



## **Third Party (3P) Work Plan Advisory Project [Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting]**

### **Meeting Summary**

**Date:** Wednesday, December 7, 2022  
**Time:** 1pm - 4pm  
**Format:** Hybrid: In person at San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, 4875 Morabito Place, San Luis Obispo, CA & Zoom  
**Meeting Materials:** [CCWQP Website](#)

### **Welcome**

Jodie Monaghan, Ag Innovations, welcomed everyone both in the room and on Zoom and introduced herself as the facilitator for this Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting.

### **Hybrid Meeting Protocols**

Because this was a hybrid meeting with attendees participating both in the room and remotely by Zoom, Jodie went over some protocols for the meeting. While the public is invited to listen to the meeting, comments or questions would only be taken from SAC members or their alternates during the meeting. SAC members on Zoom or by phone were invited to submit questions via chat or email to Gillies Robertson at [gillies@aginnovations.org](mailto:gillies@aginnovations.org). Comments from the public could also be directed to Gillies via email at [gillies@aginnovations.org](mailto:gillies@aginnovations.org).

### **Introductions and Agenda Review**

Jodie gave an overview of the agenda and reviewed the ground rules for the meeting. Self-introductions followed.

### **Perspectives**

Following the introductions, Jodie gave a brief overview of the concept of “Positions Vs. Interests” before inviting the group to share their perspective on the Ag Order, what their concerns are, and what they hope to achieve by participating in the process. The SAC consists of representatives from five interest groups; Environmental Conservation, Environmental Policy and Justice, Growers, Ag Associations, and Conservation Partners. Each interest group was given eight minutes to share their perspective. The following is a summary of the presentations:

- **Environmental Conservation**

Ross Clark of Central Coast Wetlands provided some insight into the goals of the process as seen from the environmental conservation perspective. Ross stated that he hoped they would be able to achieve the environmental outcomes of the Ag order & Clean Water Act while working on cooperative solutions with the growers, landowners, and regulators to identify site or water specific strategies.

- **Environmental Policy and Justice**

Ben Pitterlee, Santa Barbara ChannelKeeper; Brandon Bollinger, Community Water Center; Chelsea Tu, Monterey Waterkeeper provided a brief overview of the environmental policy and justice perspective and their goals for participating in the development of an Alternative Compliance Program. Their priorities are around the need for accountability and a framework for identifying participating growers who are not in compliance with the targets of the program. They also emphasized their concerns for community members who are faced with water quality uncertainty and the need for prompt action to prevent nitrogen levels increasing. They also expressed gratitude in being included in the process.

- **Growers**

Pam Silkwood, Taylor Farms, and Randy Sharer, farmer, gave the perspective of growers in the region. They recognized the importance of this work and appreciated the opportunity to be part of the collaborative effort. Drawing attention to the global need for fresh food, and the importance of farmers producing food and feeding families, they also brought attention to the fact that farmers do not want to waste fertilizers and herbicides but need the opportunity and time to develop production systems which allow them to reduce their use.

- **Ag Associations**

Kaylee Ellis, Grower-Shipper of SLO/SB Counties, and Norm Groot, Monterey County Farm Bureau, gave the group an outline of the process from the perspective of the Agricultural Associations of the Central Coast. They highlighted the importance of continued agriculture in the region and the need for time and flexibility to enable the agricultural community to enact the necessary changes to meet the requirements of the Ag Order. They also noted the complexity of regulatory compliance facing growers and that financial incentives are an important factor in moving the ACP forward, by providing a pathway to managing the costs of compliance.

- **Conservation Partners**

Karen Lowell, NRCS, Salinas; Aparna Gazula, UC Cooperative Extension; and Paul Robins, RCD Monterey, gave the Conservation partner's perspective on the process. They stated the need to acknowledge the "human factor", by factoring in diversity and complexity in designing a process that growers can actually achieve, and that whatever is asked of growers has to have resource protection benefits and be relevant. They also acknowledged the need for sensible regulation and a developing a path forward that helps facilitate good work with multi-benefit outcomes.

## Project Overview

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Sarah Lopez, Executive Director, Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc. (CCWQP), provided an overview of the goals and objectives of the meeting, and provided some context and perspectives related to the Ag Order 4.0 Third Party Alternative Compliance Pathway (ACP) Work Plans for groundwater monitoring and nutrient management in the Central Coast. She provided a report of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting, held on November 30th, and gave a synopsis of the presentations given at the TAC meeting by Tess Dunham, Attorney, Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLC, and by John Dickey and Kenneth Miller from Formation Environmental. Sarah also provided some insight into Preservation Inc's perspective of the process, outlined the goals for the day's discussion, and gave an overview of the various potential formula approaches.

The following questions were taken after Sarah's presentation:

Q: Once the work plan is submitted, when/where will the public comment opportunities take place?

A: Once the work plan is submitted, there will be a 30-day public comment period for comments submitted in writing. Following that, there will be a public workshop to hear in-person comments. Once all comments have been received by the Regional Water Board, Board staff will make a determination to approve or deny the work plan. The public comment period will run for 30 days after April 15th. The in-person workshop may be held on the regularly scheduled June 20th Regional Water Board Meeting. However, it is still to be determined if there will be a special meeting or if comments will be heard during the scheduled August meeting.

Q: Please confirm the scale of 'township'...36 sq miles?

A: Yes, "Township" scale for the Central Valley program is 36 square miles.

Q: Will the TAC be able to review the Work Plan before submission to the Board?

A: Yes. But it will not change much between TAC/SAC meetings and submission.

Q: How many factors were included in The Board's development of the program?

A: Basis of Nitrogen Discharge Limits section of Order. Definitions Attachment C to The Order has a good description of terms. Mary Hamilton, Environmental Program Manager, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board will share the relevant document sections with the group.

Q: How much are we talking about using a formula to develop a value or a target?

A: Today we are discussing the development of a formula. We will use the formula to derive the Values.

Q: What is the scale/scope of the formula in regard to the different farming styles/systems/crops?

A: We will assess both ends of the formula spectrum and also a "middle ground" modeling process before deciding on which one will be included in the Work Plan.

## SAC's Discussion and Input

Following a break, with Jodie facilitating, the group spent the remaining time discussing the alternative pathways. The following questions, answers and comments were recorded:

Q: How would folks interact with the model? Is it something that can work with our small, Spanish-speaking farmers as well as the bigger operations with technical staff?

Q: Does Preservation Inc (CCWQ) have a preference on the spectrum of options. e.g., A simple A-R spreadsheet to SWAT?

A: CCWQ does not have a position at this point on any of the approaches.

Q: What is CCWQ Preservation Inc's membership?

A: Randy Sharer provided a brief overview of CCWQP membership, which highlights who would be participating in the ACP. CCWQP represents: 2/3rds row crops, ¼ wine grapes, small percentage of tree crops, nurseries, small growers. Operation size: 75% are less than 100 acres. Majority are 10 acres or less in size, 25% are 50-500 acres, then a smaller percentage are larger than 500 acres in size. 90% of growers are English speaking; less than 8% are Spanish speaking. Total membership is 4,000 ranches, 425,000 acres in the region, most are in good standing. Not many members are educated to the graduate level let alone a college education. The ACP and administrative compliance needs to be accessible to all. In short, CCWQ represents the small guys.

Q: What is the difference between formulas and targets?

A: Values are an assessment of what's happening, targets are where they need to be to achieve compliance.

Q: UCCE Central Coast provides a good decision support system (Michael Kahn et al) and centralizes a lot of resources for growers. However, it leaves out some results. Why not leverage an existing tool, i.e, UCCE Crop Manage? Growers always ask "what tool do we use?"

A: RCD can help growers with "Crop Manage" as it is difficult for some growers to use.

Q: Farming is a leap of faith. The scope of data may be less present from small/beginning/transitioning growers?

A: Some details are baked into the more complex models (i.e., SWAT) whereas a simplified model can be amended by more sophisticated growers. However, information management is going to be difficult no matter the grower.

Q: Has CCWQ been looking at the costs of the various modeling options?

A: CCWQ has a Board of Directors and a standing Ag Committee. The Ag Committee assesses costs and allocations over the acreage and tries to make sure fees are appropriate for grower size. Groundwater monitoring requirement costs cannot be modified by grower size. This program will be allowed to shape its fee schedule.

Q: Is nitrogen in irrigation water accounted for in the formula?

A: Yes, it is accounted for in the formulas but discounted through evapotranspiration.

Jodie asked the group if there were any last thoughts on the various approach options available. The following comments were recorded:

- Farm operations have dramatically changed over the years, becoming more efficient with water, and fertilizer use. Let's provide the opportunity for growers to continue to innovate.
- Let's see what makes sense and is scientifically supported.
- The targets in the current proposal consider most factors. What is the benefit that is being achieved for farmers? We are ultimately trying to achieve load reductions. We need to see some case studies of what the modeling may show.
- We need enough information that shows the hazard level, which is based on data, is achievable.
- There is the human factor of protecting drinking water. It is important to be able to see data that shows that the process is working and drinking water is indeed being protected.
- There is value in all three approaches. Keeping it simple for farm-specific use is important, the larger scale SWAT type model is also potentially useful. Quantifying the models will be important.
- The more scientifically based the approach is, the more accepted it will be. Most farmers want to know the science and how chemicals move in the environment in their own region.

### **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

- Sarah provided a summary of the discussion and thanked everyone for participating.
- There is an obvious need for more specific information on the various alternatives and potential side-by-side scenarios.
- Sarah thanked Formation Environmental for diving into the project.
- There is a strong push for keeping the process simple and intuitive to help growers.
- CCWQP will start providing information that fuels future discussion of areas and targets.
- There is a tentative, "ballpark" date of 30th January for the next meeting.
- In-person meetings with a virtual alternative are the preference for the group.

### **Attendees:**

#### SAC Members:

Jennifer Pensky, Ph.D. Candidate, UCLA

Paul Robins, RCD Monterey

Benjamin Pitterle, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Aparna Gazula, UC Cooperative Extension  
Brandon Bollinger, Community Water Center  
Chelsea Tu, Monterey Waterkeeper  
Ross Clark, Central Coast Wetlands Group  
Norm Groot, Monterey Co Farm Bureau  
Kaylee Ellis, Grower-Shipper of SLO/SB Counties  
Karen Lowell, NRCS, Salinas

Advisory:

Tess Dunham, Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLC  
John Dickey, Formation Environmental  
Mary Hamilton, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Project Team:

Sarah Lopez, Preservation Inc.  
Ryann DiBasilio, Preservation Inc.  
Jodie Monaghan, Ag Innovations  
Gillies Robertson, Ag Innovations