

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

**STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 17-18, 2024**

Prepared on September 27, 2024

**ITEM NUMBER: 20**

**SUBJECT: Strategic Planning Discussion**

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**ACTION: Information/Discussion**

**SUMMARY**

Central Coast Water Board staff developed a Strategic Plan and presented it to the Board at the August 2023 Board meeting. We made minor revisions to the Strategic Plan based on Board member feedback and planned to present it to the Board and public for review and discussion during the April Board meeting. The April Board meeting was subsequently canceled, and so we scheduled the Strategic Plan update for the October Board meeting in San Luis Obispo. The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document that will be updated as needed to address changing priorities and will be formally reviewed and updated every two years.

The Strategic Plan includes four broad regional priorities focused on 1) workforce planning and development, 2) core programmatic functions, 3) climate change adaptation and resilience, and 4) environmental justice. Climate change and environmental justice priorities are integrated throughout our work and staff consider related actions during project and program development and implementation. The purpose of this item is to present the final Strategic Plan and to provide an update on recent activities related to workforce planning and development and core program priorities.

**Workforce Planning and Development**

We continue to recruit, hire, and retain highly qualified staff. Workforce planning and development is critical to ensuring our staff (including program staff, seniors, and section managers) are provided the support they need in a transitional time for the organization. We have seen numerous staff retirements over the past several years and have a workforce that has experienced a pandemic that required a full transition to telework, and then a transition to a hybrid work environment. Ensuring that our staff have the tools, resources, and support to do their best work is one of our highest priorities.

At our February 27, 2024, staff meeting, staff engaged in workforce planning and development sessions to provide feedback on the support and tools they need to do their best work. The staff led workforce planning efforts included seven staff breakout groups, three senior groups, one section manager group and one executive level group. One make-up session was provided for staff unable to attend the staff meeting, which included two additional groups. The discussion was facilitated by our staff formally trained in facilitation and nearly all staff participated in the workforce planning sessions. Those staff that were unable to participate in the breakout group discussion provided individual input. Group discussions focused on three topics including Knowledge and Skills, Managing Assignments and Workload, and Preparing for Professional Growth. In all areas of the organization, we received valuable feedback that indicates that some of the highest priorities include a need for increased and improved training, mentoring, professional development, and cross-programmatic work opportunities.

We are working on strategies and implementing actions to address staffs' highest priority needs. We established a staff led workforce planning committee in May 2024 to turn staff feedback into actions to achieve the increased training, mentoring, and professional development identified in the workforce planning and development sessions. Addressing workforce planning needs will be an ongoing effort and will shift how we support and manage our workforce and projects. That shift will take time and resources and will result in a more resilient and experienced staff that will continue to work to achieve positive water quality, environmental, and public health outcomes. Supporting the needs of our staff is a key component in continuing to grow and shape a positive organizational culture.

Staff recently developed and initiated a staff-led mentorship pilot program for the region. There are many mentorship relationships within the office that are significant, ongoing, and provide informal technical and professional guidance and coaching opportunities for staff. The mentorship pilot program is a more formal mentorship option for staff that will pair mentors with mentees based on needs and expertise. Staff will present an update on the pilot mentorship program and will be available to answer Board member questions.

### **Core Programmatic Functions**

Current fiscal year program priorities are included in the Strategic Plan. Program managers provided internal mid-year and end of fiscal year updates on those priorities. Revised program priorities for fiscal year 24-25 are included in the Strategic Plan. Priorities are often a moving target based on discharger, public, policy or legislative changes, complaints, unauthorized discharges of waste, or other needs or new water quality information. Changing priorities requires us to redirect resources to new tasks based on need. The Strategic Plan highlights the priority programmatic functions and projects we plan to focus on in the coming year and provides an opportunity to evaluate those priorities and to adjust as needed to account for unanticipated work.

**CONCLUSION**

The Strategic Plan identifies our priority work based on the existing demands and creates a framework to evaluate demands and focus resources on other work as may be necessary. Our highest priority is our staff, and we are focused on maintaining and building workforce capacity, expertise, and engagement through onboarding, mentoring, training, and succession planning. Our workforce planning efforts will continue and will be based on feedback from staff on their needs. We plan to check in regularly with staff on our progress towards addressing their needs. We will post the Strategic Plan on our website and will provide periodic updates in the Executive Officer's report. A more formal evaluation of the Strategic Plan will take place every two years to determine if significant revisions are necessary.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. [Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Strategic Plan](#)