

Meeting Minutes

Environmental Enhancement Committee

Monday, May 23, 2022, 3:00 p.m.

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

Public comments were accepted via the chat function or live at the West Sacramento location.

This meeting had the option of meeting in person at: 1010 Riverside Parkway, West Sacramento, CA 95605 in the California Poppy conference room, or Online using MS Teams

Meeting called to order at 3:03 p.m.

In attendance were three Environmental Enhancement Committee (EEC) members: Amy Hutzal, Stephanie Tom Coupe, and Julie Yamamoto. California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (CDFW-OSPR) attendees were: Dan Orr, Bruce Joab, Peter Boucher, Elliott Frodahl, Heather Sironen, Nicole Gleason, Cristina Perez, Julia-Malia Olea, Sonia Torres. The MS Teams system also showed attendees; Jeff Maassen, Rietta Hohman, and one anonymous individual. EEC members made introductions. Stephanie Tom Coupe, from NFWF; Julie Yamamoto, Acting Administrator for OSPR; Amy Hutzal, State Coastal Conservancy member; Dan Orr, the EEF Coordinator.

There was a review of the agenda, and a brief description about using the TEAM CHAT format for comments or questions from the public.

Dan Orr provided a slide presentation. He provided background information about the Environmental Enhancement Fund, and some of its history. He explained the process that the applications have undergone to date, including a technical review by the Technical Review Committee (TRC). There were nineteen projects listed. The six top ranking projects were covered in detail:

1. River Health Days

Amy Hutzal asked Dan to identify what county each project was in. Stephanie Tom Coupe asked what resources were benefited by the River Health Days proposal. Dan explained that it was a riparian area restoration benefiting several species. Julie asked why they weren't funded in the prior year application. Dan mentioned that the previous application was too education focused, and the current application focused on native plant restoration aspects. Amy asked if they had a nursery for the native plants. Dan explained that the UC Santa Cruz nursery that supplies their plants will provide the native plants as described in the application.

2. Restoring Critical Habitat and Increasing Climate Resiliency in a Northern California Dune System

Dan explained that they claim the lupine over stabilizes the dunes, and the removal of the lupine along with dead material will provide benefits for the Snowy plover. However, there is a predator issue that the TRC identified as a "sink" for plovers in that area.

3. Little River State Beach Nearshore Dune Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience

Amy asked about the goal of both dune projects. Dan explained that native dune plant cover is a goal of both projects, as well as to reduce the total plant cover on the dunes to a more natural level in the 5-20% native cover range, which Snowy Plover prefer. Julie asked if the portion of this work that was done with Kure-Stuyvesant funds was successful. Dan responded yes it was successful. Stephanie asked about both dune restoration projects and if plovers will have more space to thrive with both being done. Dan explained the projects were far apart compared to the distance that plovers typically move in a season, making the proximity of the two projects a non-starter for the Snowy Plovers.

4. Lower Hoke Meadow Restoration

There were no questions for the Lower Hoke Meadow Restoration project.

5. Kelp Forest Restoration at Timber Cover in Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

Amy asked about the relationship between the project and the land manager. Is the land manager supportive of both applications that are proposing kelp restoration? Dan said that The Greater Farallones application is more supported by the marine sanctuary and that they were identified as a partner in that proposal, and that CDFW Marine Region thought it unusual that the Reefcheck proposal had not identified that partnership. Julie asked if any proof of concept was provided for the use recreational diver proposal by Reefcheck versus the commercial diver project in the other proposal. Dan explained that Reefcheck cited their successful projects done in Southern California. Jeff Maassen, a member of the public and urchin diver that has previously worked with Rietta Hohman, made a comment that Dan Orr read to the committee on this project that was supportive of the Gulf of the Farallones proposal. Stephanie asked about the TRC opinions of the two kelp restoration projects. Jeff made a comment in support of the Greater Farallones project and said that it would be helpful to Southern California efforts. Then there was an anonymous comment indicating that the Farallones project needs to support smashing of urchins in place. Dan Orr explained that the Reefcheck project indicates sending the urchin carcasses to a vineyard for use as fertilizer. Jeff Maassen made another comment that the commercial sea urchin divers and their vessels are best suited to the removal and smashing of urchins.

6. North Fork Lost River Flow and Habitat Enhancement Project

Stephanie asked where this project was located. Dan explained that it is in Mendocino County on a tributary to the Mattole River.

Dan recapped the highest ranking projects as scored by the TRC. He paused to allow for public comments before the EEC deliberations began. There were no additional comments from the public.

Dan offered a slide from TRC indicating funding suggestions to the EEC, but clarified that the EEC can fund whatever they wish in whatever order they wish. Jeff Maassen expressed that the Gulf of the Farallones project will help their project which is in Southern California and located in the Channel Islands. Julie asked about whether the TRC identified an option to give funds to the North Fork Lost River Flow and Habitat Enhancement Project. Dan explained that they did not, and that the TRC only specifically identified the two options he presented earlier. Julie said that the diversity of project benefits was a consideration she was thinking about. Amy apologized for the Teams issues she had been having, and that she leans toward the second funding suggestion as she prefers that the kelp restoration project receive some funding, but that she doesn't like the idea of reducing the funding to the Friends of the Dunes project to accomplish that. Amy asked if the kelp project is scalable, and Dan referred to the proposal indicating that it seemed scalable, but he would need to check with the applicant. He did not see scalability addressed in the marine sanctuary application. In the Reefcheck application scalability is not mentioned either. Julie asked if the Friends of the Dunes could move forward with partial funding. Dan said there was some other Federal funding in place. Stephanie asked if the Friends of the Dunes project is more urgent because of the plover sink issue. Dan clarified that

there was a split on the TRC, indicating that the discussion there identified the project could either help plovers by reducing predator pressure on their nests, or make it worse if the predators react to the increased numbers of prey. A member of the public, Rietta Hohman, indicated that the Greater Farallones Association kelp project is scalable. She also commented on some of the Federal funding already in place. Dan indicated that Rietta had submitted the application from the Greater Farallones Association. Dan pointed out that since she authored the proposal, her comments had credibility. Stephanie asked for a reminder of what the benefits were associated with the Lower Hoke Meadow project. Dan referred back to the slide for that project and read the benefits from the application and indicated there were several benefits. Stephanie asked what fish species were to benefit from this project. Dan did a search of the application but did not find the species of fish identified in the proposal. Julie mentioned that the Lower Hoke is the only substantial inland project, except the San Lorenzo proposal which is \$15,000. Stephanie commented on her considerations of the project mix. Dan asked if she was suggesting not funding the Little River dune project, and Stephanie indicated that was not her intent. Amy said that she was considering partial funding of the kelp restoration project and fully funding the Friends of the Dunes project. Rietta Hohman clarified that they could drop some research elements from their project and that they are pursuing other funding sources. Julie and Amy had a discussion about partial funding to the kelp project that would involve reducing the funds for Lower Hoke to \$232,000, which would leave about \$173,000 for the kelp project. Amy made a proposal to that effect, and Dan made a spreadsheet showing that breakdown of funding.

Julie Yamamoto made a motion to fund the proposals as described by Amy and represented in Dan's spreadsheet. The motion was seconded by Stephanie. The EEC voted unanimously for the total funding of \$750,000.00 be awarded as follows:

- River Health Days: Community-Based Habitat Enhancement of the Lower San Lorenzo River, submitted by Coastal Watershed Council, for \$15,000.00
- Restoring Critical Habitat and Increasing Climate Resiliency in a Northern California Dune System, submitted by Friends of the Dunes, for \$229,517.00
- Little River State Beach Nearshore Dune Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Project, submitted by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, for \$99,811.00
- Lower Hoke Meadow Restoration, submitted by Truckee River Watershed Council, for \$232,000.00
- Kelp Forest Restoration at Timber Cove in Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, submitted by Greater Farallones Association, for \$173,672.00

Dan presented a slide showing how the EEF process would move forward showing the next fiscal cycle of upcoming funding authority, with an associated request for proposals in January of 2023 and another EEC meeting in May or June of 2023. He concluded by showing a successful dune project that EEF had previously funded on a slide.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.