

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Work Plan

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal year 2022-2023 (FY 22-23) Work Plans have been developed for each of the four divisions of the North Coast Regional Water Board: Point Source & Groundwater Protection; Nonpoint Source & Surface Water Protection; Planning and Watershed Stewardship; and Cannabis & Enforcement. Following this Introduction is a summary of Office-wide Initiatives. The purpose for the Division Work Plans is to prioritize and guide the work of Regional Water Board staff during the fiscal year, and to manage expectations regarding the scope, content and schedule associated with activity milestones and deliverables. In addition, the Work Plans serve to identify projects and tasks for which the Regional Water Board is under-resourced to adequately fulfill.

The Work Plans for each of the Divisions are generally organized similarly and with the following components:

- I. Background – this section describes in general terms the purpose and scope of work of each program implemented within the Division.
- II. Division Resources – this section tabulates the staffing resources assigned to each Division.
- III. Core Activities and Projects by Priority – this section itemizes and summarizes the activities and projects for each program within the divisions and identifies: the priority level for each activity/project; whether the activity/project is a “core” activity or “special” project; the amount of staffing resources allocated to the activity/project; the timeframe and target month or quarter for each activity/project; and key issues to resolve in order to complete the activity/project.
- IV. Performance Targets – this section presents the performance targets, where applicable, developed for various programs which are reported to the State Water Board. Not every program has performance targets. Regional Water Board’s performance in achieving the designated performance targets are reported annually as part of the State and Regional Water Board’s annual Performance Report and, where applicable, prior years’ performance associated with performance targets are tabulated.

Generally, a “core” activity/project is one that is a routine or fundamental activity that must be carried out in order to implement the program, and a “special” activity/project is a one-time or stand-alone type of activity/project. The priority level assigned to each activity/project is generally based on the following considerations: whether or not completion of the activity/project is critical to achieving the mission and vision of the

Regional Water Board; whether or not there is a commitment to the State Water Board, US EPA, or another federal or state agency to complete the activity/project; and whether or not staffing, contract, or grant resources are dependent on a deliverable from the activity/project.

Each division work plan was developed by the respective Division Chiefs and unit Seniors with key input from program staff. The level of detail provided in the work plans varies, but each work plan provides sufficient detail to guide the division's work throughout the fiscal year. All work plans serve as both a planning tool and a tool to track progress throughout the fiscal year. Throughout the fiscal year the Management Team meets to assess the status of projects/activities in the division-specific work plans and makes modifications, as necessary.

Needless to say, the work of the Regional Water Board can be dynamic, with new, unplanned activities/projects that emerge and which require response and, in many cases, require action that takes time and energy away from planned work activities, resulting in shifts in priorities and necessary adjustments to work plan milestones and commitments. Regional Water Board staff's work to address the region's historic drought during FY 21-22 is an obvious example of unplanned, but critically important work that had to be done. Migrating the entire office to working remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic is another example. And, we are frequently asked to respond to requests, large and small, programmatic and administrative, from the State Water Board. When these unplanned work activities arise, we shift priorities and adjust work plan commitments, as necessary.

OFFICE-WIDE INITIATIVES

There are several initiatives/projects not outlined in the Division Work Plans and these are summarized here.

Engagement Committee and Subsequent Initiatives

In December 2019, approximately 77% of Water Board staff participated in the CalEPA 2020 Employee Engagement Survey. That survey served as a starting point for the North Coast Regional Water Board when we decided to conduct additional surveys and develop a plan of action to enhance workplace conditions, procedures, and culture within our organization in several key areas including job satisfaction, improved understanding of expectations for staff and management, support for professional development, reinvigorating our efforts related to individual accountability, refresh communication strategies, and encourage leadership from each staff member.

Following the completion of the additional North Coast Regional Water Board staff surveys, an Employee Engagement Steering Committee (EESC) was formed to began work on an action report. The EESC Recommended Action Report was distributed to staff in August 2021. The Action Report provided a description of recommended initiatives to address the themes expressed in the surveys most in need of attention to reinforce positive aspects of office culture and procedures and, importantly, to make improvements where necessary. The recommended initiatives included:

- Reexamine / Refresh Onboarding Process
- Create Communication Venues
- Reexamine/Refresh Staff and Supervisor Expectations Memo
- Cross-program Coordination
- Create Vision Statement for Regional Water Board Culture
- Inventory, Update, and Organize Procedures Templates
- Improve Access and Provide Training on IT Tools
- Create Social Committee

In FY 21-22 and moving forward into FY 22-23 these initiatives are being addressed within six employee engagement sub-committees, with representatives from all levels of our organization. Several milestones of the Action Report have already been achieved and in FY 22-23 work will continue on several themes identified in the Action Report. The commitment to improvement through the EESC and sub-committees has become an ongoing part of the Regional Water Board's culture, and projects, activities, and milestones associated with the committees continue to be a substantive part of the FY 22-23 Work Plan. The goal or purpose of the Communications, Organization, Expectations, Onboarding, Social, and Culture Committees work are described here.

The goal of the **Communication Committee** is to promote improved levels of communication between staff, managers, and executives through new and improved communication venues. The **Organization Committee** combined themes from the survey to increase overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization by updating business rules, improving access and training associated with existing IT resources and data management tools, and improving document storage and access. The purpose of the **Expectations Committee** is to update the staff Expectations Memorandum and develop a companion Expectations Memo specific to supervisors/managers. The purpose of the **Onboarding Committee** is to improve the onboarding process and create a thorough, effective, efficient, and welcoming onboarding process for new staff that is clear, easy to follow, and well organized and includes a centralized document repository for standard documents and templates relevant to new hires. The purpose of the **Social Committee** is to enhance and strengthen personal and professional bonds among Regional Water Board staff through social venues. The goal of the **Culture Committee** is to develop a vision statement for the culture of the Regional Water Board that we aspire to attain and maintain for our organization. Each committee meets semi-regularly and has initiatives/projects/tasks planned for FY 22-23 to advance the purpose and goals of the committees.

In the winter of 2022 CalEPA again conducted the same Employee Engagement Survey that was implemented in late 2019. The organization-specific results from the 2022 survey have not yet been tabulated. Once the results are provided for the North Coast Regional Water Board, the results will be shared with all staff, and the EESC and sub-committees will review the results and assess modifications to our strategies to address key issues.

Addressing Racial Equity and Environmental Justice within the North Coast Region

On November 16, 2021, the State Water Board adopted Resolution No. 2021-0050, Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism. The State Water Board resolution in part acknowledged the role racism plays in creating inequities in affordability and access to clean and safe water, committed to advancing racial equity within the Water Boards and the communities they serve, and directed its staff to develop a Racial Equity Action Plan.

In December 2021, the North Coast Regional Water Board outlined the process for developing a region-specific racial equity resolution for board adoption. North Coast Region staff will modify the State Water Board's resolution to tailor the language to the specific conditions that affect North Coast communities. During summer to fall 2022, staff will 1) develop a draft resolution; 2) engage with specific organizations, communities, and Tribes to encourage participation in a workshop and potential listening sessions; 3) post the draft resolution for public review; and 4) hold a workshop and potentially several listening sessions during the public review period to solicit input on the draft resolution from the public and Tribes. Staff will propose the resolution to the board for adoption in winter 2022/2023.

While adopting this resolution is an important first step, staff recognize that actions are the key to advancing racial equity and environmental justice. As such, staff will develop an action plan after adoption of the resolution to identify specific actions that the North Coast Regional Water Board and its staff will take to implement the resolution. Action plan development will be informed by the State Water Board's action plan process^[1] and input from the public, Tribes, and staff. The action plan development process will include, in part 1) offering government-to-government consultations to North Coast Tribes; 2) meaningfully engaging with communities of color and other disadvantaged communities to build and foster trust and ongoing relationships; and 3) conducting internal engagement opportunities. Further action plan details and a timeline will be developed after resolution adoption.

^[1] State Water Board staff anticipate proposing an action plan to their board for adoption in winter 2022. North Coast staff plan to engage in the statewide process by participating in their internal workshops, listening sessions, draft action plan public review period, and the State Water Board's Racial Equity Team.