientific researchers and environmentalists. While members from each sector have been willing to come to the table and talk about these conflicts, and research has been completed suggesting some solutions, little progress has actually been made in coordinating these groups and planning projects and compromises to improve the watershed. We learned that we did not get this funding, however we continue to look for other opportunities to set up stakeholder meetings and create a productive dialog leading to results all stakeholders can be happy with.

- **CWA 319 (h) Concept Proposal**

We recently heard that we were not selected by the State Water Resources Control Board for funding to pilot new techniques to address urban and rural NPS impacts in the City of Watsonville from Bacteria, Sediment and Nutrients through the tracking of current Management Measure (MM) implementation. We will continue to seek funding to develop the necessary methods to prioritize future project implementation based on a data driven evaluation of sub-watershed loading estimates in combination with load reduction estimates of the selected measures.

Upcoming Events

CCWG will be hosting a CRAM training for the Riverine and Estuarine CRAM modules on May 2-6, 2011 at Moss Landing Marine Labs. For more information and to download the flier, please go to <http://ccwg.mlml.calstate.edu/events/cram-training/>

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 sperry@mlml.calstate.edu with any ideas, questions or comments - we'd love to hear your feedback.



Figure 5: CRAM training session