

Meeting Minutes

Environmental Enhancement Committee Meeting

May 25, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Live Event meeting

Dial in [+1 916-535-0984](tel:+19165350984) United States, Sacramento (Toll)

Conference ID: 708 421 54#

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

[Public location for attendance: 1010 Riverside Parkway, West Sacramento CA 95605 in the Sea Otter conference room.](#)

Public comments were accepted via the chat function on MS Teams and at the West Sacramento location (we found later this did not work properly due to technical difficulties – this meeting was redone on June 27, 2023 to allow for public comments).

The meeting began at 10:02 a.m., and all three EEC members were in attendance, Julie Yamamoto in the conference room, the other EEC members attended via MS Teams. This is a hybrid meeting. Dan announced that we'd delay the start of the meeting until 10:05 to allow others to join.

Dan Orr introduced himself, read a statement about inclusion, reviewed the 2022 selections for funding that the EEC had made and the changes that necessitated this meeting due to a reduced spending authority amount. He gave instructions for public members to use the Teams chat function for comments or questions. EEC members introduced themselves, Julie Yamamoto as the acting OSPR Administrator, Amy Hutzel who is the Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy, and Stephanie Tom Coupe who is a director at National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Dan reviewed what the EEF is, and how the EEC directs the funding choices. In January, we experienced a spending authority change, a reduction, which is why we are here today. He reviewed what is currently underway, along with the aggregate amounts awarded in the January 2023 meeting, and how the EEC awarded funding to five (5) projects that applied to the Fall 2022 request for proposals (RFP). He summarized the projects in his slides, then indicated that he will ask the EEC to decide how to reassign funding given the program's new lower amount of spending authority for the coming fiscal year. He reviewed the "minimum ask" amount that he had received from each of the five previously awarded entities, or the minimum amount needed to make each of those projects viable. Dan also reviewed each project goal.

Julie Yamamoto had a question about the Yosemite fish eradication project, and could they reduce the number of their sites in addition to reducing them to only one year. Dan said they expressed to him that they need to do all the watershed connected lakes and that they were confident that they could find the funding for year two if their EEF funds were reduced.

Dan then reviewed fund change options for the EEC to consider; and the slides showing the details of potential options A, B, and C, though other funding options are also available to the committee.

Amy commented that she is not pleased, and that these cuts from the original spending authority amount don't make sense, and that she hoped this is being communicated to the Agency. Dan answered that it is being communicated up the chain. Amy suggested option A. She thought saving staff time for administration was important and that funding option A makes the most sense because it would award more dollars to fewer projects. Julie concurred with Amy. Stephanie deferred to the State government representatives on the committee, but said that she initially preferred option B because it would benefit more areas of the environment versus option A. She assumes they are laid out in order of priority to the State. Dan clarified that he tried to lay out options that made sense for the committee's consideration; A was first because the math was easy.

Stephanie was leaning toward option B2, she said. Bruce indicated that "fairness" was maximized to the applicants with option B2, and that we could administer them. Stephanie indicated that she is more concerned about funding various natural resource options. Dan displayed option "B2," which leaves an unspent funding authority of approximately \$33,000 after the awards are made. Bruce asked if option A leaves unspent authority. Amy asked for a re-review of option B.

Julie asked for clarification of how option B would fund the Yosemite project, and she thought they could find year two of funding. Cristina asked if Yosemite's \$120,000 option was for them. Amy reiterated her preference for funding option A. She thinks \$25,000 toward a multimillion-dollar project does not make sense, administratively.

Dan asked if there was a preference for A or B. Julie mentioned EEF has funded a lot of dune restoration work, and we could ask the kelp group to reapply at a later date. Bruce read an e-mail from Dan Ryan from BLM. Julie asked other questions about funding sources for projects. Amy said she is open to option A or B2, leaning toward A. She is open to either. Julie said she likes these two options as well, A or B2, and agreed with Stephanie's comment that benefiting multiple habitats was important. Julie said she is mindful of the applicants' efforts, so she leans more toward option B2, while aware of the administrative burden.

Dan asked for "leanings" from Stephanie, and she said she is leaning toward B2. Dan re-reviewed B2 and what that means for each project with respect to their "minimum ask" and what they could do with it. Julie said that she is considering a modification to this option B2, reducing Morro Bay, and shifting funding to Yosemite. Bruce mentioned herbicide applications are not allowed with other grants, so EEF is good for dune restoration work, which he acknowledged the EEF program has done a lot of.

Dan modified his calculation per Julie's suggestion to show that result to the committee, now being called option B3. Amy asked who the applicant was for Albion Cove. Dan answered Reef Check. Amy asked about funding changes that the coordinator can make. Dan explained the State process and a little about how it works. Amy supported option B3 as shown by Dan on his spreadsheet, which Julie had suggested. Dan asked if Stephanie supported the option that he referred to as B3.

Julie made a motion to select option B3 for a funding decision, Amy seconded that motion, as shown on Dan's spreadsheet. A vote occurred and option B3 was unanimously approved by all three of the EEC committee members.

The details of that EEF funding voted on and passed by the EEC was as follows:

- Watershed Restoration and Protection Marsh Creek 7 Water Flows to the Delta, submitted by Save Mount Diablo, for \$67,074.00.
- Restoring the High Elevation Freshwater Ecosystems of Yosemite National Park, submitted by Freshwater Life, Inc., for \$108,000.00.
- Bull Kelp Restoration in Albion Cove, submitted by Reef Check Foundation, for \$44,000.00.
- Elk Creek Acquisition-Eel River Watershed, submitted by Bureau of Land Management, for \$25,000.00.
- Morro Bay Coastal Enhancement Through Ice Plant Removal, submitted by Morro Bay National Estuary Program, for \$0.00. No longer funded.

Dan thanked the committee for making this decision given the changed circumstances, and for bearing with him on all of this. Dan reviewed the fund balances in the slides (see slides). He then reviewed all the remaining slides, including next steps. Dan then announced that he is promoting to a supervisory position at another agency. Julie recognized that he has done a fantastic job as the EEF coordinator. EEF project management will continue in a team approach, with Bruce, Cristina Perez, and Peter Boucher, along with Brenda Brantley giving administrative support. Dan thanked the EEC committee. Audio went out, but was then restored. It became clear at this point, by an email received, that public participation had been limited throughout this meeting. Amy said that she hoped that the Department of Finance will not restrict the EEF funding and spending authority in the future.

The meeting adjourned at 11:16 am.