

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 5-6, 2020

Prepared on February 21, 2020

ITEM NUMBER: 13

SUBJECT: Executive Officer's Report to the Board

STAFF CONTACTS:

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ACTION: Information / Discussion

KEY INFORMATION

This item presents a brief discussion of issues that may interest the Board. Upon request, staff can provide more detailed information about any item.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES - UPDATE

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At our recent Central Coast Water Board meetings in San Luis Obispo, we introduced new staff, those changing jobs, and we said goodbyes to those employees that were retiring, of which I am now one. In September 2018, I wrote an EO Report item focused on the rapidly changing nature of our workforce, reflecting on rapid staff turnover resulting from a significant rate of retirement coupled with increases in some program-specific resources. With this item, I am revisiting the theme of our changing workforce and updating what we look like now, how our changing workforce creates challenges in building a positive organizational culture that retains our employees, and details some of the actions we are taking to grow the culture we want in our jobs/careers/calling.

The Scale of Our Workforce Change:

Overall, both our staff growth and turnover rates have slowed from those of 2018, however the year-over-year change is still significant and continues throughout our organization. Table 1 provides some perspective as to change in both the Central Coast Water Board general workforce and management team over the last few years. As an organization, we grew only slightly during the last two years; however, during the same period we have had significant turnover due primarily to retirements. This turnover results in an overall workforce with less Water Board experience, however, many of our newer employees have significant private sector, environmental compliance experience. Note that some of these retirements are from management positions which can trigger a domino effect resulting in several phases of hiring until the final vacancy is filled.

Table 1 – Change in Central Coast Water Board Workforce 2018 to present

| Category | 2018 | 2020 |
|---|--------------|------|
| Total Employees (including vacancies) | 80 | 82 |
| Employees with Less Than One Year with Us | Not assessed | 4 |
| Employees with Less Than Three Years with Us | 19 | 17 |
| Employees with Less Than Five Years with Us | 27 | 21 |
| Management (Seniors and above) with Less Than Two Year | 12/18 | 5/19 |
| Management (Seniors and above) with Less Than Three Years | 9/19 | 6/19 |

Looking forward, the organizational staff turnover will continue to be significant in 2020, as we have knowledge of at least six planned retirements in this calendar year, resulting in the subsequent hiring of six new staff, and some associated promotional opportunities to backfill higher-level, vacated positions. This retirement rate is slightly slower than in 2018 (seven positions in a nine-month span).

The Impacts of Workforce Change:

This rapid change in both workforce and work assignments results in efficiency and cultural challenges. New leaders and staff are unfamiliar with their respective assignments compared to experienced employees, and as a result, tend to be less efficient with their work. Similarly, because of our newness, we collectively have fewer shared learning experiences that help us to form our organizational culture. Newer staff are also less familiar with the traditional work tools (i.e., Porter-Cologne, Clean Water Act, cleanup and abatement orders, permits, waivers, etc.). Similarly, new staff have little connection to the Central Coast Water Board's organizational Vision and Measurable Goals, CCAMP, and our Basin Plan, for example.

Strategies to Manage These Workforce Change Impacts:

At both the staff and management levels, we are having conversations and formulating actions to address these challenges. This is a 360-degree communication effort (versus top-down), as our newer employees bring innovative ideas as to how we can address our technical and cultural organization-wide challenges. Some examples of recent strategies and efforts to combat the inefficiencies of significant workforce change include:

- Developing Leadership and communication education for interested staff and management (required) focused on our individual communication preferences and styles and growing our awareness of the communication styles of our coworkers.

As a specific example, we have employed several DISC courses (not to be confused with disc golf courses) for the majority of our organization and have had multiple educational sessions focused on how we can improve our collective communication.

- Developed “Water Boards 101” covering our regulatory “toolbox”; this education targets our newer staff.
- Use of existing educational systems, including our “Water Board Academy” housed at State Board to accelerate technical and leadership education for staff in need of growing their knowledge.
- Encouraging mentoring at all career stages, with special focus on ensuring newer staff have access to someone farther along in their career to provide advice and counsel.
- On a personal level, I have encouraged staff to set up regular noontime walks with me and others to discuss career goals and impediments, potential actions and resources, career achievements and frustrations, our culture, communication and management styles, potential career pathways/opportunities, etc. This has been a great experience from my perspective, and I intend to continue this “walking mentoring” for the remainder of this month and beyond my own retirement date.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST FOUR YEARS AS EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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I learned from a valued mentor that reflecting on our organizational accomplishments periodically is important to ensure we collectively know we are getting the larger, priority things done. This knowing-we-are-getting-important-things-done perspective can sometimes get lost in the day-to-day grind. Listening to the observations of the staff I interact with, incorporating suggestions from supervisors, and reflecting on my own experience as EO yielded the incomplete list below, which covers some of the great work we have initiated and/or completed over the last four years:

- Hired and/or promoted nearly 40 very high-quality, motivated employees into our organization and focused them on the most challenging, highest priority work including domestic well sampling, drafting Ag Orders 3.0 and 4.0, implementing 3.0, creating and implementing new regulatory programs (cannabis and active oil fields), implementing LID, cleaning up polluted fuel and industrial sites, and advancing surface and groundwater assessment work.
- Promoted a number of great present and future leaders to continue the important work of restoring and protecting water quality throughout the Central Coast region. These leaders have increased the diversity of our workforce, and there is still much more work to be done here.

- Initiated efforts to address climate change impacts, as these impacts relate to our authority, throughout the region. Climate change has now become one of our core organizational initiatives, and permeates through most of our programs. Our climate change-based actions include:
 - New requirements for NPDES facilities requiring planning, assessment, and implementation of strategies to address impacts from climate change.
 - Continued progress on a number of recycling projects throughout the region pushing towards greater water portfolio diversification and drought resilience (another climate change strategy). Facilities with potable recycling projects include:
 - Pure Water Monterey, Cambria, both completed
 - Pure Water Soquel, Morro Bay, Pismo Beach, and Carpinteria, all in design or pilot phase.
 - Cayucos, in concept.
- Ensuring environmental justice (EJ), safe drinking water, and implementing the human right to water; these are parts of a core initiative and values of this organization and permeate through each of our programs. Our actions include:
 - Domestic well sampling project in nearly all of the region's counties
 - Bottled water grant to assist those with unsafe drinking water
 - Grew our EJ capacity-building through a grant with Community Water Center to assist communities that do not have a voice to participate in public processes that provide for water quality protection/restoration and safe drinking water.
 - The Stewardship Group agreement, although imperfect, this effort has yielded significant safe drinking water for portions of the Salinas Valley.
- Adopted and implemented Ag Order 3.0 and developed requirement options, a draft order, and a clear blueprint and pathway to complete 4.0 by the end of 2020.
 - Four years ago, we collectively had no plan and no momentum. The change in this is due to the collective efforts of the ILRP and other programs' staff, past and present.
 - Quantified impacts to groundwater and surface water relating to nitrate loading, including on-farm domestic well monitoring efforts by growers.
 - Established transparency and regular communication with other agencies, CalEPA, and the Governor's office.
- Concluded numerous litigation cases against the water boards, including CoastKeepers 1 and 2, Zamora, South SLO County, and a challenge to the Santa Maria pesticide TMDL.
- Identified source area and responsible parties for Buckley Road TCE plume.
- Initiated investigations to identify PFAS/PFOA sources including sampling at airports, landfills, and pending for wastewater facilities and other sites.
- Initiated upper deep aquifer zone cleanup on Olin project, using pump and treat to limit spread of perchlorate in this zone.

- Launching an all-new cannabis program, hiring eight staff, inspecting over 150 cultivation sites resulting in correction of hundreds General Cannabis Order violations, and hosted dozens of stakeholder outreach events as cannabis came into legal cultivation.
- Hosted an outstanding, well-attended homelessness forum exploring ideas and strategies that bring solutions. This topic will also be on the Chairs' Meeting agenda in May 2020.
- Completed a number of enforcement cases, including settlements and penalties for more than \$2 million.
- Webcasting Water Board meetings to create broader transparency, access, and participation.

These actions were not initiated or completed by any single individual at the Water Board, but instead are the product of this collective team of highly motivated and dedicated staff and board members. Thank you to each of you for your role in these and other significant accomplishments, and for the ones yet to come. I am proud and grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as their/your executive officer.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Table 1 - 401 Water Quality Certification Applications Received
2. Table 2 - 401 Water Quality Certifications Issued
3. Table 3 - Groundwater Section, Case Closure Performance Scoreboard
4. Table 4 - Groundwater Case Closures
5. Table 5 - Enrollments In General Orders/Waivers