

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Work Plan

INTRODUCTION

Work Plans have been developed for each of the four divisions of the North Coast Regional Water Board: Point Source & Groundwater Protection; Non-Point Source & Surface Water Protection; Planning and Watershed Stewardship; and Cannabis & Enforcement. The purpose of these 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 work plan milestones and deliverables.

The Work Plans for each of the Divisions are organized consistent with the following outline:

- 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, and in the case of the Planning and Watershed Stewardship Division also summarizes the grant and contract resources managed by Division staff. Division-specific staffing and budgetary impacts from the coronavirus pandemic are also presented.
- 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 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.

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. Target months for a particular activity/project are presented for the current 2020/2021 fiscal year, unless otherwise noted. In some cases, a defined activity/project has multiple sub-tasks with associate milestones and target months for completion.

Each division work plan was developed by the respective Division Chiefs and unit Seniors with input from 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 emerging which require response and, in many cases, require action that takes time and energy away from planned work activities. Migrating the entire office to working remotely due to local shelter in place requirements and shifting to this new work paradigm is an obvious example. Responding to fires and floods is another real example that our region has faced regularly over the past several years. And, we are frequently asked to respond to requests, large and small, programmatic and administrative, from the State Water Board.

New Components to FY 20/21 Work Plans

New to the work plans this fiscal year is an explicit "line item" for Unplanned Work Activities. Including this line item within each of the work plans serves as an acknowledgment of the workload demands associated with these unplanned work activities. Responding to unplanned work often requires that managers assess the urgency of the work and reprioritize workload and project commitments. When unplanned work is determined to be of high importance, other planned work commitments may be delayed or not completed.

Also new to the work plans this fiscal year is the consistent incorporation of an explicit line item or discussion about prioritizing Staff Supervision. Active and regular supervision of the technical staff is a critical function of the unit senior, as is such active supervision of unit seniors and division chiefs by their supervisors. The unit senior supervises, plans, organizes, and directs the work of technical staff under their direction. Supervisory tasks include preparing individual work plans and performance evaluations; providing day-to-day guidance of technical staff to ensure they are appropriately trained, timely completing work, and implementing a shared set of agency expectations; providing first-level review and approval of written documents to ensure proper content, consistency, completeness, and accuracy; participating in meetings with

stakeholders; and preparing items for Board action. Following the shelter in place orders due to the coronavirus pandemic, the transition of the office to working remotely required that staff and their supervisors develop new practices to ensure sufficient and effective levels of supervision, highlighting for all of us the value of the staff-supervisor working relationship. Explicitly including staff supervision within the work plans emphasizes the priority and importance we put towards this function.

Accommodating the Fiscal Impacts from Coronavirus Pandemic

Needless to say, the coronavirus pandemic has had major impacts at a worldwide scale, and there have been real fiscal impacts to the Water Boards. Included in the California budget for FY 20/21 is a 9.23% pay cut for all state employees; all Water Board staff will receive a salary reduction of two (2) days in pay (equating to 9.23%) and will accrue two days of personal leave credit per month. Though staff can use the personal leave credits at a time of their choosing, overall this reflects a nearly 10% reduction in work time which will reduce by approximately 10% the productivity in all programs.

In addition, in June all state agencies were directed to redirect 5% of their workforce to work on a limited term assignment as Covid-19 contact tracers, under the supervision of the California Department of Public Health. For the North Coast Regional Water Board four (4) staff have been redirected (voluntarily) to work fulltime for an indefinite period of months on this important work. Coupled with the near 10% reduction due to pay cuts, the redirection of 5% of our staff to serve as contact tracers results in nearly a 15% reduction in our workforce for FY 20/21. These work plans have been written to accommodate and reflect this very significant reduction in staff time doing the work of the North Coast Regional Water Board.

EXECUTIVE TEAM PROJECTS and ACTIVITIES

The Executive Team provides overall leadership and guidance for the North Coast Regional Water Board. Much of the work of the executive team members is reflected in the work activities presented in the division work plans. However, there are some additional duties and activities not outlined in the division work plans and these are summarized here.

Leadership and Organizational Culture

The Executive Team is actively engaged with each other and with staff throughout the organization to consistently assess and improve upon the organization's operations and processes. In May 2019 and June 2020, the Executive Team met to discuss the well-being of our organization and identify changes we should implement to improve organizational efficiencies and effectiveness in achieving our region's vision: Healthy watersheds; Effective regulation; Strong partnerships. We identified several focus areas where we could improve upon the organization's operations and processes, including managing and prioritizing workload, supporting staff through active and regular

supervision, and instituting processes and practices to empower staff. Over the coming months, the Executive Team will be working on developing and implementing immediate and long-term actions to improve upon the focus areas identified during our Executive Team retreats.

In December 2019, Water Board staff participated in the CalEPA 2020 Employee Engagement Survey. About 77% of employees responded. Those responses are helping the management team understand North Coast Regional Board staff's job satisfaction and opinions regarding our work and workload, our leadership, and the resources available to complete our work. The most valuable information to come out of the survey is in regard to areas where we need to improve as an organization. Over the next few months, we will be communicating survey results to staff, seeking staff input, and developing an Action Plan that describe how we can maintain and build upon areas of strength and how to address areas of need identified in survey. The Executive Team has identified several existing activities that provide valuable opportunities to build a meaningful Action Plan.

Participation in the Management Coordinating Committee and Deputy Management Committee

The Management Coordinating Committee (MCC) is the highest-level coordinating body within the Water Board organizational structure. The Deputy Management Committee (DMC) is the second- highest level coordinating body within the Water Board organizational structure. The DMC supports the MCC to ensure the Water Board achieves its primary missions, by working to make the organization efficient and effective. Primary MCC responsibilities include:

- Providing leadership so the organization can achieve its mission and goals;
- Ensuring coordination and communication exists among the Water Board's major organizational units;
- Aligning the goals and priorities of all Water Board organizations; and
- Improving statewide consistency in the operation of the organization to the maximum extent practical while considering the need for regional variation and innovation.

Some of the DMC key responsibilities are to:

- Assess and identify statewide organizational challenges or obstacles to efficiency and develop, recommend, and/or implement solutions to these challenges;
- Track, advise, assist, and direct Roundtables and serve as clearinghouse for, and help resolve, items elevated from Roundtables; and
- Provide direction to the Training Academy, and approve training proposals and expenditures

The two North Coast Regional Water Board Assistant Executive Officers (AEOs) represent the region and actively participate in DMC meetings and the various DMC activities listed above as well as subcommittees. The AEOs currently participate and

provide input in the Statewide Human Resources Efficiency Sub-committee and the Regional General Orders Sub-committee. Additionally, the AEOs serve as one of the executive sponsors of the NPDES Roundtable and the Forest Activities Roundtable. One of AEOs also serves as one of the rotating chairs of the DMC.

Participate in the On-Farm Composting Workgroup

In support of California's Healthy Soils Initiative (HSI), Matt St. John, Executive Officer, and Charles Reed, Supervising Water Resource Control Engineer of the Point Source Control & Groundwater Protection Division, are representing the North Coast Regional Water Board in a multi-agency working group that includes CalRecycle, California Air Resources Board, local air quality management districts, and the State and Regional Water Boards. The working group will evaluate definitions, regulations, requirements, and industry best practices to align agencies in order to develop standard Best Management Practices for on-farm composting and feedstock acquisition, assess the net community impact of on-farm compost production for water quality and air quality in agricultural communities as necessary to inform the activities of the permitting and regulatory alignment committee, and communicate the net environmental benefits as well as public health benefits to stakeholders, in particular within disadvantaged communities.

Participate in the Sonoma State University's Water and Homelessness Initiative

In February 2020 the North Coast Regional Board endorsed the Board's participation in a joint partnership with Sonoma State University's Rising WATERS initiative, which in 2020-2021 will focus on water-related implications and impacts associated with homelessness in the Russian River watershed. Matt St. John now sits on the advisory team for this initiative which will form interdisciplinary teams of faculty and students, with key input from advisory team professionals from state and local governments and non-governmental organizations. Over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year, the initiative will host several workshops and culminate in the completion of one or more projects addressing the nexus between water quality and homelessness.