

# *Meeting Minutes*

## *Environmental Enhancement Committee Meeting*

Online using MS Teams

June 22, 2021, 1:00 p.m.

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/Science/Environmental-Enhancement-Fund>

Public comments were to be accepted but no members of the public commented.

The meeting was called to order and began at 1:07 pm. The online attendees were the three Environmental Enhancement Committee (EEC) members, Sam Schuchat, Stephanie Tom Coupe, and Tom Cullen. Julie Yamamoto, Dan Orr, Bruce Joab, Julia Malia-Olea, Cristina Perez, Renee Rose, Amir Sharifi, Michael Anderson, Heather Sironen, were in attendance from California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Office of Spill Prevention and Response (CDFW-OSPR), Robyn Straley (public member), and Mary Small joined and was introduced by Sam as his successor as the Executive Director of the California Coastal Conservancy as of Friday of this week.

Dan discussed a few general procedural items with instructions on using the chat for questions for members of the public. All committee members introduced themselves after some brief technical difficulties were dealt with getting Sam on audio and video.

Dan Orr briefly reviewed information on the on the environmental enhancement fund (EEF) and history, including the process that has transpired both historically with EEF, and then the fund condition, plus a little explanation of this current RFP that resulted in the projects being considered for funding in this committee meeting. Dan explained that seven state scientists were on the technical review committee (TRC), and generated scores that they are viewing. Dan showed the applications to the EEF this round, ranked by average rank of the TRC. He also presented ranks with and without the focus area points that were applied. He also showed the raw score averages and how it ranks the projects. He paused for questions after showing those ordered lists, but no questions from the asked by the committee. He then summarized some high-level details about the top eight highest scoring projects. Those included the Mojave Desert Springs Habitat Protection and Restoration, and Sam asked to see a map of the locations for this project. Next was the Enhancing Critical Riparian Bird Habitat Along the Amargosa River, and Tom asked if drought consideration were considered in the TRC scoring. Dan explained that drought was not a specific scoring criteria but was discussed by the TRC, especially for the two desert projects and the Anacapa Island project. The two desert projects are spring fed and the TRC felt that led to an increased chance of success. Next was Acquisition of 2.88 Acres of Connecting Wetland in Lake Isabella, Kern County, and Sam and Stephanie asked to see the map more closely. Sam commented he can see the parking lot on Google. Dan showed images from the project application, which provided

Stephanie with what she was interested in seeing. Next was River Health Days: Community-Based Habitat Enhancement of the lower San Lorenzo River, which Dan said had withdrawn their application from EEF since they received other funding through the OSPR Small Spills fund. Next was Anderson Creek Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration, and Dan pointed out a TRC concern about a fish barrier for Coho in low flow years in Anderson Creek. However, steelhead were able to use the creek. Next was Restoring 10 Acres of Native Habitat at East Anacapa Island, and Dan explained that the TRC considered the plantings portion of this project to be primarily an upland project, but the TRC scored the project well. Sam asked who the applicants were for this project (California Institute of Environmental Studies), and Dan explained they are their own non-profit, with most of their other projects on State and Federal land and he pointed out drought and Covid had negatively affected their ability to irrigate other plantings. So, drought is something to keep in mind on this project. Next was Coastal Dune Habitat Restoration for Hollywood Beach, Ventura County, and Dan discussed some TRC comments made on it. Next was Morro Dunes Natural Preserve Restoration, and Dan discussed differences including costs between Hollywood Beach Dune project and this one at Morro Dunes and he explained the methodological differences. Dan then showed the fund requests for those top scoring projects and showed where funding authority would run out if funded from the top-ranking projects was done in order.

Deliberation began by the committee on what to fund, and Tom pointed out that the Refugio Beach Trustee Council will have \$22 million for Southern California coastal areas soon that includes this region in Ventura County. Sam mentioned that high fixed costs at Ventura are understandable with the heavy equipment usage there. Stephanie mentioned that getting Morro Dunes 'across the finish line' to finish their dune restoration is a preference of hers. Tom asked if Ventura County will get RBOS funding, and Bruce Joab answered that three dunes projects are in consideration for that funding within Ventura County.

Sam Schuchat made a motion to fully fund the top four ranked projects as indicated in the slide (not considering River Health Days that has withdrawn). Stephanie Tom Coupe seconded that motion. Sam suggested the residual authority funding, after those are funded, specifically \$64,956.85, go toward the Morro Dunes project. Stephanie seconded that motion. The motions passed as it was clear that Tom agreed with both.

Those projects selected for funding by the EEC, and the amounts to fund them for are:

- Mojave Desert Springs Habitat Protection and Restoration, in the amount of \$252,115.00.
- Enhancing Critical Riparian Bird Habitat along the Amargosa River, in the amount of \$102,064.00.
- Acquisition of 2.88 acres connecting wetland in Lake Isabella, Kern County, in the amount of \$150,322.00.

- Anderson Creek Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, in the amount of \$238,542.15.
- Morro Dunes Restoration Project Ice Plant Removal and Coastal Dune Restoration, in the amount of \$64,956.85.

Dan posed a question to the committee for 2022 and asked if the EEC wanted to have a focus area for that RFP. Stephanie asked if the Resources Agencies have a preference, and Dan mentioned that acquisitions is the only focus that he is aware of. Tom mentioned that he is leaning against a focus area, based on some input from Julie Yamamoto. Sam mentioned that the current focus area hasn't gotten the program very much, but Dan pointed out we got the attention of the 'dry land' groups. He further explained they are likely to continue to pay attention to RFPs from EEF from now on. Stephanie supported the general RFP what does not have a focus area, and that would make the work less for staff. Sam indicated his support for going back to the general RFP without a focus area as well and pointed out that our amount of money was too small to do acquisition projects in Southern California. Sam moved for a general RFP without a focus area in the next RFP, and Tom seconded that; the motion carried as it was clear that Stephanie agreed.

Dan mentioned a few items for moving forward that related to the contracting process coming up, and that an RFP is expected to come up next Spring.

At 2:06 pm the meeting was adjourned.