

**Minutes of the
ASBS Natural Water Quality Committee**
December 10, 2007
at the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project

Members in attendance:

Jim Allen - Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
Andrew Dickson - Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Rich Gossett - CRG Marine Laboratories
Dominic Gregorio - State Water Resources Control Board
Burt Jones - University of Southern California
Steve Murray - California State University Fullerton
Bruce Posthumus - San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Kenneth Schiff - Southern California Coastal Water Research Project

Members absent:

none

Others in attendance:

Rolf Schottle - AMEC Environmental, Inc.
Kimberly O'Connell - UC San Diego /Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Dominic Gregorio began the meeting at 9:30 AM. There were six items on the day's agenda: 1) Introductions, 2) Approval of Minutes; 3) ASBS regulatory update, 4) defining natural water quality; 5) review and approval of the Annual Report; 6) update on reference and regional monitoring designs, and 7) SIO intertidal surveys.

The minutes from Sep 7, 2007 were reviewed and, with minor edits, were approved by the Committee.

Dominic opened the third agenda item on ASBS regulatory updates. First was the ASBS exception for the Caltrans. Caltrans will receive a statewide ASBS exception since they discharge to numerous ASBS. The second update was on the completion of exceptions for all of the point source discharges in the State. The focus now will be on nonpoint sources, which is largely stormwater flows since all dry weather flows will need to be discontinued. Third, was the pending release of \$35 million for ASBS stakeholders to implement water quality improvements through Proposition 84 grants. The Committee discussion turned to the need for adequate monitoring to demonstrate the improvement in water quality for each project. Unfortunately, the monitoring components from other grant programs provided insufficient information necessary to make this assessment. The action item from this topic was:

- The NWQC, at their next meeting, will construct a recommendation to the SWRCB regarding modifications to the grant guidelines for improved monitoring.

- Dominic will ask someone from Division of Financial Assistance to the next meeting

Dominic opened the fourth agenda item on creating a definition of natural water quality. He distributed a strawman definition to start discussion. A number of topics arose including the concept of water quality (i.e. chemistry) vs. beneficial use (i.e. marine life), natural vs. background, pristine vs. reference, natural vs. human disturbance, amongst others. The committee agreed that: 1) the definition should approximate natural or expected conditions (which can be quite variable); and 2) given that natural conditions are currently unattainable, we should be striving towards similarity to a reference system (that has yet to be defined). The action item from this topic was:

- Ken and Andrew will modify the strawman definition by Jan 15 for distribution to the committee for comment

Dominic opened the fifth agenda item on review of the Annual Report. The committee provided a number of relevant comments on language and interpretation of the draft document. The action item for this topic was:

- Ken will edit the document based on the NWQC comments and distribute to the Committee within one week for review and approval via email

Ken opened the sixth agenda item on the Regional Monitoring Program. He started with a description of the monitoring questions, then provided a conceptual approach, and finished with some study design specifics agreed to by the stakeholders. The action item from this topic was:

- Ken is to email the draft workplan to the Committee for comments

Kimberly opened the seventh agenda item on the SIO intertidal survey. Jack Engle had provided a written history of the MARINE monitoring program at Dike Rock in the SIO ASBS that has existed for approximately 10 years. Steve Murray elucidated some more study design details for the committee. He concluded that: 1) the MARINE method was good for obtaining trends in habitat forming species (from photoplots, which can detect many physical perturbations); 2) it is relatively inexpensive (1 field day); and 3) because of the standardized sampling technique and centralized database, the MARINE method is a powerful tool for comparing changes at your local site to regional status and/or conditions. He did describe an alternative method for rocky intertidal monitoring based on Pete Rajmondi's work (PISCO) that can quantitatively measure abundance and distribution of biological communities, but this method is much more labor intensive and has a much smaller data set. The committee agreed that intertidal monitoring at SIO should be conducted in coordination with the Bight'08 regional monitoring program. The action item from this topic was:

- Steve Murray is to assist the Bight'08 ASBS Committee to define an appropriate monitoring design for rocky intertidal habitats

The next Committee meeting will be held on February 2, 2008 at SIO. Topics for the day shall include refining the natural water quality definition, Annual Report approval and

review of the presentation to the SWRCB (scheduled for March), and a progress report on the Regional Monitoring design for ASBS.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:45 PM.