

## **Watershed Assessment and Monitoring (WAM) Subcommittee Report**

**Meeting Date:** April 9, 2009

**Subcommittee Action:** None.

**Requested Technical Advisory Committee Action or Feedback/Guidance (if any):** None.

**Other Information/Announcements:**

- Self introductions were made and the group approved the January 2009 WAM Subcommittee meeting summary.
- At the previous meeting Jon Konnan passed around the 2008 Pulse of the Estuary, an annual user-friendly report that documents activities of the San Francisco Estuary Regional Monitoring Program (RMP). The group briefly discussed the RMP and it was noted that SMCWPPP contributes about 80K each year to this program. In addition, Jon and a few other stormwater program representatives put in a fair amount of time going to RMP meetings and reviewing documents to help look out for stormwater program interests. Production of the 2008 Pulse cost about \$95K, about 3% of the overall RMP budget of approximately \$3.2M. The group wondered whether printing costs could be reduced by distributing more copies electronically.
- Dermot Casey noted that the County collects pathogen indicator data and wondered whether such data could help SMCWPPP comply with a proposed monitoring requirement in the draft Municipal Regional Permit (MRP). Jon noted that the current draft of the MRP does include a requirement to analyze creek water samples for pathogen indicators; however, Regional Water Board staff agreed to remove this requirement at a previous meeting with stormwater program monitoring representatives. Reasons for not collecting such data from creeks include that the protocols/standards developed by USEPA apply to swimming beaches, not creeks. Also, indicator monitoring by itself is not very useful - it needs to be combined with information about recreational exposure before drawing any conclusions about whether recreational beneficial uses exist and are attained.
- Jon reviewed the status of the WAM Subcommittee's FY 2008/09 pilot study in San Mateo Creek to investigate sources/pathways of trash. The study area is an approximate one-half mile reach near the bottom of San Mateo Creek where trash accumulation was identified during our fall 2006 Unified Stream Assessment (USA) creek walk and subsequent trash assessments. Two trash assessments of the entire study area have been completed to-date. The first assessment was in September 2008 and established a baseline before the Coastal Cleanup Day and additional cleanup by City of San Mateo staff. The second assessment was in January 2009 and followed a few rain storms, though no large storms had occurred during the 2008/09 rainy season before this assessment. The primary goal of the second assessment was to determine the amounts, types, and, to the extent possible, sources of trash (littering, dumping, storm drains, etc.) that had accumulated in the study area since the cleanups. About 5,000 trash items were found in the creek during the January 2009 assessment, confirming that trash

accumulation in the study area is an ongoing problem. The group noted that most of the 39 100-ft reaches in the study area had trash levels that exceed the proposed Trash Action Level in the draft MRP. The proportion of trash items in the creek that appeared to originate from littering/dumping fell from about 50% in September 2008 to 33% in January 2009. In both assessments, only a small fraction of the trash could be identified as originating from storm drains (2%). However, the proportion of trash originating from unknown upstream sites increased from 48% in September 2008 to 65% in January 2009. This increase could possibly reflect to some extent trash conveyed to the creek by storm drains with outfalls in the large culvert upstream of the study area. Dermot suggested that a possible follow-up action would be to install baskets under the outfalls in the culvert to determine how much trash they discharge. The group discussed how the study results reveal that a large part of the trash problem is due to problems such as littering, dumping and homeless encampments that should not be regulated through an MS4 NPDES permit. The pilot study also included performing litter audits in January 2009 in the surrounding watershed. One goal was to try and use storm drain maps to connect on-land trash sources with trash that accumulates in the creek, but that generally proved infeasible. However, branding of trash during the audits did reveal some major sources of trash and could help inform outreach and enforcement efforts. A third trash assessment is planned for May 2009, and will provide additional data following a rainy period in late February and early March. Matt Fabry asked whether municipal staff could observe the third assessment fieldwork without interfering with or slowing down the work.

- The group discussed a draft FY 2009/10 work plan for SMCWPPP's WAM component. The work plan focuses on compliance with the water quality monitoring section (Provision C.8) of the MRP, but also includes some tasks that are not strictly required for MRP compliance but would benefit SMCWPPP. Jon noted that the first year monitoring requirements of the five-year draft MRP permit term are mainly dedicated to planning rather than fieldwork and costs will increase dramatically years two through five when the fieldwork kicks in. Jon also noted that there is still a lot of uncertainty in what Provision C.8 will look like once the MRP is adopted. This makes estimating costs to implement C.8 difficult, along with the fact that it is unclear at this point which C.8 requirements would be performed by individual countywide stormwater programs and which will be performed by a regional collaborative of the programs. Jon also noted that a number of requirements that would typically would fall under SMCWPPP's WAM component, including requirements related to pollutants of concern such as mercury and PCBs, are not addressed by the current draft of the WAM component work plan, for lack of existing budget. Jon noted that based on the preliminary estimates the cost for SMCWPPP to implement Provision C.11 and C.12 (mercury and PCBs) of the draft MRP range from roughly 200K to 1.3M per year over the five-year permit term and 200K to 400K per year if BASMAA's requested changes are incorporated into the adopted permit.

**Subcommittee Work That Affects Other Subcommittees: None**

**Next Steps:**

- Jon will ask RMP representatives whether Pulse of the Estuary printing costs could be reduced by distributing more copies electronically.

- Jon will double-check that the relatively high level of trash observed under road crossings in the pilot study area is due to littering/dumping rather than accumulation caused by a constriction of the creek under the crossings.
- Jon will let the group know whether observing the third trash assessment fieldwork is possible, perhaps by scheduling the upcoming WAM Subcommittee field trip during the assessment fieldwork.
- Jon will provide Matt with a cost estimate for implementing the February 2009 draft MRP provisions that typically would fall under SMCWPPP's WAM component, including water quality monitoring and requirements related to pollutants of concern such as mercury and PCBs.

**Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting will be the annual WAM Subcommittee field trip and will likely occur 10am - noon during the second Thursday of either May or June. We will most likely visit the trash pilot study location again, which is a lower reach of San Mateo Creek.