

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Management Plan?

- a. The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan defines the priority issues facing the health of the Morro Bay estuary and watershed and presents action plans to effectively address those issues. The management plan is the guiding document for the Estuary Program.

2. Why does the Estuary Program need to have a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan?

- a. In 1995, Morro Bay was accepted into the National Estuary Program, which was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act requires each National Estuary Program to develop and implement a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, or Management Plan. The primary purpose of the Management Plan is to identify problems (called “priority issues”) that threaten the ecological and economic resources of the estuary and watershed and to define various action plans to effectively reduce those problems.

3. Why was the Management Plan updated?

- a. Great progress was made in addressing the priority issues from the original Management Plan (which was completed in 2001 and revised in 2012). However, more work needs to be done. Over the last decade, the understanding of some of these issues has increased through experience in the field, new research, and environmental monitoring, much of which has been supported by the Estuary Program and its partners. Improved approaches to addressing the priority issues and areas warranting further study have been identified. For the 2012 revision, new issues not recognized in the first Management Plan, notably the effects of climate change, needed attention. These developments drove the effort to revise the Management Plan and its action plans in 2012. In contrast, the 2022 update focused on assessing the action plans to determine which were complete and which were no longer relevant. Some action plans were updated, along with minor updates to the document to reflect the current status of efforts, partners, etc.

4. What were the major changes in updating the Management Plan?

- a. The 2022 Management Plan updated action plans in three different ways. Four action plans were eliminated because they are no longer relevant, either because they were completed or because of changes to partner missions. Eight action plans were combined into four action plans due to similar approaches and metrics. Six action plans had edits to reflect updated information. The remaining changes were minor ones to reflect the current status of efforts, partners, etc.

5. What opportunity did the public have to provide input into the management plan?

- a. In 2011, the Estuary Program staff hosted three public meetings, four technical workshops, and one public comment period to solicit public input on suggested updates to the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. The revised draft management plan was released for formal public comment in February 2012. Because the 2022 update was relatively minor in comparison, soliciting public input was not part of the process. The Estuary Program staff collaborated with its Management Committees, which include representatives from different interests and technical areas, to provide feedback on the process and on the updates.

6. How much progress has been made in addressing the priority issues originally identified in 2001 Management Plan?

- a. Substantial progress has been made in addressing the priority issues originally identified in the 2001 Management Plan. Action has been implemented to reduce bacteria and nitrate loading, arrest sedimentation, and improve habitats. Although these issues remain priorities, there have been improvements through a number of effective actions, including floodplain restoration along Chorro Creek, riparian fencing to reduce bacteria inputs to creeks, and 5,000 acres of habitat protected and restored.

7. How will the Estuary Program implement the Management Plan?

- a. The Conservation and Management Plan was developed with a five-year planning horizon. Each year, the Estuary Program prepares an annual workplan that specifies tasks for the upcoming year. Tasks within each annual workplan will be set to address the most pressing issues facing the estuary as well as having the appropriate partners and sufficient funding in place to ensure success.

8. What is the role of partners in helping to implement the Management Plan?

- a. Partners are listed on action plans that are well aligned with the mission and goals of each partner organization. Each partner organization's depth of involvement depends on the nature of projects being implemented, funding availability, and technical resources. Some partners work closely with the Estuary Program to secure joint funding to protect lands, complete restoration projects, or initiate outreach campaigns. Other partners provide in-kind or cash match or technical advice to assist with partners. Partners may also engage in projects within the watershed that are part of their own organization's mandate (such as The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County developing easements on private property to protect and preserve land).

9. Will the Management Plan be updated again?

- a. The primary focus areas presented in the beginning of Chapter 3 ("Maximizing Impact in the Next Five Years") will be reviewed every five years. Also every five years, the rest of the document will be reviewed to determine if updates are needed. As the document underwent a large scale revision in 2012, another revision is expected in the next ten years.

10. How will implementation of the Management Plan be tracked and reported?

- a. Each action plan presents an implementation tracking measure that the Estuary Program will monitor to demonstrate progress over time. Additionally, the Estuary Program will track the measures presented in Chapter 3 for the primary focus areas under each priority issue. This information will be available to the public through periodic reports from the Estuary Program.

11. How can I access the Management Plan?

- a. The Management Plan is available online at <https://www.mbnep.org/library/#ccmp>. You can also view a hard copy or request an electronic copy by contacting the Morro Bay National Estuary Program by phone (805-772-3834), email (staff@mbnep.org), or in person (601 Embarcadero, Suite 11 (upstairs), Morro Bay California 93442).

12. Who should I contact with further questions?

- a. General questions about the Management Plan can be directed to Melodie Grubbs, Executive Director, at mgrubbs@mbnep.org or 805-772-3834, ext. 16. Requests for accessing the Management Plan in person can be made by contacting the Morro Bay National Estuary Program by phone (805-772-3834), email (staff@mbnep.org), or in person (601 Embarcadero, Suite 11 (upstairs), Morro Bay California 93442).