



Blue Carbon Collaborative (BCC)

Meeting #7 – Meeting Notes

Tuesday, January 24th, 2023

12:00pm – 2:00pm Pacific Time

[Link to Meeting Recording \(panel only\)](#)

Meeting Objectives:

- 1) Share about latest BCC participant projects and developments.**
- 2) Learn about ideas for blue carbon solutions that engage frontline communities. Discuss case studies and ideas on how to engage communities more effectively and identify community needs and opportunities.**

Meeting Notes:

Updates:

- Blue Carbon Collaborative website has officially launched!
www.bluecarboncollaborative.org
- AB45 bill authorizing California Coastal Commission to require applicants seeking a coastal development permit for a project impacting a coastal wetlands to build or contribute to a demonstration project to mitigate their impact - Questions about the website or support of AB45 please email Mary@wildcoast.org
- North Carolina interim report for state's first greenhouse gas inventory, includes seagrasses. If interested in reading, contact Jazmin at Pew, zdagostino@pewtrusts.org.
- Port of San Diego has completed the first phase of its eelgrass blue carbon study. It's available on our website here:
<https://pantheonstorage.blob.core.windows.net/environment/2022-San-Diego-Bay-Eelgrass-Blue-Carbon-Study.pdf>
https://pantheonstorage.blob.core.windows.net/environment/2022-San-Diego-Bay-Eelgrass-Blue-Carbon-Study_Key-Findings.pdf

Breakout Groups:

- We divided up into 5 breakout groups to discuss the questions: 1) Introduce yourself to the people in your breakout room, 2) What blue carbon initiatives are you working on that engage frontline communities, 3) What are your learning priorities for the Blue Carbon Collaborative

- Groups appreciated the chance to get to know each other and hear about each other's work, and were looking forward to learning from the broad ranges of topics covered by the collaborative's quarterly meetings and the panelists for today's meeting.

Panel Presentations "Blue Carbon Solutions for Frontline Communities"

- **Daniel Coffee**, UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation, Project Manager
"Principles for Environmental Justice Investments"
 - National environmental justice strategy
 - Climate impacts are not equally distributed – global south facing more extreme impacts than global north
 - Vulnerability to extreme weather and extreme heat, ability of communities to cope with more acute and stronger climate conditions
 - Not conditions to rebuild after
 - Vulnerability and climate change inversely related – people most set-up to cope are those with the resources to do so, built on fossil fuel economies
 - Climate change exacerbates impacts those not responsible
 - Climate justice – investments that address those historical inequities
 - EJ screening tools – how to define who should be prioritized, how to identify those communities
 - Challenging to do
 - Provide overarching framework for policy makers to know where to invest
 - Cal EnviroScreen, other state tools, CEJST
 - Exacerbating effect between population and burden
 - Tools are not just the back end numbers – can go in and tease out indicators that are pertinent to a project
 - Relative tool – tool for figuring out highest priority, bad at measuring progress
 - Market pitfalls
 - Activists have deep skepticism over market based mechanisms
 - Concern that carbon pricing and market mechanisms can increase fossil fuel costs, not change the status on the ground
 - No incentive to move operations out of the area if the cost is going up everywhere
 - Existential problem of fraud and manipulation – can offsets be permanent? Are leakages happening? Will we shift from one area to another?
 - CA – Moving towards coupling economic investments w/ community co-investments
 - EJ-minded project
 - Robust community buy-in from the get go
 - CA – administration requires investments to document community engagement along the way
 - Tangible economic and environmental benefits – ecotourism for example
 - Impacts are concentrated locally
 - Deep evaluation – multi-year, deep

- **Emily Landis, The Nature Conservancy, Climate and Ocean Lead**
“High-quality blue carbon principles and guidance: a triple-benefit investment for people, nature, and climate”
 - Blue carbon ecosystems very unique, needed its own guidance (exist already for forest)
 - 70 organizations, lots of endorsements
 - Blue carbon adaptive management style – need to account for long term changes in ecosystems (climate, sea level rise, etc.) so need to have an adaptive management approach
 - Additionality and baselines – Cautious of paper parks – just because there’s an MPA, doesn’t mean the ecosystem is protected
 - Durability and risk of reversal – Understand how much may be lost and account for it
 - Mitigating risk of reversal – ridge to reef approach, if you are restoring mangroves, you also need to be restoring coral reefs. Not as simple as planting trees. Ensure that what you’re restoring is going to stay there.
 - **Local context in blue carbon ecosystems** – social and ecological component, not all things are going to be the same.
 - Conservation and restoration – very different projects
 - Accuracy and GHG accounting – need for accurate GHG accounting, justify that credits are actually carbon reductions
 - Principles of high quality blue carbon – cannot have bad credits going onto the market
 - Safeguard nature – conserve remaining in tact ecosystems, do no harm (care to not do afforestation)
 - Empower people – ensure inclusive participation, locally relevant gender integration, feedback and accountability mechanisms. Respect traditional land use and equitable benefit sharing.
 - Employ the best information, interventions, and carbon accounting practices – need to know the best thing to do in the place
 - operate locally and contextually, mobilize high integrity – use local social, ecological contexts, establish network local partners
 - Mobilize high integrity capital – When developers take funding, it is high integrity capital. Funding comes from companies that have high integrity targets. Ensure there is fair compensation.

- **Ben Scheelk, The Ocean Foundation, Program Officer**
“Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico mangrove and seagrass restoration projects in partnership w/ the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and the Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve”
 - Jobos Bay NERR, tropical, poorest area of the island
 - Smart small and experiment with practical elements, incredibly dynamic and no one size fits all
 - Lots of science and relationship building
 - Permitting – build a relationship with USACE and DNER to streamline permitting process

- Haven't broken ground yet, but are permitted and ready to go on one of the largest mangrove restoration project in Puerto Rico
 - Changes in hydrology due to human impacts; hydrology issues caused by road creating habitats that aren't productive
 - Project primarily focuses on hydrological function, but will do some mangrove planting as well – built a nursery with the reserve, partner w/ boy scouts and community members
 - Disturbed area surrounded by communities; used to provide co-benefits
 - One of the biggest challenges is having the institutional capacity to analyze cores and other scientific analyses
 - Using LiDAR to analyze canopy and do monitoring for carbon credits
- **Jill Bieri, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Coast Reserve, Director**
“Virginia Coast Reserve: World’s First SEAGRASS Blue Carbon Project. Why here? Why now?”
 - Largest successful seagrass restoration project in the world, nearly 10,000 acres and expanding
 - Co-benefits – scallops returning, fish, crab density increase
 - Long legacy of land conservation from TNC
 - More grass = better quality = more effective blue carbon sink
 - Important to have the right partners at the table – academic, Virginia DEQ,
 - Collaboration on a grand scale – many partners involved in this large scale project
 - Verified by VCS

Discussion

- How do you jumpstart a blue carbon project that benefits frontline communities?
 - Start by using a screening tool for site selection
 - Meeting w/ community stakeholders, conducting a site visit to get to know their needs. Start w/ patience – this process can take a while.
 - Pilot – start with smaller projects to build trust and facilitate permitting later on.
 - Be engaged with communities, build trust and let them know what's going on underwater. Some of these habitats don't have a lot of people that know about them or cross through. Let stakeholders know what's going on.
 - Cannot rush these projects – no way to fast track, long term commitment
- How do you balance the needs, values, and goals of the community with the priorities of investors, and ensure that investors don't take the project in a direction that does not have community support or fit their values?
 - Take the decision out of the hands of the investors by establishing a regulatory framework that sets a high bar.
 - For donors, it's a journey for them to understand what's happening. As we take money, be up front with what's going to happen and how long it's going to take.

- There's not enough high quality credits out there to meet the demand, so we're in a negotiating seat right now. We have the ability to do the due diligence.
- Philanthropy not necessarily seeking return on investment, broader leeway to design project for community needs. That relationship may not be the same for working with investors.
- Blue carbon habitats and coastal restoration/conservation projects can protect communities from coastal hazards related to sea level rise and flooding and improving water quality. What are some examples of ways communities were informed of these benefits? How do we ensure blue carbon projects are matched with the needs of communities?
 - Transparency – make the point that we're not doing restoration to take over the entire coastal bottom, not competition with stakeholders, how much of the project is going to market. Always at the table with them, always keeping them in conversation.
 - Carbon mitigation talking point doesn't fly with communities. Resources currently are not flowing to the community. Providing benefits that benefits local laborers, create jobs, do it in a flexible way (do things on a weekend, time off).
 - Carbon credits will be owned by DNER and cannot guarantee where that money will go, but we are pushing for it to be invested back in the reserve for educational opportunities. Inspire kids to get involved in this work.
 - Look to CA Transformative Climate Communities – tailor priorities and projects to the needs of communities
- VA Seagrass credit pursuing a stacked resilience credit – is this still happening?
 - Methodology launched by Verra for validation of credits that match with SDGs, this one for SDG13. When this was developed, eel grass did not work, but the tidal marshes do play a big role, protecting coastal communities.
- What was the process for working with DEQ?
 - Reached out to Coastal Policy Center at Williams and Mary to see if it was something the State could be engaged in
 - Needed to draft legislation that allows state to own/sell credits from sea grass beds
 - Worked out language with stakeholders – money/proceeds will be put back into monitoring and research, they did not want it to be put into restoration
 - DEQ owns and manages the credits

Next Steps

- Next Blue Carbon Collaborative meeting will take place on March 7th from 12-2pm with the topic “Blue Carbon and Opportunities in Habitat and Climate Planning”.