

Summary of CSBPA's 2021 Capstone event

October 2021

About the event

California Shore and Beach Preservation Association (CSBPA) held a capstone event, wrapping in topics and points from the 2021 Webinar Series of interactive online seminars to learn about and discuss California coastal issues.

This event included a distinguished panel of policy, science, Agency, and economic representatives to discuss how we improve coastal sediment management through coordination in California, and how to consider change with future projections and improved coastal science understanding. Beyond the current policy, how do we move this forward?

The event was held on *Wonder* to allow an interactive social space and open discussion. As such, in lieu of a recording, a summary paper is provided.

About the panelists

Doug George, NERRS Science Collaborative Program Manager, NOAA Office for Coastal Management

Dr. Doug George is a geological oceanographer and the program manager for the NERRS Science Collaborative. He has worked throughout the West Coast as a federal scientist, state resource manager, and environmental consultant with projects ranging from estuary restoration and living shorelines to regional sediment management and climate change adaptation. Dr. George's educational background includes a B.S in Oceanography from Humboldt State University, a M.S. in Journalism from Columbia University, a M.Sc. in Oceanography from Dalhousie University and a Ph.D. in Hydrologic Sciences from the University of California, Davis.

Lesley Ewing, Senior Engineer, California Coastal Commission

Since getting her master's degree from UC Berkeley, Lesley Ewing has been a coastal engineer with the California Coastal Commission where her career started with an overview report about the consequences of sea level rise to the coast, and this has remained a key part of her work over the following years. She is a past chair and current director of CSBPA, past director of The



Coastal Zone Foundation, and currently hosts a monthly podcast on coastal literature, called *Shorewords!*

Kellyx Nelson, Executive Director, San Mateo Resource Conservation District

Kellyx Nelson has spent nearly 30 years in non-profits, government, and the private sector developing, implementing, and assessing programs and partnerships for environmental benefit and other public good. She has an undergraduate degree from Columbia University in Political Science and Environmental Science, and a master's degree in Public Policy from UC Berkeley, and has served as the Executive Director of the resource conservation district since 2006, earning the RCD numerous distinctions.

Lauren Knapp, Environmental Economist, NOAA Office for Coastal Management

Dr. Lauren Knapp is an environmental economist on contract with NOAA's Office for Coastal management, where she helps on efforts to value marine economies and train local communities on how to use economics to inform decision-making. Prior to this, she was an economist for the Office for National Marine Sanctuaries, a Postdoctoral researcher at University of Michigan, and a Knauss Fellow at the US Army Corps of Engineers' Engineering and Research Development Center.

Dan Hoover, Oceanographer, US Geological Survey

Dr. Dan Hoover is an Oceanographer with the U.S. Geological Survey in Santa Cruz. He surveys beaches and nearshore bathymetry at several long-term monitoring sites in California to understand beach and shoreline response to natural and human-impacted forcing. He serves as a science advisor on several regional panels working on sediment management and coastal impacts of climate change. He has an M.E. in Engineering from Harvey Mudd College, and M.S and Ph.D. degrees in Biological and Geological Oceanography from the University of Hawai'i.

CSBPA event contributors

Kristen Goodrich - moderator, CSBPA Board of Directors

Kim Garvey, CSBPA President

Phyllis Grifman, CSBPA Board of Directors

Jeremy Smith, CSBPA member, lead of Young Coastal Professionals

Aaron McGregor, CSBPA Board of Directors

Maria Winters, PhD student, UCLA

Andy O'Neill, CSBPA Board of Directors



About CSBPA

CSBPA is the state chapter of the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

CSBPA seeks to foster dialogue and cooperation on shore and beach issues, including but not limited to: shore and beach processes; coastal geomorphology; coastal wetlands; ports, harbors and marinas; beach nourishment and preservation; shoreline protection; coastal recreation; historic shoreline changes; monitoring and mitigation efforts; and results of shoreline research, especially efforts focused on the California or Pacific coastline.

CSBPA is involved in local coastal conferences, professional awards, state science fairs, collegiate scholarships, and community outreach and education. CSBPA supports the professional development of members and interested communities through annual meetings, newsletters, participation in ASBPA meetings and contributions to *Shore & Beach*. CSBPA is working on how to best serve the needs of the California coastal community and we welcome your inputs. Learn more about CSBPA here: <https://asbpa.org/california/>

To support our education and outreach mission, and extend dialogue on California coastal issues with peers and professionals, CSBPA hosted a 2021 Webinar Series leading to this event, with topics and presentations available here: <https://asbpa.org/2021/04/20/csbpa-2021-webinar-series/>



Summary of introduction and opening remarks about Sediment Management (SM)

Sediment is an essential component of contemporary coastal and marine management in California. For decades, multiple coastal sediment management organizations have facilitated and coordinated regional sediment management as an approach, emphasizing regional level solutions to sediment imbalances and treating sediment as a resource. More recently, these organizations are increasingly focused on the state's sea level rise adaptation efforts. However, several challenges face regional sediment management plans including lack of reliable long-term funding for planning and implementation, the need to broaden communication, the need to facilitate transfer of best practices and lessons learned to more stakeholders, regulatory constraints to beneficial use of sediments, balancing competing goals of management, and integrating science guidance into sediment management (SM) planning and projects. Despite these challenges, regional sediment management has been a widely used and accepted approach, but activities need to move toward implementation. To facilitate successful implementation of SM plans, organizations need two key elements: internal capacity and inter-organizational coordination.

Several organizations, such as California Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup (CSMW), CSBPA, and Beach Erosion Authority for Clean Oceans and Nourishment (BEACON), are taking leadership and action in overcoming these constraints to fulfill their commitment to improved coastal sediment management.

This event will explore the key elements of capacity and coordination for successful SM implementation.

Summary of Moderated Discussion

What does 'improved coordination' mean for Sediment Management? How might 'improved coordination' look and play out on the ground?

Coordination does not necessarily mean actions are fast or streamlined. If parties are coordinating well, it can mean a lot of communication; they should ask what they can do more effectively or do differently. Especially with "tech burnout" and meeting fatigue, people should reflect on how communication can be more effective, as just having more meetings (more communication by amount) may not be the answer.

"Coordination" often gets used in place of "collaboration", which more often seems like what people and agencies are aiming for. Coordination can imply much more transactional, task-



oriented actions, whereas collaboration can create the conditions for problem-solving and solutions-oriented thinking for SM. Collaboration is a process and can take time; outcomes are emergent and built upon trust but can deliver progress.

For some specialist perspectives, experts are brought in on specific aspects of SM, rather than being at the center of coordination or involved at the beginning of the process. Having these perspectives at the beginning of the process can help everyone involved understand the issue. For example, bringing in the science perspective at the beginning of the SM process, to understand the problem that is trying to be addressed through coordination, can help make the process smoother as there can be early, shared understanding of the issue and agreement on the goal.

Retaining people who have experience in this coordination is also important. Doing effective coordination for SM requires understanding on how various connections for SM function, and so keeping an agency or organization experience base is necessary for effective coordination.

What does capacity mean for Sediment Management? What types of capacities do organizations need to better coordinate?

Social science. Bringing in a social science or economics perspective can help inform organizations in these management plans, as they can bring rigorous methodologies to evaluate and capture many abstract benefits and costs (e.g., habitat improvement, amenity values, and return on investments). Incorporating this at the beginning for a forward-facing and proactive look at systems, rather than being reactive, allows for management to estimate accruing benefits over the lifetime of projects. Talk with social, environmental, and economic experts early to get the right analysis for the project's needs. The Office of Coastal Management or Sea Grant offices often have an economist, and they are an excellent resource for an initial check on any studies or analyses you might want to conduct.

Funding. Capacity can be described as the bandwidth for the work of coordination: the act of developing consensus around a problem, developing a solution, facilitating communication with the community and technical advisors, and getting to a feasible outcome is all work. Work is not just moving the sediment. We all need to recognize and accept that, and we need to engage with our funding systems to explain how all of the above is genuine work and is essential to the process. Because unfortunately, public funding is usually restricted to specific implementation tasks, and all this other effort that is foundational to moving the sediment is not seen or interpreted as implementation.

There is a recent trend in funding to be more efficient by not allowing organizations to charge their full indirect rates, but these true costs cover necessary things for any organization to exist – that's an inherent part of the capacity. People in large organizations may not realize whether their agency is billing indirect costs or not, but NGOs, tribes, and smaller organizations are very



aware of these distinctions. And these smaller entities may lose money on grants and access if this isn't allowed, making this an equity issue as well.

Diverse training and skillsets. Capacity can also describe the different types of skills, such as the distinction between collaboration and coordination, that are needed on different projects or at different stages. Every project, whether restoration, implementation, or planning, has management and coordination of tasks to reach completion. However, some projects need more collaboration to create conditions for ideas and innovation to occur – to build relationships and trust. Outcomes through this process are emergent and may breakthrough long-held assumptions or positions. And those are different capacities. The people who are experts at building collaboration may not be the same technical people who are experts in coordinating tasks. As a community, we sometimes assume that facilitation is someone anyone can do, unlike, for example engineering. But this is another skillset, with its own education, background, and experience.

There are real examples of when collaboration addresses the capacity issue. For example, the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Science Collaborative aims to foster collaboration by funding efforts bringing together the management questions, science, and stakeholders together at the beginning of the process. While this is focused on NERR management needs, the concept is applicable anywhere. Another example is the efforts of BEACON in Santa Barbara and Ventura, around climate change adaptation, resilient coastlines, habitat space, and sediment management.

Collaboration. From an agency perspective (federal, state, or local), there are different levels of capacity. First, there's a sense there's too much work and too little time, resources and staffing to do everything – a capacity issue with the amount of work given the resources. At the same time, staff still are deeply invested the very serious projects and concerns that come to them; as mentioned earlier, there's a huge amount of work in the preparation, finding a solution, and communication that brings a project forward. Not all agencies recognize all that necessary effort and work in their metrics. However, it is recognized that public access and improving public communication is increasingly important. Enabling the public to know who and how to get a hold of the right staff member or having access to synthesized information to get up to speed quickly on projects improves engagement and makes coordination efforts more effective.

Agencies need to put time and money toward retaining the right skills and having/keeping the people who are on the ground making connections and sitting down with everyone to come to consensus. It's these people that drive projects to success, especially as there is no established roadmap yet.



What are the biggest needs in and obstacles to successful SM coordination?

<Perspectives and questions from attendees>

- There's a need for **concrete, positive examples of successful sediment management**. Information about these examples need to be shared and be accessible to everyone. Examples may include Texas or Florida that have central sediment agencies.
- Funding is required for successful sediment management. Without a **dedicated funding source**, a central office or agency is not possible. There is a lot of funding available at this time related to climate change from State and Federal sources, and we need to try to access that.
- **Coordination** (as an enabling condition for SM) should be considered absolutely necessary and budgeted for, but funding for coordination is greatly limited (this is usually an unfunded role) creating huge barriers for success – how do we fund this specific need/expertise better?
- Effective coordination can have significant returns for a low cost. However, with respect to advancing restoration, perfection can be the enemy of progress and excessive green tape (i.e., **regulatory hurdles** in restoration) can get in the way of good projects being advanced in an effective, efficient, and cost-effective manner. Can regulatory hurdles in restoration be streamlined (i.e., cutting the green tape) given the amount of funding and necessary short-term actions? Is there interest in developing metrics to measure what factors can advance restoration?
- Getting all the necessary parties at the table is only the first step in coordination but getting all the parties to an understanding of what the 'agreed' path – **consensus** - should be is the hardest part. This is related to previous distinctions between collaboration and coordination.
 - It is very important to set aside and consider the time needed for developing consensus, but that's not always fully considered. However, with an honest evaluation of time, we may not have enough people or resources, so what's the new paradigm?
- Having a knowledgeable coordinator who knows the scene, the challenges, and all the players. The coordinator needs the ability to compromise and knowing what compromises are appropriate, to **build trust early** and often with coordination meetings with all stakeholders, understand special interests, and sit down and talk with people through issues. Trust built in one project can result in a series of projects moving forward more quickly.

Panelists' thoughts on SM obstacles, final remarks, and how CSBPA could play a role in moving forward.

There should be a balance between stepping back to understand all the aspects of impacts from a project and moving forward to taking action. That is, we should not sacrifice consideration of



long-term benefits and goals due to inaction -- some of the biggest risks at present are from not working at a pace and scale to advance environmentally beneficial projects the way we need to. With climate change in particular, and the pace of the changes we face, winning slowly is actually losing. *Cutting Green Tape*, an initiative aimed at creating efficiencies and regulatory practices for environmentally beneficial projects, is doing that. Please see the white paper "[Shifting the Paradigm](#)" or the [website](#) for more info.

One of CSBPA's goals is to build upon these types of efforts and take lessons from these initiatives to apply them to the shore and beach community. CSBPA is made up of a broad and diverse professional network, and the different perspectives on sediment management may be a unique resource to helping advance these sorts of efforts.

Consistency is key part of effective coordination for any project, especially those that work across state/jurisdictional boundaries. Having a consistent voice, one coordinator, has been effective in challenging projects.

People working in a regulatory space are deeply committed to goals and efforts we all share, working very hard on challenging projects that are important to so many folks. Regulatory staff also have a serious sense of obligation and duty with their job, upholding the mandates they are entrusted to fulfill. Have empathy for the people working in these offices, rather than expressing distrust with agencies. These staff may be under-resourced or have little capacity, and a little bit of empathy can go a long way in accomplishing our shared goals. It's difficult to coordinate and collaborate with someone you don't have respect or empathy for.

There is a need for compromise, too. With coordination in these types of projects, tradeoffs will inherently happen. Knowing the magnitude and scale of those tradeoffs, as well as the benefits, can aid the process.

A role for CSBPA in this process may be enabling some of those discussions that build trust and empathy, as well as providing background information for all stakeholders to build incremental foundations for challenging topics.

