

Planning Group Meeting Summary

Held: August 2, 2018

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Key Outcomes

The Monterey County Water Resource Agency (Agency) convened the inaugural collaborative Planning Group meeting to develop the Salinas River Long-Term Management Plan (LTMP), scheduled for completion by January 2019.

The purpose of the LTMP is to describe a multi-benefit management program that addresses facilities operations, flood-risk reduction, water supply, water quality, natural resources conservation and management, and federal and state Endangered Species Act compliance. Goals for the plan provide more detail to address these issues.

The independent Consensus Building Institute (CBI) conducted an issue assessment outlining important stakeholder interests related to river management and drafted a charter to clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes. Initially, the August 2nd meeting was convened as a joint Planning Group and Technical Design Team meeting. During the meeting, the group recommended simplifying the proposed structure to a singular Planning Group and holding issue-specific working groups to address plan elements in detail.

Action Items

Planning Group	Late August	Send CBI (Stephanie Horii - shorii@cbi.org) additional input on the draft LTMP outline or other data sources to include in the data tracker.
CBI	8/30/18	CBI will follow up with absent planning group members for their input on the assessment report and revised charter. CBI will update and finalize the assessment and revise the charter per the planning group discussions.
CBI	8/30/18	CBI will develop a communication and engagement plan.
ICF	8/30/18	The project team will modify the LTMP draft goals per the planning group's input.

Hopes for LTMP

As part of the introductions, attendees shared goals for what they hope the LTMP might achieve, including:

- Better understanding of the river system, including groundwater and percolation,
- Mutually agreed-upon management priorities,
- Balance of all needs of the river,
- Comprehensive management programs based on sound science,
- Central conglomeration of all information related to the river,
- A healthy watershed ecosystem, including recovered populations of listed species.

Stakeholder Issues Assessment and Process Recommendations

Gina Bartlett, CBI, presented major findings CBI developed from a stakeholder issues assessment, which informed CBI's process recommendations and development of a draft stakeholder engagement charter. (*Refer to the meeting materials for CBI's draft assessment report and the draft stakeholder engagement charter.*)

Stakeholder interviewees underscored the importance of the Salinas River as “the lifeblood of the Valley.” Interviewees indicated the LTMP could help create a shared vision for a sustainable and healthy Salinas River. They identified several issues the LTMP should address, including flow management, water quantity and quality, lagoon management, flooding, vegetation management, fisheries and riparian corridor protection, and agency alignment.

Based on interviewees' input and the timeline for LTMP development, CBI proposed that a planning group of stakeholders representing diverse interests would seek to collaboratively develop consensus recommendations on LTMP components. A technical design team, consisting of staff from agencies and a few organizations, would help prepare materials for productive planning group dialogue and provide detailed input on LTMP development from technical, scientific, political, and funding perspectives. Scientific working groups would meet as needed to delve into specific issues and share input to the Agency and consultants. The draft charter further describes roles and responsibilities for the LTMP development process.

Discussion

For the assessment, attendees primarily asked clarifying questions to understand the context of the issues identified in the assessment findings. In response to several questions, the project team explained the LTMP does not bind anyone to a particular action. Rather, the plan will capture an array of management actions that may or may not conflict with one another, may or may not have the planning group's full consensus, or may or may not lead to the Agency (or another entity) choosing to implement a particular action.

Much of the discussion centered on the group composition and decision-making / information-sharing structure. Given the short timeline to develop the LTMP, the group emphasized the LTMP development process will need to balance efficiency, flexibility, consistency, and transparency.

Balance representative interests. A few attendees cautioned about unintentionally creating unbalanced representation (e.g., if some representatives serve on multiple groups or are unable to attend frequently attendance). The facilitator explained that representatives and their alternates agreed to serve on the planning group assuming their commitment to attend and participate throughout the process. The facilitator can also employ several process options (e.g., agreements can be tentative until a key absent person is consulted, planning group members can review and weigh in on materials before a meeting, etc.).

Revised process: technical design team combined with planning group. Attendees shared different opinions on the purpose for the technical design team. A few raised the concern about unbalanced representation and whether there was sufficient time for team meetings. Others valued having a group that would funnel information from the working groups to the planning group and develop multi-objective recommendations. The group tentatively agreed to a revised process: the planning group serves as the multi-objective group, the technical design team roster will combine with the planning group, and working groups will convene as needed to support LTMP development.

Working groups. A few attendees recommended changing the scientific working groups to “focus working groups.” Working groups will primarily focus on specific technical/scientific issues, such as lagoon management and groundwater sustainability planning. There also may be a need to convene working groups to address other issues important for LTMP development, (e.g., regulatory issues or meeting materials before a planning group meeting).

Regulatory requirements working group. Several attendees recommended the regulatory agencies meet as a working group to ensure alignment across agency requirements as well as with the project applicants. However, the group also values having agencies integrated in planning group meetings to support cross-pollination of input and awareness..

Outcomes and Next Steps

The collaborative planning effort will consist of a planning group and issue-specific working groups. Individuals originally part of the “technical design team” will fold into the planning group.

CBI will follow up with absent planning group members for their input on the assessment report and revised charter. CBI will update and finalize the assessment and revise the charter per the planning group discussions.

CBI will develop a communication and engagement plan that outlines how the Agency and the project team will engage stakeholders and the public, and how input will be included in developing the LTMP.

LTMP Purpose and Draft Goals

Elizabeth Krafft, Agency LTMP project lead, reviewed the LTMP purpose and draft goals. (*Refer to the meeting materials for the LTMP purpose and draft goals.*)

Planning group members shared the following suggestions:

- Incorporate Goal #4 on stream maintenance program as an objective for Goal #1 identifying long-term solutions. Goal #4 is fairly specific compared to the other goals and seems more appropriate as an objective.
- Expand the scope of Goal #2 on lagoon management to include more lagoon management considerations besides flooding reduction.
- Replace “existing” with “appropriate” for Goal #3 on steelhead migration issues. We should not limit ourselves to only “existing” management efforts.
- Separate Goal #7 on historical and existing conditions in the Lower Salinas watershed into different goals / objectives: document historical conditions, describe what changed over time, and describe management opportunities and potential actions for the future.

Next Steps

The project team will modify the LTMP draft goals per the planning group’s input.

LTMP Draft Outline and Data Source

Kathryn Gaffney, ICF project technical consultant, oriented attendees to the LTMP draft outline and referred them to a list of the data sources for the LTMP. (*Refer to the meeting materials for the LTMP draft outline and LTMP data source tracker.*)

Discussion

Attendees asked several clarifying questions to confirm whether the LTMP will address their issues of interest, including water quality, collaboration with landowners, reservoir management, sandbar management, future research needs, vegetation management, and climate change stressors.

Water budget coverage. In response to a question about the LTMP water budget, Howard Franklin from the Agency explained the water budget for the basin covers the county, but the model that informs the budget considers the entire watershed.

LTMP management actions. Another attendee asked if the LTMP will focus solely on management actions that the Agency might implement. The project team stated they plan to document both potential Agency management actions and actions that others may implement.

Post-January 2019 timeline. An attendee requested the LTMP include a timeline of milestones for post January 2019 LTMP implementation (could go in Chapter 6).

Groundwater sustainability planning timeline. Several reemphasized that development of the LTMP and Salinas Valley Basin groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) need to be aligned. One attendee voiced concern that the group will not have enough information about the GSPs in the fall to adequately include into the LTMP.

Next Steps

Planning Group members can send CBI (Stephanie Horii - shorii@cbi.org) additional input on the draft outline or other data sources to include in the data tracker.

Public Comment

An attendee emphasized a need to further understand the historical biological and hydrogeologic state of the Salinas River system and the Valley. For example, what was the state of the aquifer, and how does that relate to the state of the vegetation/creeks/streams?

Next Steps

LTMP project team will coordinate the 2nd planning group meeting (scheduled for September 14). Potential topics for the next planning group meeting:

- LTMP constraints and opportunities
- Existing conditions
- Stream Maintenance Program (SMP)
- Initial discussion on management objectives and actions for the lagoon and SMP

Meeting Materials

- [August 2 meeting materials packet](#)