

**HUMBOLDT BAY EELGRASS MANAGEMENT PLAN
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS KICKOFF MEETING
MEETING MINUTES
Harbor District Conference Room - 601 Startare Drive, Eureka
November 28, 2016 10:00 – 2:00**

ATTENDEES

Whelan Gilkerson (Merkel & Associates)
Keith Merkel (Merkel & Associates)
Kathy Rogers (Merkel & Associates)
Vanessa Blodgett (PlanWest/Harbor District)
George Williamson (PlanWest/Harbor District)
Lucas Sawyer (Hog Island Oyster Company)
Matt Goldsworthy (NOAA/NMFS)
Aldaron Laird (Trinity Associates)
Miles Slattery (City of Eureka)
Brendan Thompson (N Coast Regional Water Quality)
Kasey Sirkin (ACOE)
Rebecca Garwood (CDFW)
Melissa Kraemer (California Coastal Commission)
Stephen Kullmann (Wiyot Tribe)
Greg O'Connell (SHN)
Bianca Hayashi (County of Humboldt Public Works)
Joe Tyburczy (California Sea Grant Extension)
Lauren Garske (California Coastal Commission) – on phone
Joel Gerwein (California Coastal Commission) – on phone
Randy Lovell (CDFW State Aquaculture Coordination) – on phone

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE –Vanessa Blodgett (Plan West/Harbor District)

2nd of 5 partner meetings

Will be working through the components

Encourage lots of discussion

Meeting #3 will be held January or February

Next meeting will include a boat tour to look at various mitigation opportunities and possible conservation areas

Humboldt Bay EMP Path Forward

- Work Plan (meetings, bay tours, plan drafting, Final workshop)
- Framework for Plan adoption

HB EMP Conformance Needs Relative to CEMP or Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP)

- What do we draw from this CEMP?
- Where do we depart from it while maintaining consistency?

CEMP widely accepted at this point

No need to reinvent the wheel

*Depart at special case issues
CMP good way to address local paradigms*

Drawing Guidance from the CEMP

- Planning & Design – Impact Avoidance/Minimization
- Impact Assessment & Monitoring
- Data Analysis & Reporting
- Final Mitigation Success Criteria

Eelgrass Spatial Metrics and Mapping

- High accuracy surveying/mapping critical to assessing and communicating eelgrass-project interactions
- CEMP standards for mapping accuracy 95%
- Important to establish a consistent standard for determining eelgrass vegetated cover, areal extent, and spatial distribution metrics

CEMP Calls for project surveys

Work with the Harbor District to create a project checklist

CEMP has planning tools for minimization of impacts

Start with knowing what your resources are

Need mechanical processes

How and when to map resources what to do with it

Problem with definition of what a survey is

Should be structured. Communication at land use level

Utility in having workshops, forums to educate people upfront with the checklist

Need a kick off when plan comes out

Maybe a You Tube training? District website

Need user friendly historical information - May help with survey planning

Need to be careful with data.

State standard for surveys?

CEMP outlines tools available and approaches. Attaches level of standard of quality of survey. Provided latitude for agencies to adopt standards

CMP element of CEMP

Locally need to be sure all agencies will accept standard adopted

Document must be acceptable

Each plan is unique. Quality is important

We will flesh out guidance language

Over/Under mitigation is common

CEMP – applicant is responsible for success. Provides tools

Departing from the norm

- Mitigation Strategies
- Mitigation Transplant Ratios
- Mitigation Credit, Capture, Tracking & Accounting

How to develop strategic partnerships to help with mitigation

Starting market for selling mitigation credits

*Try to minimize law-land communication with Plan
May be limiting factors to growth potential
Like to push for preliminary survey requirement
Facilitates understanding between agencies
Survey does become part of the permit package
Is there an expiration date for preliminary survey?*

Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Strategy & Considerations

- Methods for avoidance and minimization of impacts
- Opportunistic mitigation and site development
- Onsite Vs offsite mitigation criteria
- Other considerations
 - Physical Policy
 - Evaluation and tracking

Methods for Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts

- Project Siting
 - Do I need to put the project in eelgrass?
- Project Design
 - Often simple design changes can avoid impacts or at least lessen them and thus reduce mitigation need. Humboldt Bay example – aquatic center. Realigned the gangway early in the design phase to minimize the interaction with the fringing eelgrass.
- Integration of restoration within the project

Preliminary Survey

What is there and context of it

Connect financial gain of following the plan expedite process, permitting. Frustrations, etc.

EMP process need something that brings it back to why is this important?

A tool the HD can put forward right up front to project proponents

We need to educate

Education is important

Is there the potential for project to happen that don't involve HD?

Anything above MHW need HD

HD = SLC for Humboldt Bay

Only 1 website should disseminate info

Core focus area? What is this? Suggested more comprehensive area at last meeting?

Plan Area does include all of Bay

Focus Area – special needs starting CMP

Restoration opportunities exist

What does focus area really mean?

Developing CMP could be done in phases

Be careful about how spread thin we got in first place

Arcata and Eureka could spend time laying out their projects

Plan needs to have ability to pull other things in

It is a living document can expand out

Guidelines will be applicable to all
In a perfect world, develop 1 RGP for waterfront activities, Evaluate consistency with RGP moving forward on each project, can renew RGP down the road
RGP only covers projects of a particular nature?
RGP creates class of projects
RGP NW unique to region
ESA/401 not always straight forward
RGP cover all mitigation?
140 acres in Focus Planning area. Maybe max of 10 acres of actual potential eelgrass impact.
Final agreement to convert 10 acres put into RGP
ESA issues. Need to be really careful
Tribal issues
Post efficient RGPs have focused on maintenance and re-tasked existing structure
Arcata may not have eelgrass issues now, but they will
Creative strategies for avoidance
Awareness of resource, design
Do I need to put project in eelgrass? Aquatic center is an example. Gangway aligned to minimize eelgrass impacts
How big of an issue and secondary impacts does construction

LUNCH BREAK 12:10 – 12:45

WAG – Power Point methods for avoidance and minimization of impacts

Opportunistic Mitigation and Site Development

- Synergistic restoration of former tidelands
- Substrate Remediation
- Removal of derelict infrastructure

HB opportunities somewhat different
Tideland get eelgrass directly and indirectly by increasing tidal Prism.
How to capture excess?
Senate bill may yield climate adaptation. Bill with no \$ but it does put more points on the restoration side opportunities

Onsite vs Offsite Mitigation Criteria

- Area of eelgrass impact relative to site's capacity to develop additional habitat
- Ownership/Jurisdiction/Zoning Considerations

Scale dependent – pile renewal, etc
King Salmon dredging issue – 1st priority project
Option 1 – dredge access channel not finger channels. How soon will I be back? How much risk do you have of going too low? What is depth of eelgrass in KS
What is likely to be successful?
How cost effective?
Are we getting good ecological bang for the buck?
1-acre eelgrass impact

Can you get eelgrass to grown back at same density?
 Why not focus on mudflats first?

Mitigation Strategy and Considerations

	Continuous Eelgrass (acres)	Patch Eelgrass (acres)	Percent of HB continuous eelgrass (acres)	Percent of HB patchy eelgrass (acres)
Humboldt Bay	3644	2-43		
EMP Focus Area	119	37	3%	2%
Priority Projects in EMP Focus Area	</= 10	</= 5	0.2%	0.2%

Substrate Remediation to Restore Historic Eelgrass Habitat

North Bay – Legacy bottom hardening site

- Outside current mariculture operations
- Approximately 1/3 to 1/2 acre of eelgrass restoration capacity-patchy eelgrass surrounds site
- Landowner receptive to conservation easement
- Other similar opportunities exist-Challenges include: ownership and existing management

Got data good idea 1=1

Pilot study, go clean it up, plant portion, etc.

Eelgrass Mitigation /Conservation Spatial & Temporal factors

- Magnitude of Potential Impacts to Eelgrass within EMP Focus Area relative to System level Eelgrass Populations – important to consider
- Sea Level Rise/Climate Change – how to address it within the Plan – look to agencies for guidance

Look go agencies for guidance re SLR

Humboldt Bay System Level Eelgrass Resources

- 2009 NOAA Humboldt Bay & Eel River Benthic Habitat Project
- Continuous Eelgrass – 3,644 acres
- Patchy Eelgrass – 2,043 acres
- 5,687 Total acres

EMP Focus Area

- Samoa, Fairhaven and Eureka’s working waterfront
- Entrance Bay/North Bay Channel
- King Salmon and Fields Landing

Eureka waterfront data void – will be filled

Magnitude of Potential Impacts to Eelgrass within EMP Focus Area Relative to System level Eelgrass Population

Scale of issue

Identify any restoration projects and incorporate into CMP but use it as an anchor and continue building as opportunities & projects present

Sea Level Rise/Climate Change – how to address it within the Plan

- Managing Plan Focus Area vs System
- Policy-limitations including depth, coastal squeeze
- Active vs passive approach

Regulatory mechanisms – need offline conversation with agency staff

Next steps?

EPA road map

Regulatory tools

Project tracking

Capturing credit

Need for HD to

Don't reinvent the wheel

Get component re mechanics of survey requirements out

Meeting/call with agencies

Need to focus on identifying mitigation opportunities and eelgrass restoration opportunities

Pieces of the puzzle – when is it appropriate to change 1 habitat to eelgrass

Dilapidated docks converted, removed (low hanging fruit)

Is the potential opportunity to restore eelgrass, take what you've got, use part of it before

CEMP does contemplate different w/temp & permanent

Possible eelgrass management fee?