

# North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

## Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Work Plan

### INTRODUCTION

Work Plans have been developed for the Watershed Stewardship Program and 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. Following this Introduction is a summary of Office-wide Initiatives. 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 generally 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 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.

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 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 21/22 Work Plans

New to the Work Plan is the addition of the Watershed Stewardship Program work plan which was incorporated within the Planning and Stewardship Division work plan in previous years. The Watershed Stewardship Program workplan outlines activities that will be conducted to advance the North Coast Region's Watershed Stewardship Approach, which is a strategic initiative designed to support the Water Board's efforts to coordinate program activities, build watershed-based partnerships, and improve water quality and ecological resiliency. Because the Watershed Stewardship Approach is more strategy than a resourced program, this work plan identifies key partnerships, projects, and watersheds which have been identified as priorities to increase the Regional Water Board capabilities in adaptive management, collaborative project funding, large-scale ecological restoration, and building consensus solutions.

The Watershed Stewardship Coordinator facilitates the application of this strategy. The Coordinator strives to develop and implement strategies to promote sustainable land use practices, undertake restoration where legacy impacts have impeded progress towards supporting conditions, and promote investment in environmental infrastructure to increase resiliency within our aquatic ecosystems.

Also new this year is the inclusion of several Office-wide Initiatives that are not otherwise described in any of the Division work plans. Finally, consistent with the

previous year's work plan is the inclusion of a "line item" for Unplanned Work Activities and in some cases an accounting for the priority and associated time that supervisors put towards supporting the staff in their units/programs.

### Accommodating the Fiscal Impacts from Coronavirus Pandemic

The California budget for FY 20/21 included a 9.23% pay cut for all state employees; all Water Board staff received a salary reduction equal to two (2) days per month (equating to 9.23%) and accrued two days of personal leave credit per month. Though staff were entitled to use the personal leave credits at a time of their choosing, overall this reflected a nearly 10% reduction in work time which reduced by approximately 10% the productivity in all programs in FY 20/21. At the time these work plans were finalized for the June 17, 2021 Regional Board meeting, the proposed California budget for FY 21/22 includes the funds to reinstate full salaries for all Water Board staff effective July 1, 2021. Since the final determination of this funding decision was unknown at the time the work plans were drafted, the current work plans still reflect a 10% reduction in staff time and commensurate reductions in work productivity have been assumed. Should the final approved budget reinstate full salaries for Water Board employees, performance targets for some of our regulatory programs may be exceeded.

In June 2019 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 three staff were redirected (voluntarily) to work fulltime on this important work and we thank these staff for their service. The State Water Board's Division of Administrative Services has informed us that all Water Board staff who volunteered to act as contact tracers are scheduled to be reinstated to full time Water Board work by July 1, 2021. The work plans have been written to reflect the return of these three staff to Water Board work.

## 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, 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. At an August 2020 All Staff meeting, the Executive Team presented results of the 2019 survey and sponsored the development of an Employee Engagement Steering Committee (EESC) to examine the themes/issues to which the survey demonstrated the

need for improvement. In Fall 2020, work of the EESC began in earnest starting with a review of the 2019 survey results and taking the time to discern areas needing improvement. It quickly became apparent that additional surveys were needed to inform the development of an Action Plan. Over the last 6 months, all Regional Water Board staff have been given the opportunity to provide their input through anonymous surveys developed by the EESC covering the areas of Job satisfaction, Professional Development/Job Expectations/Accountability, and Supervision/Leadership. The results of the first two surveys have been reviewed and synthesized by the EESC and have been used to develop a list of themes and preliminary actions which have been shared at updates during All Staff meetings. By the end of 2021 the EESC anticipates having a final list of recommended actions to form the basis of an Action Plan. It is anticipated that some of the recommended actions will require considerable dedicated staff time. Though these actions, their level of effort, and associated milestones have not yet been developed, the Executive Team has fully supported the work of the EESC and is prepared to support dedication of staff time to these important initiatives.

#### Addressing Racial Equity and Environmental Justice within the North Coast Region

During its August 18, 2020 meeting, the State Water Board directed staff to implement a Racial Equity Initiative to advance racial equity both within the Water Boards and among the communities that we serve. To achieve this goal, the Water Boards have established a steering committee and working group charged, in large part, with developing a resolution for racial equity, and racial equity strategies and workplans. The steering committee is composed of CalEPA and Water Board upper management staff in positions where they can affect and implement recommendations and changes arising from the resolution and action plans. The working group is composed of approximately 30 staff from throughout the State and Regional Water Boards, from various backgrounds, programs, and disciplines, working under the leadership of the steering committee to develop workplans, action plans, training modules, and other actions and activities that will serve to enact meaningful change within the organization. The North Coast Region's Enforcement Coordinator, Diana Henriouille, serves as a member of the working group.

To date, the steering committee and working groups have conducted external and internal listening sessions to gather input and recommendations from staff and the public to help draft a resolution for State Water Board consideration. Upon adoption, the resolution will serve as a model for Regional Water Boards seeking to develop and adopt similar resolutions. North Coast Region staff anticipates drafting a resolution for Board consideration toward the latter part of fiscal year 21/22.

This summer, North Coast Region staff in collaboration with the State Water Board Office of Information Management and Analysis, will host a series of racial equity information and discussion sessions. In addition, North Coast Region staff will facilitate a self-education discussion group that will view/read, and meet monthly to discuss, various racial equity and environmental justice-related media, including books, movies, TED talks, and podcasts. At a statewide level, the working group has initiated, and

plans to host monthly lunchtime racial equity support sessions, open to all staff. Both within the statewide Racial Equity Initiative framework and at the regional level within our office, we will continue to look for and implement opportunities to advance racial equity and environment justice, and will report to the Board periodically on those activities and efforts.