

Wood for Salmon Workgroup Meeting Summary

Date: February 21, 2014
Location: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Rosa, CA

Attendees: Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB
Jonathan Ambrose, NMFS
Dave Wright, CTM
Erik Schmidt, SusCon
Katie Haldeman, SusCon
Kathie Lowrey, Prunuske Chatham, Inc.
Rick Macedo, DFW
Mary Olswang, DFW
Scott Harris, DFW
Steve Reynolds, CGS
Cheryl Hayhurst, CGS
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Participating by Conference Line:

Patty Madigan, MCRCD
Dr. Stephen Swales, DFW
Jen Carah, TNC
Lance Salisbury, DFW
Anna Halligan, TU

Action items are shown in BOLD font

Agenda Items

This Wood for Salmon Workgroup (WFSW) meeting focused on the following topics: (1) wood and fisheries restoration announcements, (2) update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT) effort, (3) WFSW website update, (4) update on MCRCD large wood guidance document development, (5) update on DFW implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961, Coho HELP Act, (6) update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program, (7) update on the SWRCB General 401 Certification revision, (8) project size calculator and schematics update and discussion, (9), WFSW draft coordinated permit application form update, (10) lessons learned from the Campbell Timberland Management THP with large wood enhancement, (11) discussion and review of a new draft permitting matrix for large wood projects, and (12) WFSW outreach/ workshops discussion.

1. WFSW Meeting Announcements

- Rick Macedo announced that Scott Downie and Doug Albin of DFW have retired from state service. Bill Condon, DFW's State Coordinator for the Timberland Conservation Program, will participate in WFSW meetings as he is available.
- Erik Schmidt announced that Sustainable Conservation has sponsored AB 2193 (Gordon), the Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act, introduced to the Legislature on February 20, 2014 (see: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=ab_2193&sess=1314&house=A). This is a statewide bill that would provide a simplified DFW permit process for voluntary, small scale habitat restoration and erosion control projects, to benefit fish and wildlife species and water quality. It would allow for increased permitting efficiency for DFW, providing for DFW approval of habitat restoration or enhancement projects within 60 days that (1) are voluntary (not required mitigation), (2) is consistent with the CatEx requirements of Section 15333, (3) use methodologies in DFW approved guidance documents, and (4) comply with one or more of the following: adopted species recovery plan, fish passage guidelines, or DFW's Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual. **Opportunities for amendments to the bill are available; Erik suggested relaying comments to SusCon staff. Erik will circulate information on the bill to WFSW participants as it becomes available and further discussion on this bill will occur at the next WFSW meeting.**
- Mary Olswang stated that DFW staff require information on drought conditions for anadromous salmonid streams (following this meeting, a new interagency ad hoc drought team was established at the Coast Interagency Review Team Meeting held in Willits on February 26, 2014 that will be useful in this endeavor; contact Jim Burke, NCRWQCB, for additional information: jburke@waterboards.ca.gov).
- Jonathan Ambrose stated that NMFS staff will begin working on an updated version of the Biological Opinion (BO) for fisheries restoration projects within the CCC ESU for coho salmon in 2015 (the current BO expires in 2016). He is working with Joe Pecharich to evaluate all the projects that have utilized the BO since 2006 (approximately 65 projects over eight years) and determine which types received the most use. They will also determine if additional types of projects should be included under the revised BO and make necessary adjustments. **Jon stated that WFSW participants should provide NMFS staff with input on needed changes to improve the next version of the BO.**
- A brief overview of current fisheries conditions were provided by three WFSW participants:
 - Dave Wright stated that (1) only 2 coho had been counted in Pudding Creek in western Mendocino County; (2) fish were starting to appear in the Ten Mile River watershed; (3) fish numbers were reasonable in the Noyo River basin, with over 200 counted at the egg collecting station on the South Fork; (4)

coho were observed spawning in the Garcia River watershed at an unknown location; and (5) steelhead were observed in the Usal Creek watershed.

- Scott Harris stated that 168 Chinook salmon and 400 steelhead had been counted at Van Arsdale Dam on the Eel River. Coho have been observed in West Chamberlain Creek on Jackson Demonstration State Forest (a tributary of Big River). Several Outlet Creek tributaries near Willits, including Baechtel Creek, were observed to have both coho and steelhead recently.
- Jon Ambrose stated that south of the Golden Gate, steelhead have come into the San Lorenzo River watershed with the February storm events, spawning low in the drainage. No coho have been observed in Scotts Creek or San Vicente Creek near Davenport. Similarly, no steelhead have been observed spawning in the Soquel Creek watershed.

2. Update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT) effort

Dr. Stephen Swales provided the PACT update. PACT is a joint effort between NMFS and DFW that is attempting to identify new and available resources to expedite immediate actions to prevent extinction of coho salmon within the CCC coho salmon ESU. Formed in early 2011, the PACT consists of Management and Coordination Groups who oversee the program, and six technical working groups (Education and Outreach; Funding; Habitat Restoration and Protection; Water Quality, Flow, and Conservation; Regulations and Permitting; and Fish Rescue and Captive Rearing). The technical working groups supplied draft recommendations to the Coordination Group in 2012.

Stephen stated that the Management Group met during the week of February 10th and approved the working groups' recommendations. A meeting with members of the Coordination Group and co-leads of the six technical working groups will be held on April 2nd to begin implementation of the recommendations. Significant actions are expected to take place on the ground during the summer of 2014.

3. Wood for Salmon Workgroup Website Update

Jonathan Warmerdam stated that the WFSW website, hosted by the Nature Conservancy through the efforts of Jen Carah, is an important depository for WFSW achievements (see: http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/california/salmon/Pages/wfs_resources.aspx). It currently has Jen Carah's permit guidance white paper, Jon Ambrose's permitting flowchart, Jonathan Warmerdam's visual guidance tool and project size calculator, past presentations, a large wood loading video, and several references. **Jonathan suggested adding pdf versions of the notes from the past 18 meetings (including two subcommittee meetings) to the website. Jen Carah stated that this was possible and Pete Cafferata agreed to send the meeting notes to Jen to post on the website.**

4. Update on the MCRC D Large Wood Guidance Document

Patty Madigan stated that remaining funds from the large wood contract with CAL FIRE are being used for two education activities related to large wood stream habitat improvement projects: (1) a short guidebook illustrating the “accelerated recruitment” approach, and (2) the large wood field workshops held in October 2013. Patty stated that she has discussed the wood guidebook project with Kathie Lowrey and a draft document outline has been produced (provided as a handout). **Comments on the draft outline are welcome. Kevin Shaffer, DFW, has volunteered to write a “big picture” overview for the introduction. A scope of work and budget for the guidebook are still required. Upon completion, hard copies will be produced, as well as a pdf version to post on websites.**

Steve Reynolds stated that he is currently working on a parallel project, requested by Dr. Helge Eng, CAL FIRE’s Assistant Deputy Director for Resource Protection and Improvement, following Steve’s design of the Soquel Demonstration State Forest large wood enhancement project. This document will be either a California Forestry Note or Report, depending on its length. There was discussion regarding who the audiences are for these two documents, and the need to avoid overlap. It is envisioned that one of the documents will be an appendix to the DFW Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual. **Pete Cafferata agreed to schedule a conference call to discuss how to proceed with both these documents; participants are to include Kathie Lowrey, Steve Reynolds, Patty Madigan, and Jonathan Warmerdam.**

5. Update on DFW’s Implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961, Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act (Coho HELP Act)

Mary Olswang informed the WFSW that DFW’s AB 1961 program has received three applications to date, including two projects in Siskiyou County and one in Mendocino County. The two Siskiyou County RCD applications aim to improve habitat conditions for coho with bioengineered streambank stabilization (Scott River Bank Stabilization) and culvert removal (Shasta River-Parks Creek Culvert Removal). The Mendocino County application was submitted by Trout Unlimited for the South Fork Garcia River and involves placement of large wood using the “accelerated recruitment method.” All three applications have been approved by DFW. The Scott River Bank Stabilization project has been built, and the Shasta River-Parks Creek Culvert Removal and South Fork Garcia River Large Wood projects will be implemented this summer.

The Yurok Tribe will be submitting a new project request under the Coho HELP Act for a wood enhancement project located on Waukall Creek, a tributary located in the lower Klamath River basin. An additional project proposal to address streambank erosion with a bioengineering approach in the Trinity River watershed is also expected.

Mary stated that she produced an example of a completed Coho HELP Act application, but she did not post the document, preferring to wait until she has a more complete suite of applications, allowing several different types of examples to be produced. The revised

instructions for Coho HELP Act applications, as well as additional information are posted on the following website: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/Coho/HELP/>. She stated that the “engineering checklist” available on the website should be used for culvert replacement and bank stability projects, but large wood projects will usually not need engineering approval from DFW’s Marjorie Caisley and Mark Smelser. No Coho HELP Act workshops have been scheduled at this time.

Erik Schmidt stated that SusCon staff is willing to help DFW staff with approaches that will allow the HELP Act to be used more in the near future. Suggestions for increasing the use of the Act should be emailed to Mary at:

mary.olswang@wildlife.ca.gov. Rick Macedo stated that the main reasons people are not using the HELP Act to a large extent are the fact that project implementation must be paid for by the project proponent (i.e., these are self-funded projects, not grants), and there are a few requirements to negotiate.

6. Update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program

The MCRCD Permit Coordination Program’s CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) document covers nine types of common small habitat improvement projects: (1) access roads, (2) critical area planting, (3) stream habitat improvement and management, (4) grade stabilization structure, (5) road/landing removal, (6) stream bank protection, (7) stream channel vegetation, (8) structure for water control, and (9) restoration and management of declining habitats (a brief description is provided at: <http://mcrcd.org/>).

Jonathan Warmerdam stated that the NCRWQCB approved Order No. R1-2013-0059, General 401 Water Quality Certification, Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements, and Monitoring and Reporting Program for the Mendocino County Permit Coordination Program on November 20, 2013. The order is posted at the following website: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_decisions/adopted_orders/pdf/2013/131120_0059_MendocinoCounty_MRP.pdf. It relies heavily on the other components of the RCD permit coordination program already in place. This approach will help applicants by reducing the paperwork needed for filing. **To date, the DFW 1600 agreement and USACE 404 permit components have yet to be incorporated in the RCD permit coordination program.** Patty Madigan stated that she will be speaking at the California Licensed Foresters Association (CLFA) annual meeting on March 7th, titled “Landowner Assistance Programs” in Sacramento, on the MCRCD Permit Coordination Program.

7. Update on SWRCB General 401 Certification Revision for Small Habitat Restoration Projects

Jonathan Warmerdam stated that revision of the SWRCB General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects (SHRP), which expired in August 2012, remains underway. The expired General 401 Certification was extended with minor modifications, and is available for use for small habitat restoration projects until the new permit is complete. Mr. Warmerdam continues to work with SWRCB staff to develop the final permit. Project size limitations are expected to remain the same as with the interim permit (i.e.,

500 linear foot and 5 acres). **Kathie Lowrey stated that the USACE has some flexibility in utilizing the 500 foot limitation with their Nationwide Permit 13, and she suggested that the revised General 401 Certification should be similarly worded. Jonathan Warmerdam informed the group that he will suggest to the State Board for their consideration, inclusion of the same exception to the 500 foot length limitation, when approved by the USACE, for the final revision to the General 401 Certification.**

8. Project Size Calculator and Schematics Update and Discussion

DFW staff who oversee the Coho HELP Act were asked if they endorsed the use of the *Calculator for Determining Project Disturbance Area* developed by Jonathan Warmerdam and the WFSW.¹ Mary Olswang circulated it to DFW staff and they provided a detailed letter dated February 14, 2014, documenting their concerns about the project size calculator to Mr. Warmerdam. He stated that he has slightly modified the calculator in an attempt to generate a version that both the NCRWQCB and DFW can endorse. For example, a “channel zone equipment disturbance calculation” section has been added to the spreadsheet to quantify the use of heavy equipment in the channel zone area. Jonathan stated that he addressed most of the DFW comments in the new version of the calculator, which he distributed to the group.

Mary Olswang stated that she had not reviewed the new version yet, but she still had concerns that the project could be larger than that allowed under the 500 linear feet and 5 acre limitations. The DFW letter indicated that areas of channel modification, resulting from large wood enhancement, are not adequately accounted for (e.g., hydraulic changes producing channel scour). Rick Macedo, Steve Reynolds, and Jonathan Warmerdam all commented that this is not necessary or appropriate, as including post-project changes into the measured impact area is not generally required for other projects and would be difficult to accurately measure. In addition, these projects are generally considered low-risk, and the anticipated changes are beneficial and the reason why large wood is introduced to the channel. Jonathan stated that he is willing to incorporate changes to the calculator that are practical and are not an impediment for people wanting to develop a restoration project. **Mary Olswang, Rick Macedo, Lance Salisbury, and Jonathan Warmerdam agreed to discuss further revision of the calculator as a group, prior to emailing a new version to the WFSF. Additional comments on the revised calculator are welcome and should be sent to Jonathan at: jwarmerdam@waterboards.ca.gov.**

9. WFSW Draft Coordinated Permit Application Form Update

Jonathan Warmerdam informed the group that the draft coordinate permit application form developed by the WFSW continues to be stalled. The intent is to produce a single application form addressing requirements from the NCRWQCB, DFW, and NMFS (with

¹ The *Visual Guidance for Calculating Discharge Area for Large Wood Augmentation Projects* and *Calculator for Determining Project Disturbance Area* are posted on the WFSW webpage at the following address: http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/california/salmon/Pages/wfs_resources.aspx

possible addition of USACE 404 permit requirements later). This effort has been on hold while the SWRCB General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects has been undergoing revision. Jonathan and Mary Olswang are discussing whether there is an opportunity to use the Coho HELP Act to develop a coordinated permit application. It appears that this may have the greatest chance of success, at least in the short term.

10. Lessons Learned from the CTM THP with Large Wood Enhancement

Pete Cafferata provided a handout with a summary of the steps Campbell Timberland Management has undertaken to incorporate a large wood enhancement component to THP 1-13-031 MEN, located in the Mill and Smith Creek drainages, part of the Ten Mile River watershed in western Mendocino County.² A field pre-consultation meeting was held on April 4, 2013, with THP submittal to CAL FIRE occurring on April 17th. The Pre-Harvest Inspection was held on May 30-31, 2013, resulting in five agency recommendations. Second review for the plan occurred on August 14th, with THP approval on December 10th. CTM stipulated that they would include a Consistency Determination (CD) regarding incidental take from DFW in the plan prior to approval, and the CD was approved on December 9th.

Key lessons learned include: (1) we need a speedier process (April to December is too long), (2) we need a process that is less costly to the landowner, and (3) we need regulators (plan Review Team personnel) to better communicate with restoration personnel and coordinate their plan review efforts for these types of proposals. Bill Snyder, prior to his retirement from CAL FIRE, coordinated a conference call on December 16th with DFW and NCRWQCB staff to work towards achieving these goals. Dave Wright added that (1) all agency staff need to be working towards the same goals when reviewing plans with restoration components (i.e., we need a consistent message), and (2) detailed monitoring projects cannot be undertaken for all THP-related large wood proposals. Ideas to further this cause included: (1) increased education and training for Review Team staff, including review of the VTAC guidance document for site-specific riparian management (http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/board_committees/vtac/vtac_guidance_document/vtac_guidanicedocument_dec21-2012_final.pdf); and (2) better coordination with THP timber review staff. **Rick Macedo agreed to discuss putting this topic on the agenda for the DFW Statewide Timberland Conservation Program to be held in April at Blodgett Research Forest with Bill Condon and Joe Croteau.**

Rick Macedo stated that benefits for conducting wood projects as part of a THP include larger projects (i.e., not limited to the 5 acre and 500 foot size limitations), and improved project disclosure, enhanced public review opportunities, and more robust CEQA coverage. Jonathan Warmerdam added that this was the first THP with wood enhancement and agency review team personnel were cautious due to unfamiliarity with

² Detailed information on the large wood enhancement site-specific proposal can be found on pages 445-482 of Section 5 of the THP at: ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/THPs2013/1-13-031MEN/20131210_1-13-031MEN_Sec5_App.pdf. CTM's aquatic habitat assessment for the THP is found on pages 483-603.

the concept and process. These types of concerns should decrease with time and education/training.

11. Review of a New Draft Permitting Matrix for Large Wood Projects

Jonathan Warmerdam provided the WFSW with a draft permitting matrix for restoration projects that he produced. This document was suggested during the December 16th conference call described above. The 11x17 inch spreadsheet includes the following restoration pathways: (1) individual permitting, (2) DFW FRGP, (3) Coho HELP Act, (4) CA Forest Practice Rules, Sec. 916.9(v), and (5) Mendocino Co. RCD Permit Coordination Program. **Jonathan requested help from WFSW participants to improve the matrix; send comments to him at: jwarmerdam@waterboards.ca.gov. Several initial suggestions were provided during the meeting, but more detailed agency review is required. To facilitate this, the draft matrix will be attached to the email message with these draft meeting notes. The matrix will be posted on the WFSW webpage when it is completed.**

12. WFSW Outreach and Workshops Discussion

The group agreed to wait until after the next WFSW meeting to work on planning outreach and workshops for improved understanding of the permitting process for restoration projects. It is likely that workshops like the one held in Ukiah approximately three years ago can be scheduled when greater clarity and resolution have been achieved on several of the topics discussed above.

Next WFSW Meeting Date

Pete Cafferata agreed to send out a Doodle poll for the next WFSW meeting to be held in late April-early May 2014.