

H2O Session Introductory Comments

The Small Grants Program provides funding to non-profits and local agencies for community-based restoration projects in coastal watersheds and wetlands in southern California. The purpose of the Program is to build local capacity to plan and implement wetland restoration projects, to promote community involvement in these types of activities, and to foster education about wetlands ecosystems.

To date, we have had 5 annual cycles of the Program, with a total of 55 projects. You will here from a few of the Program's grantees this morning, and you can refer to the Wetlands Recovery Project's website for a complete list and description of all the Small Grants Program projects.

The Program is designed for relatively low-dollar projects, or components of projects, that can be implemented quickly and effectively to achieve on-the-ground restoration, while also building a community's capacity for future larger projects and expanding education and outreach efforts. "Small" not only implies a small level of funding, but also a project that has clearly defined goals and deliverables that can be achieved on the order of a year, rather than a large project that may be bogged down by increased management, permitting, and planning logistics.

Small restoration efforts being implemented on sometimes significantly degraded wetlands, streams and rivers, can seem inadequate, but we feel that restoration is important as a social process to increase visibility and value of wetlands to society. Community-based restoration can be viewed in part as a means to an end – an avenue to get people connected to their watershed that result in numerous beneficial feedbacks to the community.

The point is that restoration is something in which people and communities participate, not just something that consultants perform. What we get excited about with this Program is the notion that the ideal project not only accomplishes meaningful restoration, but is

more than just a restoration project – it educates and fosters awareness and stewardship in community members.

Not surprisingly, small organizations implementing these small restoration projects, many times with limited capacity within the organization, have unique challenges. We want to explore some of these issues in this session.

Some of the topics that we asked are panelists to address include:

- Project Development
- Planning
- Funding
- Permitting
- Volunteer recruitment
- The use of science
- Staffing
- Scheduling
- Documenting the project
- Education
- And, Organizational capacity building

The panelists for the session are:

Craig Justice, a Senior Water Quality Analyst from the City of Laguna Beach

Dan Ryan, the Stewardship Director from the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy

Kim Kolpin, the Co-founder and Director of the Bolsa Chica Stewards, is representing the Bolsa Chica Land Trust

Steve Ray, the Chair, and head of Finance, Construction, Special Projects and Legal Affairs, from the Friends of Shipley Nature Center