

Dead Wood Working Group Meeting Summary

Date: January 27, 2011

Attendees: Jim Robins, *Alnus* Ecological
Jonathan Ambrose, NMFS
Rick Macedo, DFG
Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB
Jim Burke, NCRWQCB
Dave Wright, Campbell Timberland Management
Bill Snyder, CAL FIRE
Tom Spittler, CGS
Carol Mandel, NRCS
Steve Smith, NRCS
Patty Madigan, MCRCD
Jennifer Carah, The Nature Conservancy
Jason Pelletier, The Nature Conservancy
Kathy Viatella, Sustainable Conservation
Erik Schmidt, Sustainable Conservation
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Discussion Items

This Dead Wood Working Group (DWWG) meeting focused on: (1) review of the state and federal permitting pathways summarized in the minutes from the meeting held on December 9, 2010, (2) review of NMFS Mendocino County coho watershed maps with THPs/landowners, (3) review and comment on a draft letter prepared by Jonathan Warmerdam for the DFG Director regarding an altered LSAA permit fee structure, (4) a PowerPoint presentation by Dave Wright on a large wood placement project on the Clark Fork of Ten Mile River, and (5) a briefing by NRCS staff on their Mendocino County Permit Coordination Program.

I. Additional Discussion of State and Federal Permit Pathways

Federal Permitting Pathways—Jon Ambrose stated that the existing NMFS Biological Opinion (BO) was produced by the Santa Rosa NMFS office (Mendocino County to San Luis Obispo County), but that the NMFS Arcata office has yet to finish their BO for Humboldt, Del Norte, and Siskiyou Counties (Klamath and Eel River basins). There was widespread agreement that Army Corps of Engineers input into our DWWG discussions is required to facilitate permitting of large wood placement projects. In particular, clarification is required from the Army Corps on what their Nationwide permit covers and what it does not cover. One possible goal of this group is to obtain an Army Corps Regional General Permit (RGP) for large wood placement projects, since use of the Nationwide permit is considered to be more restrictive. Jim Robins explained, however, that individual Army Corps permits can be renewed, while a RGP cannot. Also, if a RGP is issued, a government agency must hold the permit. Bill Snyder asked whether CAL FIRE could be the permit sponsor, since CAL FIRE already monitors

Timber Harvesting Plans (THPs) for proper Forest Practice Rule and mitigation measure implementation and limited short-term effectiveness.

Action Item: Contact an Army Corps representative and attempt to have a representative attend the next DWWG meeting in Santa Rosa to clarify the permitting opportunities available. Jonathan Warmerdam will take the lead on this task.

Action Item: Include on the agenda for the next DWWG meeting a detailed discussion of permit sponsorship by an agency such as CAL FIRE.

State Permitting Pathways—Rick Macedo stated that with DFG grant funding (i.e., use of the Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP)), there are very few permitting problems. The permitting issue for the DWWG is how to produce a streamlined permitting process without a DFG grant. Without a FRGP project, CESA (take permit) and CEQA, through the Section 1600 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA) process, must be addressed. The easiest permitting solution is to use the Categorical Exemption (CAT EX) for projects up to 5 acres, but many large wood placement projects are proposed for more than 5 acres.¹ Mr. Macedo agreed that using the THP or PTEIR/PTHP as the CEQA disclosure vehicle could simplify the process. Bill Snyder informed the group that the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF) has the authority to set up its own broad restoration project, but a federal nexus would be needed, such as an existing NMFS BO.

Action Item: Bill Snyder will lead a DWWG Programmatic Level Subcommittee to explore how existing agency authorities line up with federal and state permitting requirements. Additional volunteers for this subcommittee are: Jonathan Warmerdam, Steve Smith, Rick Macedo, Jason Pelletier, and Kathy Viatella. Bill Snyder suggested that George Gentry, BOF Executive Officer, also be contacted.

Jim Robins and Tom Spittler reminded the DWWG that there was discussion at the last meeting regarding the possible development of a “**DFG micro-grant**” process for large wood placement projects that could build on the existing FRGP permits being used, allowing the process to be “fast tracked.” Funding would be minimal (e.g., \$1-5K), allowing limited DFG funds to be greatly expanded for many projects. There was general agreement that this is a good idea that should be rigorously pursued, but a federal nexus to a NMFS BO would still be required. Patty Madigan stated that possible obstacles for a mini-grant process include: (1) a fee schedule, (2) effectiveness monitoring, (3) QA/QC, and (4) covering the cost of administering the program. Rick Macedo offered that requiring mini-grant projects to follow guidelines in the California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual (possibly using a simple checklist) should address most of these concerns.

¹ Rick Macedo defined the “area of disturbance” as the area of the log in the channel, the area the tree previously occupied on the hillslope, and potentially areas along the log’s transport route if significant disturbance to the ground and/or vegetation results. Generally, this has been found to be approximately 0.5 acres per site—meaning that 10 sites account for the 5 acre limit.

Action Item: *Jim Robins will lead a DWWG DFG Mini-Grant Subcommittee to pursue and further develop the mini-grant concept. Additional volunteers for this subcommittee are: Carol Mandel, Steve Smith, Patty Madigan, Jon Ambrose, Jennifer Carah, Jason Pelletier, and Kathy Viatella. Rick Macedo suggested contacting either Doug Albin (DFG), Scott Downie (DFG), or Gail Seymour (DFG) for their assistance with this task.*

II. Review of NMFS Mendocino County Coho Watershed Maps

Jon Ambrose presented and discussed two large GIS maps that the NMFS Santa Rosa Office produced on Central California Coast (CCC) coho salmon in Mendocino County. These maps are titled: (1) "Mendocino County Major Landowners within the CCC Coho Salmon Core Areas" (see Figure 1 at the end of this meeting summary), and (2) "Mendocino County THPs and NTMPs within the CCC Coho Salmon Core Areas, Landowners and Acreage 1997-2010" (see Figure 2). Mr. Ambrose stated that NMFS would like landowners to focus large wood placement projects within the Core Areas identified in NMFS's 2010 CCC Coho Salmon Recovery Plan that currently have coho present. Coho in this ESU are primarily found on private timberlands and we need better public outreach to the landowners regarding habitat improvement work. In particular, there is a significant overlap between the Core Areas and large timberland landowners in Mendocino County. Bill Snyder proposed that it would be reasonable to expect that the landowners who have undertaken extensive harvesting in these watersheds during the past 14 years would have interest in large wood placement projects.

III. Review of the Draft Letter Prepared for the DFG Director

Jonathan Warmerdam led a discussion on the draft letter he authored for the DFG Director regarding a request for a new fee schedule for DFG Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA) permitting associated with small habitat restoration projects. The goal is to modify the current process and fee structure to help promote large wood augmentation projects to rapidly benefit state and federally listed anadromous salmonids. Jonathan stated that he had received suggested minor changes from several DWWG participants that he would be incorporating into a new version of the letter. Jim Robins added that he participated in an integrated resource management summit in October 2010 that had support from the then Natural Resources Secretary Lester Snow and others in developing a permit process for DFG, the Coastal Commission, and others that would parallel the SWRCB's Notice Intent process for projects covered under the CEQA small habitat restoration CAT EX. This is a parallel process to what is called for in Mr. Warmerdam's letter. There was discussion regarding expanding the scope of the letter to include a broad suite of habitat restoration measures, but the consensus was that the letter should remain focused on large wood augmentation projects, with the concept included that it could be expanded to other related types of projects. It was agreed that a separate letter of support from NGOs would be appropriate.

Action Items: *The signature block of the letter should be at the department director level if possible and that all the department logos should be placed at the top of the letter. DWWG participants are to send Mr. Warmerdam their department logos. Jim Robins will contact Coastal Conservancy representatives and Bill Snyder will contact Department of Parks and Recreation staff for their possible inclusion. Bill Snyder suggested sending the letter to the current director of DFG (John McCamman). Jonathan Warmerdam will circulate a revised letter shortly.*

IV. Presentation by Dave Wright on a Large Wood Placement Project

Dave Wright provided the DWWG with a PowerPoint presentation showing photos of a DFG grant project for large wood placement that he completed on the Clark Fork of the Ten Mile River in western Mendocino County. This project entailed falling 120 foot tall coast redwood trees into the channel without anchoring, engineering, or heavy equipment. Bankfull (BF) channel width is 70-90 feet, so tree length was approximately 1.5 times BF width, less than the 2 times BF width generally suggested for tree length to keep wood in place. The concept for this project was to “seed” the channel with large wood for rapid habitat improvement, without the expectation that all the felled logs would remain stationary over time. The Clark Fork had large wood removed during the 1980’s and currently has unsorted stream gravels, embedded cobbles, and in general, a uniform “bowling alley” appearance.

Approximately one mile of channel was defined as the project area, with 10 large wood placement sites (9 were implemented). Trees were felled from significant redwood clumps without significant sacrifice of overstory canopy cover. Willits logger Ken Smith felled the trees in August 2010 by. The 10 sites were subjected to numerous runoff events during the fall and early winter of 2009-2010, with the largest having a recurrence interval of roughly two years. Photos in the PowerPoint showed sites prior to tree felling, immediately after felling, and in mid-January 2011. Mr. Wright stated that he found that felling large red alder trees with the coast redwoods cushioned the conifers and significantly reduced their breakage. Additionally, the alders acted as reinforcement for the redwoods, helping them to remain in place. The cost was low, estimated to be only approximately \$300 per structure, which is an order of magnitude or more lower than that required for engineered structures. It was recognized that this is only “one tool in the toolbox” for habitat restoration, and likely would not be appropriate in areas with high risk road-crossing structures downstream due to the large likelihood of log movement.

After the first half of the first over-wintering period, the photos documented large scour holes (4-8 ft. deep) that had developed around the felled logs (usually 3-4 logs cut per site, felling into anchor points were possible). Gravel sorting was observed, producing areas with relatively clean gravel for salmon spawning. Several of the logs moved downstream, but collected at other sites with felled trees. Mr. Wright stated that no juvenile fish monitoring or detailed habitat survey work is planned for this project, since comprehensive monitoring is being conducted for similar projects elsewhere on Campbell Timberland Management watersheds. Jennifer Carah informed the group that many of the logs moved associated with a large wood placement project in the

Inman Creek subwatershed of the Garcia River, but 90% stayed within the treatment area. She stated that habitat typing and tagged wood survey work for the Inman Creek project required two days of field work prior to project implementation and two days after an overwintering period.

V. NRCS Briefing on the Mendocino County Permit Coordination Program

Carol Mandel explained that with the Mendocino County Permit Coordination Program, NRCS has a Section 7 incidental take permit, but no streamlined DFG 1600 permit process yet. Similarly, they do not have the RWQCB permit or CEQA process covered to date, but they are actively working to have all the required permits covered for habitat restoration projects. A “comprehensive permitting process” is anticipated to be completed in approximately four years for all of Mendocino County except the coastal zone.

Carol stated that the existing NRCS Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) program may be able to be used to facilitate large wood placement projects—bringing in broader grant funding for this type of work. The CCPI is a voluntary conservation initiative that enables the use of certain conservation programs along with eligible partners to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forest lands. The deadline this year for applications is March 1, 2011. Examples of conservation programs available include the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). Applicants must be able to demonstrate active timber management. Interested landowners should speak to NRCS staff in the Ukiah field office. Bill Snyder stated that any of the agencies represented in the DWWG could be sponsors for next years CCPI.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for mid to late March. Pete Cafferata agreed to email a “Doodle” meeting date query via email to pick an exact date. An update on the Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) large wood placement project will be an agenda item (CGS is currently surveying potential sites that were identified in November 2010; CAL FIRE staff developed a draft MOU with the NOAA SWFSC—progress on these topics will be discussed).

Action Item: Add Greg Giusti, UC Cooperative Extension, to the Dead Wood Working Group email list. Pete Cafferata completed this task.

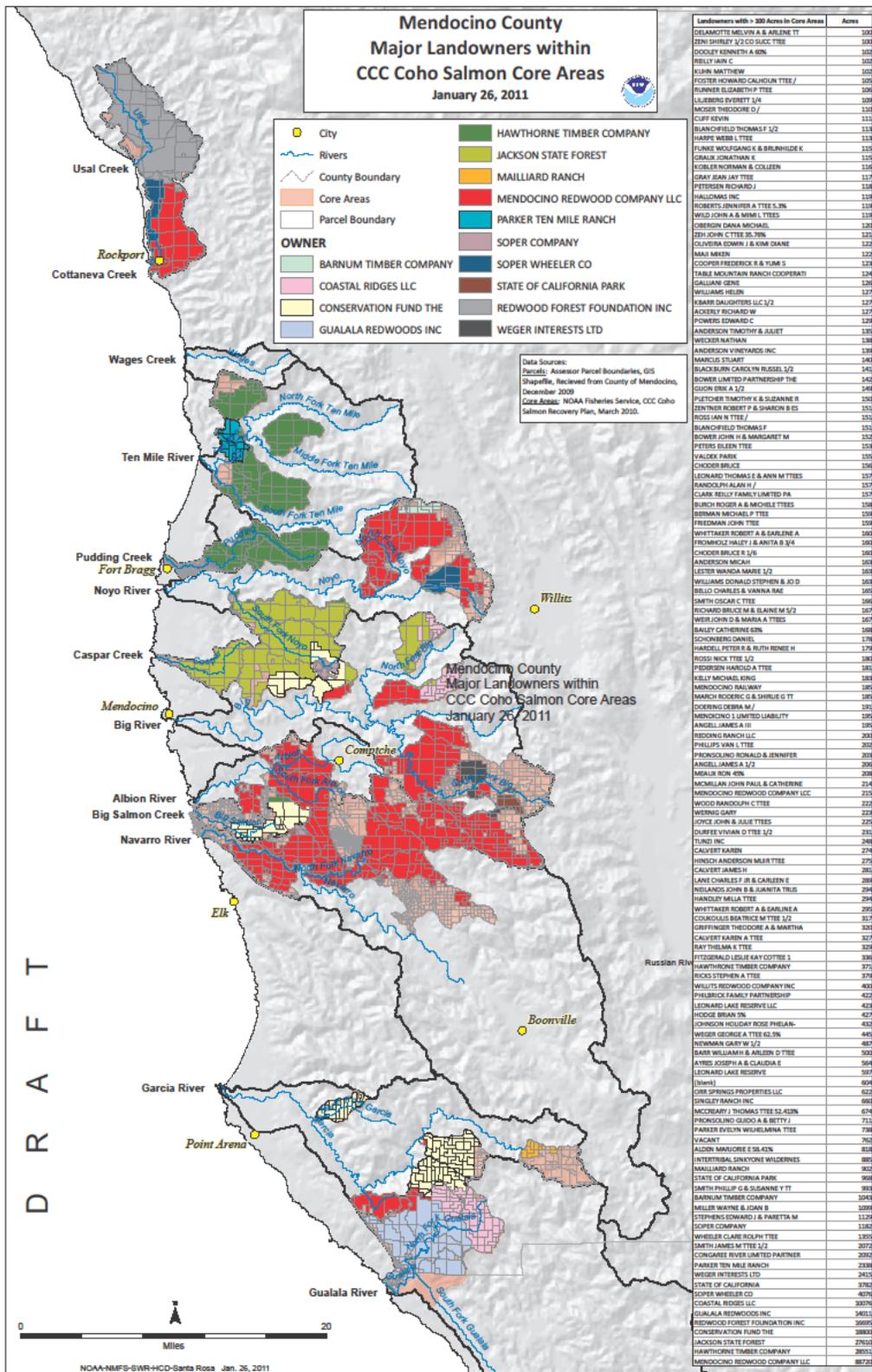


Figure 1. Mendocino County Major Landowners within the CCC Coho Salmon Core Areas (map produced by NMFS Santa Rosa).

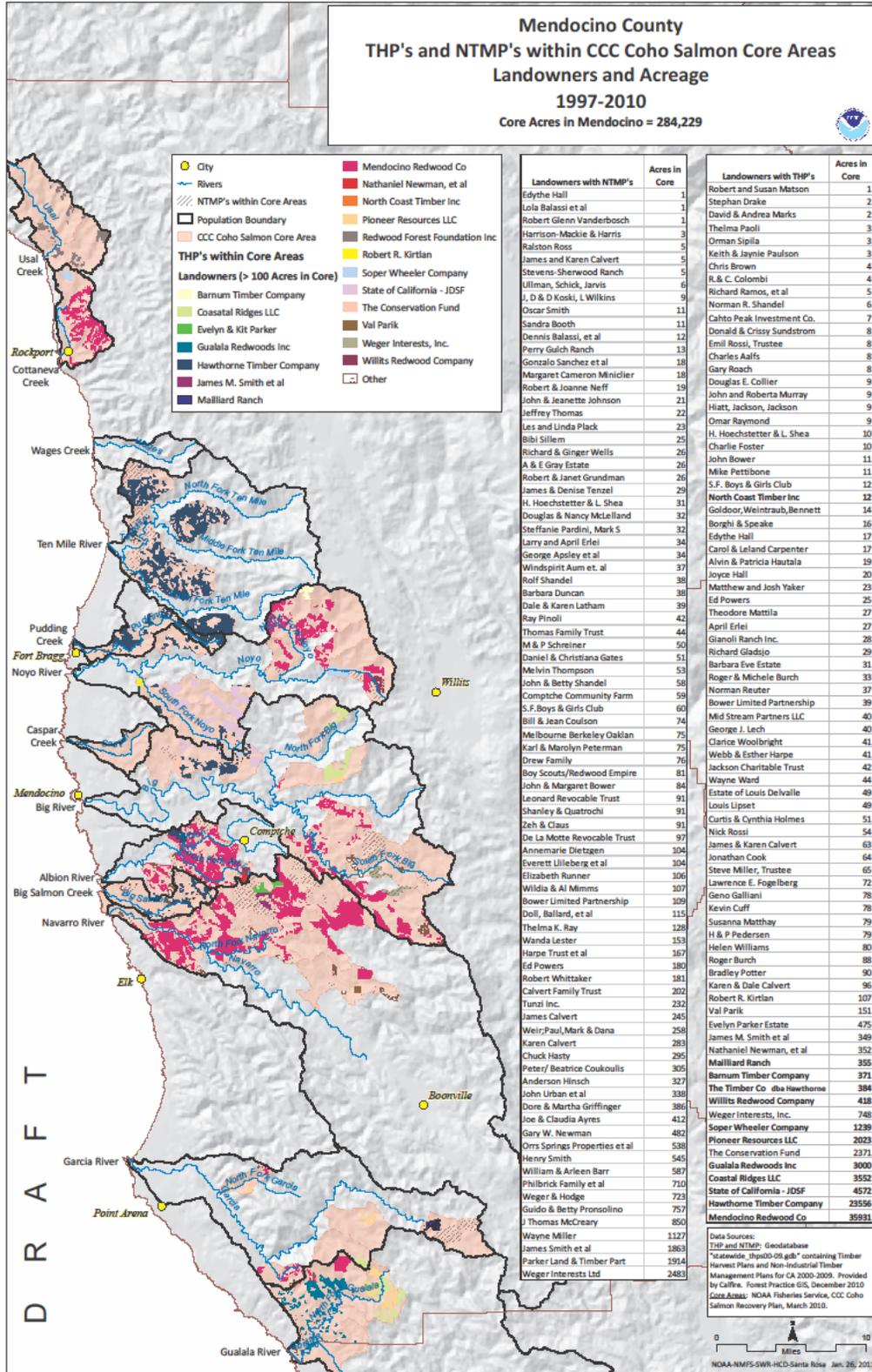


Figure 2. Mendocino County THPs and NTMPs within the CCC Coho Salmon Core Areas, Landowners and Acreage 1997-2010 (map produced by NMFS Santa Rosa).