

**North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Work Plans
Introduction and Office-wide Initiatives**



Introduction

The Work Plans that follow have been developed for and by the North Coast Regional Water Board's four divisions:

- Point Source Control & Groundwater Protection
- Nonpoint Source & Surface Water Protection
- Planning and Watershed Stewardship
- Cannabis & Enforcement

The Regional Board also has a number of Office-wide Initiatives underway, which are summarized following this Introduction.

These Work Plans are developed as a planning tool for staff to identify priorities, assess resources available, and set expectations regarding the scope and timing of work products. With limited resources come difficult choices, and the Work Plan development process also provides the opportunity to identify projects and tasks that will need to be reduced, delayed, or otherwise modified given insufficient resources. In addition to their importance as a planning tool, these Work Plans are intended to provide transparency to the Board and interested public regarding planned priorities.

This year's work plans are organized similarly to previous years, with a few structural updates to improve consistency and readability. Each Work Plan follows the same general structure:

- I. Division Introduction – a brief overview of the division
- II. Division Resources – brief description of the staff resources within the division, with graphical representation of how division resources are distributed among programs
- III. Programs – descriptions of each program within the division, including:
 - a. A table of priority activities and projects for the program
 - b. Descriptions of each activity and program, with milestones as applicable
 - c. Performance targets for the program (if applicable)
- IV. Supporting Information – additional information that may help the reader understand the work of the division

Each Division Work Plan was developed by the respective Division Supervisors and unit Seniors with input from program staff. The level of detail provided in the Work Plans varies based on the nature of the division's work. Throughout the fiscal year, each division's leadership meets to assess the status of projects/activities in that division's work plan, adjust distribution of resources to assure that the most pressing priorities are met, and make modifications as needed to respond to changing conditions and demands.

Common Elements of Work at the Regional Board

There are several elements of staff's work that are consistent across divisions. These are described below.

Unplanned work: Periodically, unanticipated needs arise that are important to the mission of the Regional Board but not planned as part of staff's workload for the year. Examples of unplanned work include work related to regional emergency response; requests or directives from CalEPA, State Board, other public agencies, and elected officials; opportunities to engage on partner initiatives that will significantly impact the Regional Board's work and mission; requests from the public; responding to complaints and instances of noncompliance; and responding to litigation and petitions. Responding to unplanned work often requires that managers carefully assess the importance and urgency of the need and consider how responding to the need would impact other priority work. Each division has varying constraints with regard to staffing and core workload. Divisions with more robust staffing may be able to absorb small amounts of unplanned work (i.e., tasks that take less than 1-2 weeks of staff time), while divisions with exceptionally limited staff resources may not be able to accommodate any unplanned work without reducing the staff time allocated to other activities. In any case, staff time spent on unplanned work will be considered when division leadership assesses mid-year Work Plan progress and adjusts commitments for the remainder of the year. The Board will be kept apprised of adjustments that result in changes to critical milestones such as a Board hearing for a high priority permit.

Supervision: Division Supervisors and unit Seniors (collectively "managers") play a critical function in supervising staff, providing leadership to their teams and the organization as a whole, and tending relationships with partners and the public. Managers provide technical and policy guidance to the staff under their supervision, including overseeing completion of work and reviewing work products to assure that they are technically sound, well-written, complete, and consistent with regional and statewide standards. Managers are responsible for preparing individual work plans and performance evaluations, providing day-to-day guidance and feedback, supporting training needs, and implementing a shared set of agency expectations. Division Supervisors participate in the Executive Team to provide high-level leadership, set office-wide priorities, and guide the culture of the organization. All managers provide leadership for the programs under their direction and participate in the Management Team to stay abreast of issues important to the organization as a whole and assure effective collaboration and consistency across units. Managers collaborate with leadership staff across the water boards and with external partners and interested parties on issues related to their programs and projects. Managers may take on non-supervisory special projects that are key to the Regional Board's mission and can be carried out without interfering with supervisory responsibilities. Throughout these Work Plans, managers' work on special projects is noted in the description of that priority project or action.

Organizational and personnel functions: Each staff person carries out functions that are necessary for their employment at the Regional Board but not directly related to programmatic work. Examples of these include filling out monthly timesheets, participating in annual performance reviews, periodically completing human resources paperwork, and participating in trainings and office-wide meetings. In addition, staff are allocated time off for holidays, sick time, vacation, annual leave, etc. Division Supervisors and unit Seniors take these time demands into account when planning staff work for the year. This segment of staff's time is included in the representation of resources by program.

Key Terms

The following key terms are used throughout the Work Plans.

Fiscal Year (FY): the work plans are formulated to cover the CA state government's fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through the following June 30.

Performance Targets are developed for various programs and are reported to the State Water Board. Regional Water Board's performance in achieving the designated performance targets is reported annually as part of the State and Regional Water Board's annual Performance Report. Not every program has performance targets. Some programs that do not have official performance targets have identified quantitative performance goals, which are also included as applicable in these workplans.

[Performance data reported to the State Water Board for fiscal year 21-22](#) is available here (2021-22 Performance Report | California State Water Resources Control Board).

Priority levels listed in the priority activity tables are as follow:

- Priority Level 1 activities and projects are those that will be the focus of staff resources
- Priority Level 2 represents those activities and projects that may not get accomplished due to resource limitations
- Priority 3 represents work that staff will not accomplish unless additional resources become available

The priority level assigned to each activity/project is 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.

Office-wide Initiatives

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

Addressing Racial Equity and Environmental Justice within the North Coast Region

On February 2, 2023, the Regional Water Board adopted Resolution No. R1-2023-0001 Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism in the North Coast Region. This resolution acknowledges and condemns systemic racism, and the role racism plays in creating inequities in access to and quality of beneficial uses in the North Coast Region; commits to advancing racial equity and workforce equity within the Regional Water Board and the communities we serve; and directs Regional Water Board staff to advance racial and workforce equity and develop and implement an Action Plan for the North Coast Region.

The resolution directs staff to periodically report on Action Plan development, and to present the Action Plan to the Regional Water Board no later than eighteen months after adopting this Resolution, or August 2024. Planning and initial outreach for the development of the Action Plan began in FY 2022-2023, and significant work on the Action Plan will occur during Fiscal Year 2023-2024, in preparation to present the Action Plan to the Regional Board in fall 2024.

Development of the Action Plan will be led by the Regional Board's Equity Core Team and will require the engagement of Regional Board leadership and staff in all Regional Board divisions and programs. Staff will consult with California Native American Tribes regarding development of the Action Plan, consistent with the principles described in the 2020 California Environmental Protection Agency's Tribal Consultation Protocol and 2019 California Water Boards' Tribal Consultation Policy. Staff will seek out and consider input from Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color communities, as well as other underrepresented members of the North Coast Region public to inform development of the Action Plan. This will include direct outreach, through an environmental justice lens, to underrepresented communities and organizations that serve the North Coast Region.

The Action Plan will address all aspects of our work, including, but not limited to, plans, policies, permits, enforcement, compliance assurance, contracting, funding, procurement, site remediation, and monitoring. It will include goals, objectives, actions, timelines, and metrics designed to advance transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in our racial equity work. The Action Plan will include a framework to:

- Analyze the impact of Regional Water Board decisions and staff recommendations to the Regional Water Board through a racial equity lens;

- Ask impacted Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and people of color communities how the actions we are considering may affect them;
- Address racist, xenophobic, and bigoted behaviors that interfere with an anti-racist work environment within the Regional Water Board or are inconsistent with this resolution;
- And establish recommendations to modify our community engagement and decision-making processes, where necessary, such as meeting people in their spaces and communities and conducting hybrid meetings to expand opportunities for participation.

Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategic Initiatives

Comparable to the other Specialists within the Regional Water Board, the function of the Climate Specialist, Matt St. John, is to support all the programs within our agency; in this case to address, mitigate, and reduce the impacts of climate change. With support from members of the Region’s internal Climate Team, the Climate Specialist will lead the identification and development of strategic initiatives to advance actions to address climate change adaptation and resilience in the North Coast Region. In past years, Regional Water Board staff have completed initial scoping for the development of a Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy for the North Coast Region. At this time, it is the Climate Specialist’s intention to move from development of a Climate Strategy document to advancing targeted actions addressing climate change adaptation and resilience. Activities and Projects in FY 23/24 will focus on further assessment and scoping of potential strategic initiatives, as summarized below.

Internal Coordination: Beginning in the fourth quarter of FY 22-23, we reconvened a Climate Team with representatives from all Divisions and many programs within the Regional Water Board. This Team will serve to coordinate among our programs to identify strategic climate initiatives. A key milestone for the Team will be the development of a Team Charter by September of 2023 to define the roles and responsibilities of Team members for advancing climate adaptation and resilience initiatives in the region. In addition, the Climate Specialist will continue to serve as the region’s representative on the State and Regional Water Board’s statewide Climate Team to ensure North Coast regional initiatives are reflected in statewide efforts and to learn from initiatives being implemented in other parts of the state.

Review of Regional Water Board regulations, regulatory and non-regulatory programs: A core component of the climate work in FY 23-24 will involve a systematic review of the Regional Water Board’s current regulatory programs to catalogue current on-going actions/initiatives that address climate change and to identify potential new actions/initiatives to further advance climate adaptation and resilience. The Climate Specialist and members of the Climate Team will meet separately with program managers and lead staff from each regulatory program to consider whether we are utilizing all existing authorities sufficiently, efficiently, and affectively to mitigate and

adapt to the impacts of climate change. These assessments will be structured by considering current and/or potential future programmatic actions/initiatives to address:

- reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing the scale of large, destructive wildfires;
- carbon sequestration;
- adaptation and resilience in the built environment; and
- adaptation and resilience in the natural environment.

In addition, reviews will be conducted of the Regional Water Board's non-regulatory programs, including monitoring and assessment and funding with a focus on partnerships and leveraging funding opportunities. For all of these reviews, particular attention will be given to geographic areas most susceptible to the impacts of climate change and associated communities most vulnerable to those impacts. The intended outcome of these assessments will include: 1) a catalogue of existing actions and regulatory mechanisms being implemented to achieve climate adaptation and resilience and 2) a succinct list of prioritized recommended actions to further advance climate adaptation and resilience using our existing regulatory programs and non-regulatory functions.

Concurrent with these assessments of our existing regulatory programs, in FY 23-24 the Climate Specialist will work in coordination with the Planning Unit conducting the Triennial Review of the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (Basin Plan) to identify potential amendments to the Basin Plan necessary to advance climate adaptation and resilience in the North Coast. As detailed in XX, a Public Review Draft Staff Report of recommendations will be completed by September 2023 and the Regional Water Board will consider staff's proposed prioritized list of basin plan projects by February 2024.

Engagement with State and Regional Water Boards, Federal, State, Tribal and Local Governments, Communities of Interest, and Board Members: In order to broaden Regional Water Board staff's identification and advancement of new regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives to address climate adaptation and resilience, the Climate Specialist will:

- Identify strategic opportunities to engage with other governmental agencies, NGOs, and communities of interest to build partnerships and leverage resources to advance climate adaptation and resilience.
- Coordinate with the Regional Water Board's Racial Equity Action Plan development team and participate in consultations with Tribes and engagement with other communities and interested parties to identify climate adaptation and resilience actions that dovetail with racial equity.
- Consider conducting staff and/or Board workshops to seek input on sector-specific issues (e.g., forest management, agriculture, wastewater treatment),

observed and potential climate change impacts to those sectors, and opportunities for climate adaptation and resilience within those sectors.

- Participate in the State and Regional Water Board’s Quarterly Climate Meet Roundtable, including participation in the State Water Board’s January 2023 Racial Equity Action Plan action to: Identify and implement actions to address climate change impacts, related to State Board authorities, found likely to have disproportionate impacts on BIPOC communities or interests.

Support on Other and Related Projects: In addition to the climate related initiatives summarized above, the Climate Specialist serves as an executive advisor to the Executive Officer on emerging and priority policy issues and provides review and input of high priority permits and policies. Among others, in FY 23-24 the Climate Specialist will provide review and input on the following priority projects:

- Narrative Flow Objective – see Planning & Watershed Stewardship Division Workplan section 6.0
- Scott and Shasta permit revisions – see Planning & Watershed Stewardship Division Workplan section 5.1
- Vineyard Permit – see Point Source Control & Groundwater Protection Division Workplan section 10.2 project 1.a.
- Federal Lands Permit – see Nonpoint Source & Surface Water Protection Division Workplan section 3.2 project 1.b.
- Eureka Elk River WWTF NPDES Permit Reissuance– see Point Source Control & Groundwater Protection Division Workplan section 3.2 project 1.a
- Smith River Plain Water Quality Management Plan implementation and development of a permit for lily bulb cultivation – see Point Source Control & Groundwater Protection Division Workplan section 10.2 projects 2.a and 2.b.
- Restoration activities in the lower Elk River – see Planning & Watershed Stewardship Division Workplan section 5.2

Finally, in FY 23-24 the Climate Specialist will work on the following:

- Serve on the interagency Steering Committee for the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement Interim Measure 11 Priority List of Projects. This committee will review and select water quality improvement projects in the Upper Klamath Basin
- Manage the Lower Lost River Stewardship and Diffuse Source Treatment Wetlands contract
- Through 2023 (and possibly in 2024) serve as co-chair of the Steering Committee guiding the development of the Russian River Regional Monitoring Program
- Serve as the Site Supervisor for the Watershed Stewardship Program and provide guidance to the Regional Water Board mentors to the corps members.

Engagement Committee Initiatives

In December 2019, approximately 77% of Water Board staff participated in the CalEPA 2020 Employee Engagement Survey. In response to the results of that survey, the Regional Board conducted additional surveys to gather more information and formed an Employee Engagement Steering Committee to develop an Action Report that recommended initiatives to enhance workplace conditions, procedures, and culture within our organization in several key areas. Staff self-selected to form six employee engagement sub-committees including:

- Communication
- Culture
- Expectations
- Onboarding
- Organization
- Social

Brief descriptions of the purpose of each sub-committee can be found in the Regional Board's FY 2022-2023 Work Plan Introduction.

Several milestones of the Action Report have already been achieved. The commitment to improvement through these 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 2023-2024 Work Plan.

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 were recently tabulated and distributed to all Water Boards staff. The Employee Engagement Steering Committee and sub-committees will use these results to celebrate successes of efforts to date, and to inform the ongoing approach to improvement.

Reporting Progress to the Regional Board

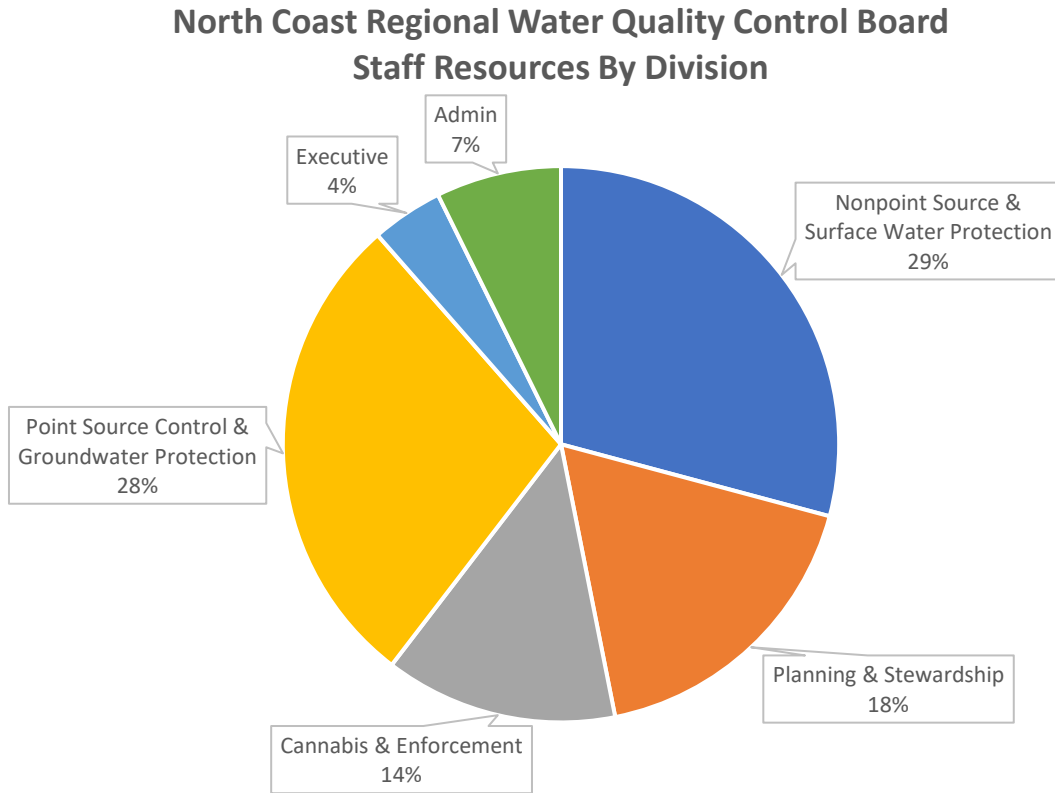
An additional function of the Work Planning process is to plan ahead for informational reports to the Regional Board. The following updates are planned, in the form of Executive Officer's Report articles. This list is subject to change based on project status, staff workload, and other emerging topics of interest.

Topic	Target Date
Coastal Pathogens Project	Dec-23
SWAMP	Dec-23
FreshwaterHABs	Feb-24
Integrated Report	Jun-24
Grants General Update	Feb-24

Topic	Target Date
Update on Closed Grant	Jun-24
Reissuance of Statewide General Permit for Sanitary Sewer Systems	Aug-23
Update on Boonville Water and Wastewater Projects	Oct-23
Implementation of Federal Pretreatment Program in Region 1	Dec-23
Proposed Amendment to Resolution 92-49: Policies and Procedures for Investigation and Cleanup and Abatement of Discharges	Feb-24
Former Island Mountain Mine Site: Case Review and Site Closure	Apr-24
Assessment of Self-reporting Compliance in the Groundwater Permitting Program	Jun-24
Cannabis Program Update	Dec-23
Review of remediation successes and compliance statuses of active CAOs.	Apr-24
Update on/Review of the McKinney Fire Restoration Project	Dec-23

Staff Resources

The Regional Board's staff resources are allocated as follows:



The structure and composition of the Regional Board's staff is represented in the attached organizational charts.