

Wood for Salmon Working Group Meeting Summary

Date: May 20, 2014
Location: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Rosa, CA

Attendees: Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB
Dave Wright, CGI
Steve Reynolds, CGS
Cheryl Hayhurst, CGS
Bill Condon, DFW
Elliot Chasin, DFW
Brad Valentine, DFW
Rick Macedo, DFW
Francesca Innocenti, Sonoma RCD
Dr. Jeanette Howard, TNC
Sally Liu, TNC
Dr. Neil Lassetre, SCWA
Bill Snyder, CAL FIRE (retired)
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Participating by Conference Line:

Mary Olswang, DFW
Anna Halligan, TU
Erika Lovejoy, SusCon
Erik Schmidt, SusCon
Lisa Bolton, TU

Action items are shown in BOLD font

Agenda Items

This Wood for Salmon Working Group (WFSWG) meeting focused on the following topics: (1) wood and fisheries restoration announcements; (2) WFSWG website update and draft mission statement discussion; (3) discussion and review of the updated version of the updated restoration permitting matrix for large wood projects; (4) update on DFW implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961, Coho HELP Act; (5) update on the status of AB 2193 (Gordon) Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act; (6) discussion regarding use of Cat Ex 15333 for wood projects; (7) presentation on the draft version of "California Coho Salmon Restoration: A Decade in Review"; (8) presentation on the California Salmon Snapshots website; and (9) a very brief update on the WFSWG project size calculator/schematics document.

1. WFSWG Meeting Announcements

- Jonathan Warmerdam announced that the next North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board meeting to be held on June 19th in Santa Rosa will include an agenda item on the WFSWG. Jonathan Ambrose, NMFS, will provide information and all WFSWG participants are invited to attend (see: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/06_2014/)
- Jonathan Warmerdam announced for Jonathan Ambrose that NMFS's Multi-Species Recovery Plan is being circulated to the resource agencies for review (it is not a public review draft at this time).
- Neil Lassetre announced that he presented a paper at the California Society for Ecological Restoration (SERCAL) conference held in Santa Rosa on May 14-15, 2014, titled "Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement: Linking Habitat Conditions to Salmonid Ecology." His co-authors were David Manning, Gregg Horton, and Robert Coey (see: <http://www.sercal.org/images/SERCAL2014sessionabs.pdf>). Steve Reynolds and Cheryl Hayhurst announced that they presented a paper at the SERCAL conference titled "Design and Construction of Large Woody Debris Habitat Enhancements" based on the wood project implemented at Soquel Demonstration State Forest. Additionally, Cheryl presented a poster on the same topic.
- Jonathan Warmerdam provided a brief summary of a meeting called by Assemblymen Chesbro and Huffman in Marin County on May 15th to cover (1) actions taken by the agencies to address the drought, and (2) progress made on implementation of the Coho HELP Act. Anna Halligan stated that while no specific action items resulted from this meeting, the main take home message was for DFW to attempt to increase the number of Coho HELP Act projects through increased outreach efforts.

2. Wood for Salmon Working Group Website Update/Mission Statement Discussion

The WFSWG website, hosted by The Nature Conservancy through the efforts of Jen Carah, is an important depository for WFSWG 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, Jonathan Ambrose's permitting flowchart, Jonathan Warmerdam's visual guidance tool and project size calculator, past PPT presentations, a large wood loading video, past meeting notes, and several references.

Jonathan Warmerdam and Pete Cafferata developed the following draft WFSWG mission statement for inclusion on the webpage that was circulated to the group prior to the meeting:

The Wood for Salmon Working Group is working to promote recovery actions described in state and federal recovery plans for improved habitat for listed anadromous salmonids by

accelerating the pace and scale of instream restoration projects, especially large wood enhancement projects. This will be accomplished by (1) understanding the state and federal permitting process for restoration projects, (2) targeting regulatory impediments and improving regulatory efficiencies, (3) creating new restoration permitting pathways, (4) developing educational resources and tools, (5) assessing public funding for large woody material restoration projects, and (6) conducting outreach and education to landowners, restoration practitioners, and permitting agencies.

After reading and discussing this “strawman” draft, the following suggestions were made for improvement: (1) the draft statement is missing the main original WFSWG goal, which was to consolidate the required permits needed for wood placement outside of FRGP, and the goal of increasing voluntary funding for wood projects (Bill Snyder), (2) a main goal of the group should be to disseminate lessons learned to wood practitioners (Dave Wright), (3) add adaptive management as a goal and strike “targeting regulatory impediments” (Brad Valentine), and (4) keep the mission statement very short; list items 1-6 as bullet points and call them objectives rather than goals (Bill Condon). **Jonathan Warmerdam and Pete Cafferata agreed to develop a revised mission statement and post the final version on the WFSWG website.**

3. Review of an Updated Version of the Draft Restoration Permitting Matrix for Large Wood Projects

Jonathan Warmerdam stated that the genesis of the restoration permitting matrix was an analysis generated for the NCRWQCB regarding the Mendocino County Permit Coordination Program, documenting what is and is not gained with this approach. It was also suggested during an agency conference call held on December 16, 2013 to address agency review of wood projects included as part of THPs.

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 County RCD Permit Coordination Program. Spreadsheet columns include permits/authorization required, fees, monitoring/reporting requirements, project size limits, CEQA coverage, project types, spatial use, and additional information.

Jonathan modified the original version provided in February based on input received from NMFS, DFW, SusCon, and CAL FIRE staff. He stated that the spreadsheet is an educational tool providing a checklist of items to consider for restoration projects. Dave Wright, Bill Snyder, and Brad Valentine stated that the Section 916.9 (v) component of the matrix has benefited for the lessons learned from Campbell Global’s Mill-Smith THP, which includes a large wood project to be implemented this summer (e.g., improved efficiencies in the process are required, as well as the need for early and open pre-consultation). **The restoration matrix continues to require input from the USACE and USFWS; no input has yet been received from the Corps’ Dominic McCormack.** Rick Macedo stated that it is important for project proponents to understand that normal CEQA project size limitations (i.e., 5 ac and 500 linear ft) do not apply when the wood project is approved as part of Section V under the CA Forest Practice Rules. Minor corrections for DFW fee requirements for the Coho HELP Act were provided by Bill Condon. **Additional**

suggestions for needed improvements should be sent to Jonathan Warmerdam at: Jonathan.Warmerdam@waterboards.ca.gov. The matrix will be posted on the WFSWG webpage when it is completed.

4. 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 WFSWG that one Coho HELP Act program project was implemented on the ground in 2013. The Scott River Bank Stabilization Project located in Siskiyou County utilized wood and rock stabilization and fish use was documented shortly after project completion. Three additional projects have been approved by DFW. Two were approved last year but will be implemented on the ground this year: (1) a project submitted by Trout Unlimited for the South Fork Garcia River that involves placement of large wood using the "accelerated recruitment method," and (2) the Shasta River–Parks Creek culvert removal project in Siskiyou County. The Yurok Tribe's project for a wood enhancement project located on Waukall Creek, a tributary located in the lower Klamath River basin, has also been approved. An additional project proposal for French Creek in Siskiyou County has been put on hold by the project proponent.

Mary stated that DFW staff had expected more projects to be submitted in the first half of 2014. While some time remains, newly submitted projects will be pushing the window for project implementation this year. **Mary added that she encourages project proponents to call her and discuss ideas for projects. She also requested input for a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) webpage addition.** The 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/>. An "engineering checklist" is also available on the website and should be used for culvert replacement and bank stability projects. **No Coho HELP Act workshops have been scheduled at this time, but there was discussion that it may be appropriate to combine Coho HELP Act information with more general outreach efforts to landowners, including information on appropriate monitoring approaches.**

Dave Wright announced that Campbell Global, along with Trout Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy, will be submitting a Coho HELP Act project application this year for excavation of eight large conifer trees along SF Ten Mile River, utilizing methods used at Soquel Demonstration State Forest in 2012 and 2013. Implementation is expected to occur in 2015. Sally Liu stated that it is likely that at least a couple of additional Coho HELP Act projects will be submitted this year.

5. Update on the status of AB 2193 (Gordon), Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act

Erika Lovejoy provided an update on the status of AB 2193 (Gordon), Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act. Sustainable Conservation sponsored the bill and it was 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 Cat Ex 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.

Erika explained that while there are similarities to the Coho HELP Act, this bill has several differences and takes into account lessons learned through use of the Coho HELP Act for a year and a half. A broad spectrum of restoration activities are included (e.g., streambank stabilization, fish passage, road improvement work, erosion control). Faster project processing is expected by "front-loading" the application process; ministerial project approval is to occur within 60 days. Erika stated that several new DFW staff positions are being proposed to implement the Act. Thirty two letters of support have been received to date.

Erik Schmidt informed the group that an amendment to the bill would be available within one week (subsequently it was amended in the Assembly Committee on May 23rd; it was passed on the Assembly floor on May 28th and ordered to go to the Senate). **Erik and Erika stated that they are happy to answer any questions about the bill (call or email them).** During discussion of the bill, they explained that the 500 linear foot limitation is currently not included, since this requirement was viewed as overly restrictive (i.e., very small scale projects have limited benefits). Erika concluded by stating that the main goals for the bill are to create a process that DFW can implement and that the restoration community will actively use.

6. Discussion Regarding use of Cat Ex 15333 for Wood Projects

Jonathan Warmerdam led a brief discussion on appropriate use of Cat Ex 15333 for large wood projects, generated from earlier questions from DFW's Lance Salisbury. Jonathan provided a handout listing the requirements for Cat Ex Class 33 (not to exceed 5 ac to assure maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife provided that conditions (a) through (d) are met). Jonathan stated that there are a broad spectrum of interpretations possible related to large wood projects, particularly for language stating that "projects...are carried out principally with hand labor and not mechanized equipment" and that "there would be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species..." Questions posed to SWRCB and DFW counsel regarding these issues were (paraphrased): (1) can we rely on Cat Ex 15333 for large wood projects? (WB counsel—yes); (2) can we use Cat Ex 15333, General 401 Cert (and LSAA) for large wood projects even though they are not specifically used as examples in the exemption? (WB counsel—yes); (3) can heavy equipment be used to place large wood in streams, even though one example states that this work will primarily be done with hand labor? (WB counsel—yes); (4) to avoid use of Cat Ex 15333 as a mitigated categorical exemption, can a project proponent include appropriate standards for

protection in their application? (WB counsel - yes); and (5) does the presence of a listed species preclude the use of the categorical exemption for small habitat restoration projects? (WB counsel not asked this question). **Lance Salisbury will forward these questions to DFW counsel for their responses. Additional legal responses are expected by the end of May. Bill Condon also stated his intent to follow up with Lance Salisbury regarding the questions for CDFW legal counsel.**

7. Presentation on the Draft Version of “California Coho Salmon Restoration: A Decade in Review”

Jeanette Howard provided a PowerPoint presentation summarizing “California Coho Salmon Restoration: A Decade in Review.” This document was jointly produced by The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and California Trout; the draft version was released in April 2014. The report includes three main sections: completed restoration activities in the CCC and SONCC ESUs, priority restoration work needed in the CCC and SONCC ESUs, and restoration funding analysis. Data for the report were stated as difficult to obtain since there is no centralized database for this type of information. Over 50 state, federal, and local agencies were contacted for information, as well as NGOs, watershed groups, and private landowners (in spite of this substantial effort, incomplete information has been obtained).

Since 2000, a total of 1,194 restoration projects have been completed in coho salmon watersheds; 1,173 of those would fall under the Coho HELP Act. A total of 764 took place in the SONCC ESU and 430 in the CCC ESU. Approximately 83% of the projects were completed under FRGP. The Russian, South Fork Eel, and Lower Eel River watersheds had the greatest number of projects funded and completed over the past decade. Data are compiled by type of project (e.g., barriers removed, number of large wood sites, riparian corridor restored, miles of road decommissioned/upgraded, feet of streambank stabilization, crossings removed/upgraded) and ESU (CCC and SONCC). Metrics by watershed in both the CCC and SONCC ESU are provided using all available data. The number of road-related projects in the SONCC ESU has been going down over time, as a considerable amount of the work has now been completed. Overall findings for the first section of the report include: (1) it is difficult to compile information on restoration projects since no access was provided to FRGP and CHRPD databases held by DFW, (2) coordination to establish accountability for restoration should be a top priority, and (3) an attempt should be made to evaluate population abundance trends in relation to the amount of restoration work completed.

Section 2 of the report relied on federal CCC and SONCC recovery plans to provide priority geographic areas for needed restoration work covered under the Coho HELP Act (i.e., wood placement, barrier removal, streambank restoration). The CCC ESU included data on 28 priority watersheds, while 14 SONCC watersheds (HUC12 subwatershed units averaging 22,000 ac) were utilized. Analyses were conducted to estimate the amount of wood needed in priority watersheds, as well as the current wood loading in these basins. Only 7% of the subwatersheds in the CCC ESU were found to meet the recovery criteria for key pieces of wood, while 56% of the SONCC ESU with available data met recovery

criteria. The percentage of large trees in riparian buffer zones was also calculated using CalVeg and THP data. Nearly half of the riparian trees in priority subwatersheds in the CCC ESU and a quarter in the SONCC ESU are considered large trees. Road density in riparian corridors were estimated and found to be beyond the NMFS recovery plan thresholds (available data were limited). The number of fish barriers remaining in coho watersheds was approximated using intrinsic potential models and DFW's Passage Assessment Database for crossing barriers. Most coho subwatersheds in both the CCC and SONCC ESUs meet recovery criteria for barriers (>75% of most subwatersheds are considered accessible). Modifying 93 barriers would result in 573 miles of additional habitat, mostly in the SONCC ESU.

Section 3, restoration funding analysis, summarizes the amount of money spent on restoration activities in coho watersheds in California over the past 13 years. Approximately \$160 million in primary grant funding has been spent from 2000-2012 in coho watersheds. Amounts spent by watershed, project type, and county are provided. An estimated 1,680 to 3,040 direct and indirect jobs were created from primary grants for restoration work.

Dr. Howard stressed that this is a draft report and comments are welcome. Additional information on the topics covered would improve the report. DFW's Fisheries Branch has not provided requested information, but they were asked to review the document. Rick Macedo stated that the barriers database is good and would provide an acceptable template for other topics. Bill Snyder suggested providing the final report to RPFs so that they can determine where restoration work is required. Additionally, he stated that agency THP reviewers should be aware of the report's contents and, when appropriate, they should ask plan proponents why work is not proposed where it is needed. Pete Cafferata agreed to discuss this concept with CAL FIRE's Duane Shintaku, Deputy Director for Resource Management. Pete also agreed to discuss GIS capture of restoration activities in THPs with CAL FIRE's Suzanne Lang, GIS Program Manager in Santa Rosa.

8. Presentation on the California Salmon Snapshots Website

Sally Liu provided a demonstration on The Nature Conservancy's California Salmon Snapshots website (see: <http://www.casalmon.org/>). She stated that work on this project began in July 2012, compiling information from existing sources, such as DFW's Coastal Monitoring Program. Technical workshops were held with DFW, NMFS, RCDs, NGOs, private landowners, and others to determine what would be valuable. The main result is a salmonid population data clearinghouse, with annual population data for coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and steelhead presented for 37 coastal watersheds. An MOU with DFW was signed in January 2013 and the website was launched in September 2013. Website tabs include: (1) "Salmon Snapshots", with population data (what we have, what is needed) for each of the 37 watersheds; (2) "By the Numbers", with information on the current status of coho salmon, Chinook salmon and steelhead populations in California; (3) "Restoration Actions", with information on barrier removals, road improvements, estuary/floodplain improvement, large wood enhancement (with a link to the WFSWG

page), and streamflow needs; (4) “Get Involved”, with information on how to participate in local watershed activities, and (5) “Salmon at TNC”, with information on solutions for restoration and recovery.

Sally stated that it has been a substantial effort for DFW to compile existing information and make the population estimates included at this website. Data on Central Valley salmonid populations will be added next year. She noted that data for the individual watersheds can be downloaded in a pdf format. To date, the website has had over 7,650 visitors (approximately 5,000 unique visitors). Population data for the 37 coastal watersheds will be updated every year. **Rick Macedo suggested that it would be appropriate to add data on summer low flows, important during drought years such as this one—especially where water use is over appropriated.**¹

9. Brief Update on Project Size Calculator and Schematics Document

Jonathan Warmerdam provided an updated version of the large wood project size calculator and schematics document. In January 2014, Mary Olswang circulated the project size calculator and schematic to DFW staff for review and input. They provided a detailed letter dated February 14, 2014, about the project size calculator and schematic, with specific comments and recommendations regarding both documents. Jonathan received additional feedback on the calculator since the February 2014 WFSWG meeting and he has further modified the calculator in an attempt to generate a version that both NCRWQCB and DFW staff can endorse.

Next WFSWG Meeting Date

Pete Cafferata agreed to send out a Doodle poll for the next WFSWG meeting to be held in late August-early September 2014.

¹ California water rights are displayed on this website: <http://projects-ca.statewater.org/water-rights>.