

IDEAS, ISSUES AND COMMENTS

from the

Humboldt Bay and Del Norte Areas Public Outreach Workshop

on the

California Coastal Sediment Management Master Plan

June 22, 2004

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs), and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) should be added to the Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup (CSMW).
- The National Ocean Service has digitized aerial photography of the California coast that could be useful to the Sediment Management Plan (SMP).
- Information on sediment budgets for watersheds for three of five Northern California's coastal counties is available from Caltrans, the Forest Service and on the internet at 5counties.org.
- The SMP should look at all coastal watersheds and at all watershed issues including pollution and sedimentation. Since the results of upland erosion eventually reach the coast this is a critical link for data and policy.
- The Humboldt Bay Stewards, the host of the workshop, was created to coordinate such a watershed-wide perspective for the management of Humboldt Bay.
- The impacts on the coast of the urban environment and future growth should be considered in the SMP. Examples of these issues include runoff, pollution, filling of wetlands, and armoring such as dikes in marshes and bays.
- Armoring of the coast in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties consists primarily of rock dikes located at marshes and bays, as opposed to the typical armoring in Southern California which is usually seawalls to protect property.
- There is more beach use by people in Southern California Counties than in the north. The Northern California coast is valued most for its "natural" or environmental assets such as habitat. Will there be opportunities to take a look at what these areas need?

- Coastal archaeology and the preservation of sites threatened by coastal erosion should be considered in the SMP.
- The Snowy Plover is an important issue in Del Norte County. It would be useful to know how the Snowy Plover has evolved or adjusted to changes in beach width, composition and lagoon entrances in managing the species.
- Exotic coastal grasses and other plants have invaded some beaches and are being removed at a high cost. They tend to stabilize the backbeach dunes, but eliminate Snowy Plover breeding site potential.
- Another Northern California issue is the wood budget (analogous to sand budgets). Downed trees and shrubs enter rivers and are transported to bays and offshore. Large woody debris (LWD) may provide habitat, nutrient base and trap sand. A better understanding of wood budgets in coastal areas could be an important piece of information. Studies in Oregon indicate decrease in wood on beaches with associated significant changes in biota. Need changes in regulations to protect LWD in streams, coastlines and estuaries, and studies of how buried LWD can be remobilized.
- Better data of the nearshore and offshore coastal zone is needed in Northern California. CICORE is just starting to conduct biological assessments and develop a GIS data system for the bays and nearshore and offshore areas.
- Thirty Six miles of coastline in Del Norte County surveyed for soundings may be available through the County.
- Crescent City harbor is a sand trap and the Harbor needs to get rid of sediment. Currently the Harbor is working with the Corps of Engineers to try to work out disposal sites. Sites used in the past are now problematical, economy of scale for the water quality plant makes all the testing required prohibitively expensive, and bypassing operations are limited due to the percentages of fine grained materials contained in the spoils. The Harbor is facing loss of use of its facilities if suitable sites can't be found.
- A potentially important role for SMP implementation would be the development of a sediment disposal clearinghouse function.
- Another example of dredged material disposal problems is at King Salmon, a small community on Humboldt Bay. The community is searching for a place to deposit material dredged from its shore and government assistance in financing the transport and disposal.
- With the exception of a few specific locations, beach erosion is not a critical issue in Northern California. This is another difference between the north and south of

the state, and there should be a break or division in the SMP at Cape Mendocino to reflect these differences.

- Coastal lagoons are a big concern, such as water levels in Lake Earl, and the “Big Lagoon” area has lost both beach and houses (Don Tuttle at the County has been tracking this).
- There is a lot of new housing being built on the coast between the Smith River and the Oregon border.
- In Humboldt Bay, failing dikes allow the bay in to form wetlands. Is this an intentional policy? Is it a good idea? Can the spoils from King Salmon area be used to recover the formerly dry areas?
- The state of Oregon provides a good example of how state agencies can effectively coordinate to streamline coastal decisions and permits. The cumulative impacts of upstream effects need to be integrated into coastal management as they are in Oregon. Their preventative efforts (rather than the “fix-it” approach) is needed in California.
- If the USACE doesn’t continue to dredge Humboldt Bay entrance then the mouth will probably close.
- The flow of water is a key variable affecting water and habitat quality and the movement of sediment. Variable water flows in rivers as it affects water levels and characteristics in coastal wetlands should be studied. Water extraction from upstream has caused a decrease in the height of standing water in lagoons that allows breaching of sand bars in front of lagoons.
- Harbor uses are changing in Humboldt Bay and Crescent City Harbor. The change is from lumber exporting (not done any more) and commercial fishing and dungeness crabbing (much reduced, but possibly stabilized now) to tourism and recreation. Crescent City harbor too shallow to import timber. There is a need to understand how fisheries are using the bay.
 - Crescent City harbor’s disposal problem is possibly connected to the federal requirement that 80 % of dredged material be sand sized, and that not more than 5% organic constituents be allowed if the material is to be placed on Whaler Island.
- There is a need to understand coastal processes in Humboldt and Del Norte counties better. There is not even a clear understanding of wave direction, or net direction of sediment movement along the coast, let alone the amounts of sediment being transported.

- Sediment supply is not very well understood up here. The fine sediment contribution in the Eel River may have decreased recently due to an improvement in land management practices.
- The Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) is monitoring sediments in Humboldt Bay watersheds of Elk River and Jacoby and Freshwater Creeks.
- It is likely that recent erosion control improvements have reduced fine sediments flowing through watersheds. It would be useful if this could be studied.
- Humboldt and Del Norte Counties sediment loads typically have around 70% fines and bed load (fine to coarse sand) is a smaller component of sediment transport than what is normally expected.
- The fundamental issue is what are the sources of sediment and how do they move.
- Sediment yields in many north coast rivers and streams are declining from the high levels associated with the long-term effects of the 1964 flood, but are still above the levels existing prior to significant anthropogenic land use changes.
- Humboldt Bay has and continues to shallow, as windsurfers go aground at tides higher than the level at which they used to be able to surf, and boats in marinas sit on mud at low tides despite having moved to “deeper” depths.
- The Eel River is the largest sediment contributor to the Eureka littoral cell..