Santa Monica Review Team Preliminary Findings
April 30, 2019

I. Addressing challenges in the 2014 PE Letter

a. Financial Management
   i. SMBNEP has turned this into a strength during this review period by diversifying its network of partners and sources of funding, including State Bond programs, grants, fundraising, corporate/private donations, etc. These efforts translated to an average of 29:1 in leveraged resources.
      1. *The SMBNEP researches and tracks prospective donors and funding opportunities and their outreach materials contain information regarding acknowledging and soliciting funds. They have a current finance plan and a system of documenting funding activity in detailed internal quarterly financial status reports that The Bay Foundation produces, as well as state match tracking by the State Water Resources Control Board. Non-federal match is tracked in Annual Reports and NEPORT information submitted to the US EPA.*

b. Outreach and Public Involvement
   i. Resignation of SMBRC ED in 2016 was an effort to clarify NEP's role and responsibility in relation to its partners. Explanations of each partner entities are captured in multiple documents. This is still being addressed as part of the ongoing CCMP revision process.
   ii. WAC continues to be the vehicle for public participation to submit input on CCMP and workplan items. The public is also able to provide general comments at GB and EC meetings. Their role is also being considered as part of the CCMP revision process.
   iii. Increased outreach and communication to the entire MC by providing access to agenda, minutes, reports, and other documents for all meetings conducted by the NEP governance bodies and their host entity (TBF).
      1. *In addition to their comprehensive website, the SMBNEP employs a variety of social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Flickr. Their annual programmatic results are publicly reported on their website in their Annual Reports. An impressive aspect of their outreach is the effort they put into producing public outreach materials in both Spanish and English, as well as into infographics and multi-media formats. The 2019 SMBNEP Work Plan Narrative Report has numerous examples of public outreach and involvement activities; a truly impressive amount done overall in this regard.*

II. Perceived Strengths

a. Competent and well-managed staff to help implement CCMP.
b. Staff engages stakeholders through outreach and volunteer events and keeps information publicly available via website and various social media platforms.
c. Governing Board is a diverse representation of the study area and could improve amplification.
d. Diverse partnerships allowing for stronger financial stability and long-term sustainability.
e. Research projects have strong scientific basis. Data and results are disseminated via conferences and publications.
   i. *The SMBNEP conducts an extensive array of research initiatives, together with their partners. With regards to emerging contaminants, a state-wide panel of experts was convened that developed monitoring requirements. They also engaged local fishing industry members to participate in kelp restoration efforts, conducted outreach and education on invasive species, and developed and distributed outreach materials in support of the Boater Education*

Program. Additionally, they affected policy change with local ordinances and ultimately state legislation restricting the use of plastic bags and straws, as well as other positive natural resource policies.

f. Demonstrated leader on multiple fronts, providing meaningful results to support CCMP goals such as trash reduction; stormwater projects; public trainings; and utilizing volunteer groups for habitat restoration (kelp forest, beach, dune, etc.)
   i. *The SMBNEP does wide-ranging ecosystem assessment and monitoring on an array of topics including ocean acidification, water quality, algae blooms, etc. They have a Technical Advisory Committee that ensures the Programmatic work and decisions are rooted in sound science. Their work identifying pathogens has resulted in faster response mechanisms, as well as improved seafood advisories and risk communication mechanisms. The Program extensively uses volunteers to support their efforts, with many opportunities available on their volunteer web page including for "Wetlands Monitoring, Research and Restoration". They also use cutting-edge technologies, such as the R2Deep@ underwater ROV. The internship program trains students, as well as the volunteer program training, improves data collection.*

   ii. *The 2019 SMBNEP Work Plan Narrative Report does an excellent job of outlining the climate change vulnerabilities to their CCMP implementation and their strategies to overcoming those pressures. Additionally, the 2015 State of the Bay report has provided overall conditions, with an anticipated update in 2020.*

III. Perceived Challenges

a. SMBNEP as an independent, autonomous entity rather than composed of 3 distinct entities (SMBRC, SMBRA, TBF)
   i. *Has there been consideration to incorporate existing SMBRC governance structure (GB, EC, TAC, WAC)--or something analogous-- under its host entity, TBF?*
   ii. *Is there interest to consolidate NEP-business into one dedicated website with a unified logo along with its own set of operating procedures, by-laws, staff breakdown and position descriptions?*

b. WAC meetings can be improved to better serve its intended function
   i. *Will hiring a meeting facilitator help to make meetings less contentious and more productive?*
   ii. *Will adopting 'rules of engagement' promote more effective dialogue and allow for reaching consensus and outcomes?*
   iii. *Would having topic specific advisory groups improve public participation?*
   iv. *Are meetings webcasted for stakeholders to participate remotely?*

c. *Any current/future plans for developing an economic/environmental valuation of NEP resources?*
   i. This could be a valuable way make the case for additional partners and funding to continue making worthwhile investments, particularly in light of climate change.
   ii. Another way to reinforce that the NEP is a collective voice of the larger community it serves, made up of many entities large and small.

d. *Is there a succession plan (e.g., Continuity of Operations Plan) being considered in the event of fires, floods, earthquakes, other disasters preventing the NEP from operating fully?*

e. *Has SMBNEP considered, in addition to periodic large-scale conditions reports, a web-based GIS data display and reporting site could be used to provide interim updated information, or annually updated conditions fact sheets available on their website?*

IV. Additional documentation, questions

a. Requests below are associated with the Performance Measures document
   i. On page 2 under Financial Management, the NEP talks about a Finance Plan currently undergoing a revision.
      1. ***Is a copy of an existing Finance Plan included in the attachments? If not, please provide a pdf or a link.***
   ii. On page 26 under Assessment and Monitoring, the 2 items are missing from your responses related to a Monitoring Plan (see page 18 of PE Guidance).
      1. ***Is a copy of an existing Monitoring Plan included in the attachments? If not, please provide a pdf or a link.***

b. Request below are associated with the Narrative report
   i. *Was monitoring after the Arroyo Sequit Fish Passage project determined that this was a successful effort?*

V. Site visit

a. Which projects should the Review Team consider visiting?
   i. Potential stops include those associated with restoration (Ballona, beach/dunes, kelp), water quality/nutrients (rain gardens/harvesting), or affected by fires to see how they've recovered (or not).
   ii. Preferable to incorporate visits with opportunity for discussion with MC along the way, if possible.

b. How long the visit should be?
   i. Tentatively plan around Tuesday to Thursday timeframe. Need to finalize dates.
   ii. East 'coast' travelers will need to travel no later than Monday and Friday.