

# Assessment on Communication Needs of the Wetland Regional Monitoring Program for the San Francisco Estuary

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## Executive Summary

The Communications Needs Assessment is designed to inform WRMP staff and decision-makers about the information needs of WRMP stakeholders. The goals are to: 1) Identify existing and emerging audiences for the WRMP's products and processes; 2) Improve understanding of topics of greatest interest for existing and emerging audiences; 3) Identify forms of communication that resonate with these audiences; and 4) Describe current communication methods and possible future approaches for the Program. This assessment will help the WRMP communicate information of interest to its different audiences in accessible and engaging ways.

Primary methods for the WRMP Communications Needs Assessment included a survey and document analysis. The assessment survey was conducted between July 2022 and August 2022. Results presented here represent some of the key findings from the survey. The WRMP has the potential to serve a broad range of interested stakeholders, including a core audience and emerging target audiences.

Survey results show that multiple audiences exist for the WRMP. The WRMP's existing audience consists of public agency representatives seeking technical products to inform their decision-making on wetland restoration monitoring and adaptive management. For this audience, the WRMP can provide high-level products such as standard operating procedures (SOPs), summary reports and a data management platform. The survey results also revealed a set of emerging audiences. This audience has interest in the information products of the WRMP, but might require more synthesized information. Emerging audiences include non-profits, tribal representatives, academia and private organizations. A clear next step is to increase engagement with our emerging audiences through the People and Wetlands workgroup and other forums. This workgroup includes members of these emerging audiences and provides a platform for them to provide input to the broader WRMP. In addition, more information is needed on existing and emerging audiences to best serve their needs going forward.

Another key finding of the assessment is the significant opportunity for increased audience engagement. Though the survey went out to some of the most engaged participants in the WRMP - including members of the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee as well as those who subscribe to the WRMP Newsletter - respondents predominantly indicated

that they do not receive information about the WRMP. The WRMP is an emerging program, and great strides can be made to share information products and program updates with our partners.

## Background and Methods

WRMP staff developed a survey to identify existing and emerging audiences for the WRMP products and processes and identify forms of communication that resonate with these audiences. The objective of the survey was to assess communication needs so the WRMP can develop communication products that are aligned with WRMP audiences. The survey was sent through various channels, including the following:

- Direct email to existing lists
  - Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and workgroup members
  - Contacts from introductory meeting with Tribes and Tribal organizations
  - Attendees of WRMP events (2021 Open House, past workshops)
  - WRMP Newsletter subscribers
- SFEP social media
  - Instagram
  - Twitter
  - LinkedIn
  - Facebook
- Information sharing from partners
  - SF Bay Joint Venture
  - Delta Stewardship Council
  - SF Estuary Institute

Questions in the survey covered four major categories: audience information, audience interest on programmatic topics and information products, and methods of engagement. Survey questions included multiple choice, ranked choice, and short answer responses. Overall, the survey was sent to roughly 300 individuals. The survey was open for six weeks and accumulated 50 responses.

## Results and Discussion

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**What area of the Estuary are you primarily associated with? (Check all that apply)**

[More Details](#)

● North Bay	25
● East Bay	21
● San Francisco	12
● Peninsula	14
● South Bay	21
● Delta	24
● None	0
● Other	6

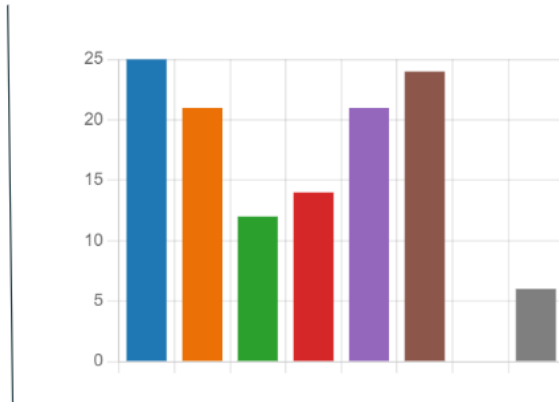


Figure 1: Shows the results of what region of the Bay most participants associate with.

Participants started the survey by choosing what region they associate themselves with. Figure 1 shows the North San Francisco Bay and the Delta region as the predominant areas of association, followed by roughly equal numbers for South Bay and East Bay. Participants were able to select multiple areas and a large number seem to focus highly on the North Bay and Delta. The survey results indicate that the WRMP would benefit from increasing its reach into those regions of the Bay that were not as well represented in the survey, such as San Francisco and the Peninsula.

**In addition, what type of organization do you work for? (Check all that apply)**

[More Details](#)

● Government	27
● Nonprofit organization	12
● Tribal group	0
● Private sector	10
● Academia	11
● Other	1

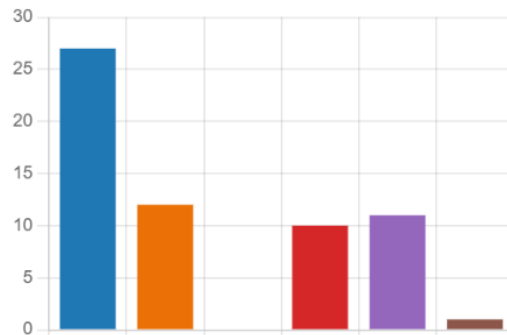


Figure 2: Shows the results for the organizations participants work for.

**What is your primary field of work? (Check all that apply)**

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Regulatory	9
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Land Management	5
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Restoration	17
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Planning	17
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> Research/Science/Technical	32
<span style="color: brown;">●</span> Funding	7
<span style="color: pink;">●</span> Education	12
<span style="color: grey;">●</span> Advocacy	8
<span style="color: olive;">●</span> Tribal Representation	1
<span style="color: cyan;">●</span> Other	1

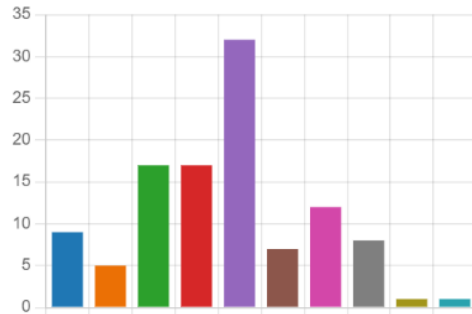


Figure 3: Shows the results of the type of work participants primarily work as.

Figure 2 shows that survey respondents primarily work for local, state, or federal governmental agencies. The majority of participants (34%) identified themselves as researchers, technical experts, or scientists, while participants who worked in the restoration field and do planning tied for second with 17% (Fig. 3). Land management and tribal representatives ranked last among all the choices, which is consistent with Figure 2 showing zero tribal representation. Overall, Figures 1-3 show that the WRMP core audience is primarily representatives from government agencies, and is more narrowly focused on scientists and technical experts working within these agencies, such as scientists, planners and restoration practitioners. There were far fewer people who identified as regulators in the survey. The survey suggests that a large portion of the WRMP core audience is highly technical and working in the public sector.

**If you are familiar with the WRMP, how are you currently receiving information about the WRMP?  
(Check all that apply)**

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Briefings from co-workers	12
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Updates via non-WRMP newslet...	7
<span style="color: green;">●</span> WRMP Newsletter	14
<span style="color: red;">●</span> WRMP website	10
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> Social media	1
<span style="color: brown;">●</span> Attending WRMP meetings	15
<span style="color: pink;">●</span> I am familiar, but I do not receiv...	14
<span style="color: grey;">●</span> I am not familiar	8
<span style="color: olive;">●</span> Other	3

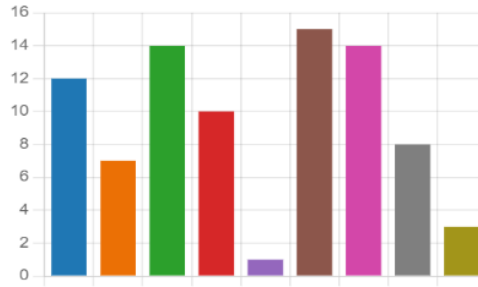


Figure 4: Shows the results about how the participants are receiving information from the WRMP

When asked how the survey recipients interact with the WRMP, the overall results in Figure 4 show that many respondents receive information through attending meetings, such as the Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and technical briefings. Interestingly, a large number of respondents are not receiving information, but are familiar with the WRMP. This means that in addition to continuing to produce newsletters and information sharing in meetings, there is a need for reaching those participants that said they do not receive information.

**How do you currently interact with the WRMP? (Check all that apply)**

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Being part of a Workgroup	8
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Being part of a Committee	10
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Attended a Committee meeting	5
<span style="color: red;">●</span> WRMP event	7
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> No current interaction	24
<span style="color: brown;">●</span> Other	5

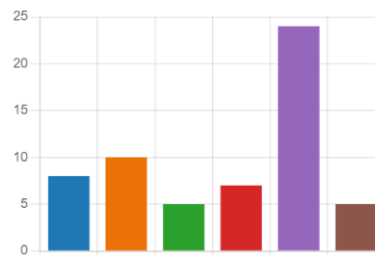


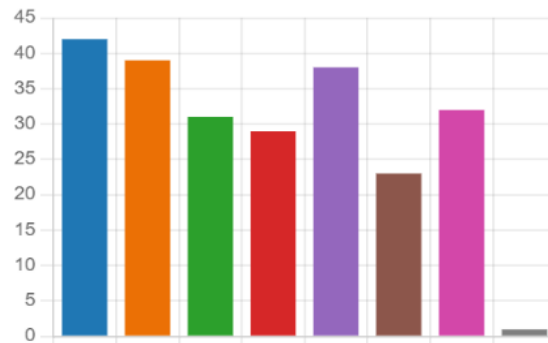
Figure 5: Shows the results about how the participants interact with the WRMP

Figure 5 reflects how participants interact with the WRMP. The largest group of respondents do not currently interact with the WRMP in a formal manner. It is possible there is high overlap

between this group and the significant number of participants who indicated they do not currently receive information about the WRMP. The large difference in the number of respondents with “no current interaction” compared with other response options shows a communications and engagement gap that the WRMP can address by producing more engaging experiences and events that can be broadcasted effectively through platforms that our audience uses.

**3. WRMP is working on a range of technical products. Broadly, please indicate your interest in the topics listed below. (Check all that apply)**

[More Details](#)



*Figure 6: Shows the results about the technical products most interested by our participant pool.*

When asked about what kinds of technical products respondents are interested in, most respondents selected many of the types included in the survey. In Figure 6, the survey respondents specified they are most interested in topics related to maps of baylands habitats, information on vegetation and biota, spatial and temporal trends, and a single network that gathers all SF Estuary data. This demonstrates a need for the WRMP to continue to advance products such as SOPs and summary reports and make sure it is delivered to interested parties. This also demonstrates that the WRMP’s focus on developing a regional data management system that centralizes SF Estuary wetland monitoring is of high interest to our core audience. It is notable that the science deliverables are an integral element that people anticipate using for their everyday work (e.g., regulation, restoration, planning)

The WRMP is able to produce a range of products tailored to diverse audiences. Please rank the forms of communication or communication products that would be the most impactful to you, with the top answer being your most impactful and your last being your least impactful.

[More Details](#)

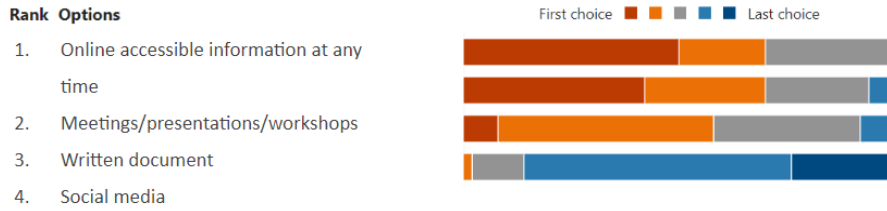


Figure 7: Shows the rankings of the WRMP products the participants were most interested in. Red is the first choice, orange is second choice, gray is third and blue is fourth.

Respondents were also asked to rank which form of communication will be most impactful to them. The results showed the highest ranked form of communication is online information, as well as attending meetings, workshops and presentations. Social media was the least-chosen option. These choices indicate that we should continue to add resources to the WRMP website

and newsletters, add additional communications, such as blogs that highlight specific topics within the WRMP, and communicate widely in online forums about the online data management system. Other options include interactive and engaging workshops and meetings that are open to a broader audience. Planning interactive information forums that have remote and in-person options can help to shift our engagement and hopefully bring in more interest from the broader community.

What type of information are you most interested in receiving from the WRMP? Please rank these options with the top answer being your most interested and your last being your least interested.

[More Details](#)

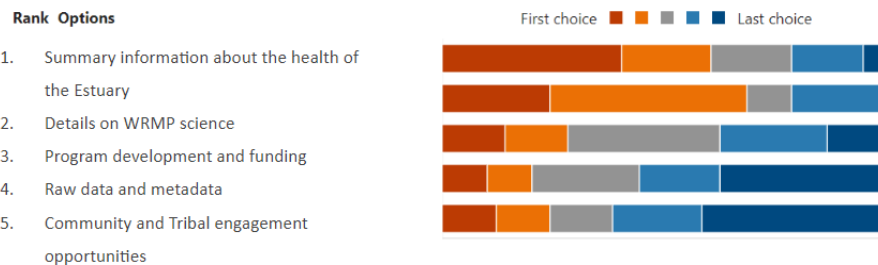


Figure 8: Shows the rankings of the types of WRMP categories the participants were most interested in. Red is first choice, orange is second choice, gray is third and blue is fourth.



Figure 8 helps expand on what topics are of highest interest. The results show that the majority of people's first and second choices are to receive summary information about WRMP science. Raw data was least frequently selected as the first choice. This indicates that respondents participating in this survey prefer summarized information products. While raw data will still be available through the WRMP data management system, program staff can focus on developing information products that summarize key scientific findings and ensure it reaches a range of audiences through the avenues described previously.

**In regards to the most effective way of social communication, please rank the *social media* platform that would be most helpful in receiving information about the WRMP, with the top option being the most helpful and bottom being the least helpful.**

[More Details](#)

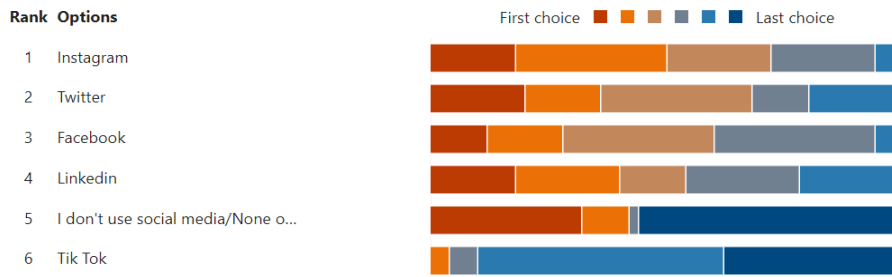


Figure 9: Shows the rankings of the kind of social media platform the participants were most interested in. Red is the first choice, orange is second choice, gray is third, blue is fourth, dark blue is fifth.

The WRMP is increasing its engagement on social media platforms. While results described above show social media is not primarily utilized by survey respondents, continued engagement on social media could reach emerging audiences. Figure 9 depicts which social media platform is most useful for respondents. Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn were most frequently selected as the first or second choice among respondents who use social media. While communicating information on social media may not be a primary communication tactic for the WRMP to reach our audience, social media is a growing method of communication that we might want to revisit as the program develops.

In regards to written communication, please rank the type of *written communication* that would be the most useful for receiving information about the WRMP, with the top option being the most useful and bottom being the least useful.

[More Details](#)



Figure 10: Shows the rankings of the kind of written form of communication deliverable the participants is most effective to them. Red is the first choice, gray is second choice, and blue is third.

Figure 10 shows that all three types of written products were preferred almost evenly across the board, with WRMP newsletters slightly leading the other two options. The WRMP should continue to develop these written deliverables as an important form of communication to our audience.

In regards to communicating to larger audiences, please rank the *briefing* that would be the most useful in receiving information about the WRMP, with the top option being the most useful and bottom being the least useful.

[More Details](#)

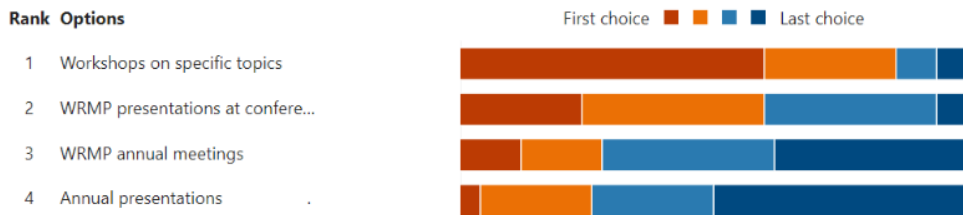


Figure 11: Shows the rankings of the kind of forums the participants think is most effective to them. Red is the first choice, orange is second choice, light blue is third and dark blue is fourth.

To understand opportunities for interactive experiences, survey recipients were asked to rank the most useful event as a form of communicating information. Results show that workshops were preferred most, with presentations at conferences as the second highest ranked option (Figure 11). These results point to a preference for engaging, interactive events over experiences that only present information.

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## Conclusion

These survey results show that the WRMP's audience is predominantly a technical audience that uses science to inform management decision-making, with scientific topics as a core area of interest. The majority of the survey recipients were science professionals, mostly employed by public agencies. Tribes, non profits, academia and private groups were not well represented in the survey, and a lack of time and resources to participate may have been a factor in the low participation rate. Offering honorariums for future surveys may increase representation from tribes and other emerging groups.

### *Two types of audiences in the WRMP*

Two categories of audiences were identified through this survey: a core audience and an emerging audience.

- Our **existing audience** is focused on the science of the WRMP to inform management decision-making.
- Our **emerging audience** - have expressed interest in the program but are less engaged.

Moreso, as these two types of WRMP audiences were discovered, it would be beneficial to have more direct engagement of the emerging audience. This includes non-profits, tribal representatives, academia and private organizations (*Fig. 2 and 3*). Having more representations of these groups can help the WRMP expand its range in bringing in voices from a variety of perspectives that steward, work in, and benefit from wetlands. The recently formed WRMP People and Wetlands Workgroup is an example of a workgroup that is developing community and tribal values via new management questions, indicators and metrics centered around human dimensions. This workgroup will allow the WRMP to develop products that provide benefit and hopefully can increase input from the emerging groups. Furthermore, the survey also showed a communication and engagement gap where a large number of participants stated they do not receive information which overlap to a significant number of participants also stated they do not currently interact with the WRMP. By better understanding our emerging and core audiences, we can target information products and engagement opportunities to serve their needs. To increase engagement, the WRMP could seek additional funding to create interactive events that incorporate more community and Tribal needs into the Program.

### *Delivering Information to our Audience groups - Suggestions for Next Steps*

Respondents' preferred newsletters and summarized materials as the top choices for delivery of information shows that the existing audience is looking for distillation of the WRMP science. This gives the WRMP insight to continue to produce digestible informational products for further engagement. Though these preferences of engagements are being continued, the WRMP has an opportunity to further their methods of delivery.

Methods that that will help increase information to our existing audiences:

- **Collaboration with the Delta region.** There was a large number of participants that associated themselves with the Delta. To increase connections between the Delta and the Bay, collaborations are needed to implement common science objectives.
- **Develop an action Plan.** Develop a clear laid out action plan including, the role of WRMP as a supporter, collaborator and their limitations as a Program. As well as a one, five or ten year goal plan. Reviewing Action plans that are in conjunction with the Bay area is a step in the right direction. For example, reviewing if there is an overlap between the WRMP and the Delta Stewardship Council's 2022-2026 Science Action Agenda.
- **Provide in depth informational products.** Being able to create digestible informational products that will also include in depth information details will create a space for every expert's needs.

Given that two audience groups were discovered, there is also an opportunity for the WRMP to include emerging audiences. Some methods the WRMP could consider for information delivery include:

- **Interactive wetland events and workshops.** Direct interaction with the places, the people and the information of the WRMP can be a way to bring in new audiences and partners into the Program. Posting at key recreational areas in the Bay can also bring in a broader audience.
- **Expanding communication on the topic of People and Wetlands.** The People and Wetlands Workgroup opens up a broad range of topics of interest to the emerging audience. Topics include: cultural uses, fishing or recreation.

### *Future Direction for Communications:*

As we consider the participants and their responses, we can see there is a lack of representation from diverse groups. As the audience changes and the materials changing the



WRMP's direction will shift as its scope broadens, finding ways to actively engage all our audiences in appropriate and inclusive ways is a major key. Some items the WRMP can start to think about include;

- A follow up survey to scope the progress is needed. Concurrently, as the People and Wetlands Workgroup becomes more active within the Program and generates their initiative then this workgroup can bring additional attention to the WRMP and we can start to gauge how our audience changes over time through future surveys—online and in person.
- A partner-led workshop where the WRMP can tap into partners who work closely with communities and both organizations lead these interactive workshops.
- If possible, future workshops or events could be recorded and put on a public free platform such as youtube so everyone has access to it. In addition, the WRMP can provide these deliverables and events in different languages that support the communities engaging with the Estuary where English is not their primary language.