

Wood for Salmon Workgroup Meeting Summary

Date: September 7, 2011

Attendees: Bill Snyder, CAL FIRE
Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB
Tom Spittler, CGS
Patty Madigan, MCRCD
Jennifer Carah, The Nature Conservancy
Jason Pelletier, The Nature Conservancy
Lisa Hulette, The Nature Conservancy
Eric Schmidt, Sustainable Conservation
Rich Macedo, DFG
Stephen Smith, NRCS
Tom Moore, NRCS
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Action items are shown in BOLD font and underlined

Discussion Items

This Wood for Salmon Workgroup (WFSW) meeting focused on: (1) a brief summary of the “Coho Salmon on the Brink” hearing held at the Capital on August 16th, (2) review and discussion on the draft consolidated permit application for non-FRGP projects, (3) brief discussion of the DFG document summarizing FRGP and LSAAs for LWD projects, (4) a discussion of the draft WFSW white paper written by Jennifer Carah on the current permitting process, (5) a brief update on Anadromous Salmonid Protection Rule Section V Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC) activities, and (6) discussion on landowner outreach/funding mechanisms.

1. Brief Summary of the “Coho Salmon on the Brink” Hearing at the Capital

Bill Snyder briefly summarized the “Coho Salmon on the Brink: Understanding the Depth of the Crisis and Recovery Strategies” hearing, held at the Capital on August 16, 2011. The Joint Legislative Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, chaired by Assembly Member Wesley Chesbro, convened the hearing (see the agenda at: <http://www.asmdc.org/members/a01/hearing-coho-salmon-on-the-brink/item/2982-agenda--presenter-information>). Videos of the presentations are available online: <http://www.calchannel.com/channel/viewVideo/2906> (also 2907, 2930, 2931, and 2932).

Bill stated that he and others informed the Committee that a simpler process for instream restoration projects is needed for landowners. Jonathan Warmerdam said that he provided hearing speaker Ms. Catherine Kuhlman, Executive Officer of the NCRWQCB, with three key recommendations to present on behalf of the WFSW:

- Expand/utilize the FRGP to implement widespread large wood projects.
- Absent FRGP funds, support development of coordinated permitting programs that can facilitate large wood projects.
- Seek guidance from the WFSW.

2. Discussion on the Draft Consolidated Permit Application for Non-FRGP Projects

Bill Snyder stated that he had received considerable input from Jon Ambrose and Jonathan Warmerdam, and that he incorporated their suggestions in the revised draft consolidated permit application form emailed for WFSW review. There was discussion regarding whether the form should be broken down into three forms: (1) for projects <5 ac/500 ft and no dewatering for engineered structures, (2) >5 ac/500 ft and no dewatering for engineered structures, and (3) dewatering for engineered structures. Jonathan Warmerdam stated the he is checking with Bill Orme, SWRCB, regarding whether it is <5 ac and 500 ft, or <5 ac or 500 ft, as well as how to determine what constitutes 500 ft for a wood placement project (contiguous linear feet or not). Bill Snyder informed the group that he tried to design the consolidated permit application to apply to the simplest situations for wood placement, and that the form was not designed to cover complex situations involving dewatering of the stream channel. Patty Madigan suggested that a user-friendly electronic form could be developed to rapidly handle multiple types of permitting situations. The WFSW thought this was a good idea, but a paper form would still be needed, at least initially.

After further discussion, Bill Snyder determined that it would be best to keep the consolidated permit application as one form, with sections that can easily be skipped if they do not apply—either electronically or on paper. The main criteria is that the project is to fit under a CEQA CatEx for small habitat improvement projects. **Bill asked the WFSW to further review the draft form and determine what additional changes are required. Suggestions are to be emailed to the WFSW email list by the end of September.** In particular, he asked participants to determine if the form has sufficient flexibility to accommodate different types of funding (e.g., NRCS WHIP funding). He added that he and Pete Cafferata have recently met with DFG’s Helen Birss and Cathie Vouchilas regarding possible DFG acceptance of a consolidated form for large wood placement projects, instead of requiring a LSAA.

Additional action items agreed to during the discussion of the draft consolidated permit application were:

1. **Bill Snyder will continue to work on receiving agency clearance for use of the form. Bill and Pete Cafferata will continue to work with DFG’s Helen Birss on possible DFG acceptance of the consolidated form for large wood augmentation projects.**
2. **Jonathan Warmerdam will continue to seek guidance from the SWRCB’s Bill Orme regarding how to determine what constitutes 500 ft for a large**

wood augmentation project (see Jonathan's handout showing three PPT slides displaying the various options).

3. Jonathan Warmerdam will seek input from NCRWQCB management staff regarding their acceptance of the consolidated form for meeting 401 permit needs.
4. Bill will follow-up on the possible development of a "mini FRGP" process with DFG's Kevin Shaffer and Helen Birss.

3. Brief Discussion of the DFG document summarizing FRGP and LSAAs for LWD projects

Bill Snyder stated that DFG's Kevin Shaffer has provided the WFSW with a document titled "Summary of Fisheries Restoration Grant Program and Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement Processes on Large Woody Debris Projects", dated July 2011. Bill called attention to page 8 of the document, which states that when a project proponent submits a notification for the same large wood placement activity at more than one site, DFG has the discretion to determine if the project will require a single notification, or if the notification should be resubmitted indicating separate projects, resulting in separate fees for each site. Bill indicated that DFG is providing more flexibility and is responding to the concerns addressed in the WFSW letter sent to DFG in April 2011 requesting a revised fee schedule for LSAAs issued for small habitat restoration projects.

4. Discussion of the Draft WFWG White Paper on the Current Permitting Process

Jennifer Carah expressed thanks to WFSW participants that have provided feedback on her white paper titled "Permitting Large Wood Augmentation Projects in the Evolutionarily Significant Unit of Central California Coast Coho Salmon: A Guidance Document." She stated that she has revised the original flowchart developed by Jon Ambrose, in particular adding boxes to address local permits, Partners in Restoration (PIR), and the coastal zone. She proposed including the revised flowchart in the white paper to supplement the detailed dichotomous key in the document. Jen stated that the flowchart clearly displays to all readers how complex the process currently is in California. Eric Schmidt suggested adding the numbers used in the dichotomous key to the boxes in the flowchart. Additionally, Tom Spittler suggested putting Section E, "Ways to Simply Permitting Large Wood Augmentation Projects," in the front of the document, before the dichotomous key. Jen asked that additional feedback on the white paper and the flowchart be sent to her by September 30th. The goal is to have a final draft shortly after the end of September.

Jen also stated that WFSW participants are welcome to participate on a tour of recently implemented large wood augmentation projects in the Garcia River watershed on September 15th.

5. Update on Section V Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC) Activities

Pete Cafferata provided a brief update on Anadromous Salmonid Protection Rule Section V Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC) activities. The main task of the VTAC is to develop a guideline document that will allow for broad application of the site-specific approach for riparian management under Anadromous Salmonid Protection Rule 14 CCR 919.9 (v). This approach offers an alternative to prescriptive uniform buffer strips when site specific practices will benefit listed fish species.

The current vision for the ASP Rules Section V guidance document includes three main approaches for plan proponents to satisfy 14 CCR 919.9 (v)(3):

1. Use of a set of matrices (the process involves evaluating site conditions, identifying functional objectives with matrices, and developing site prescriptions).
2. Use of “situation examples” to identify situations where actions can be applied, with the appropriate actions then provided. Three to four common examples are to be provided.
3. Use of watershed analysis by expert users.

Typical examples of common situations to be covered in the guidance document include: (1) low instream wood loading adjacent to stands with low projections of riparian mortality/wood recruitment—where large wood augmentation would be appropriate, (2) riparian communities with small-diameter conifer trees—where riparian thinning would be appropriate, (3) closed canopy riparian corridors lacking nitrogen-fixing species or with low primary productivity—where riparian vegetation manipulation would be appropriate, and (4) interior stands with high fire-risk—where thinning would be appropriate.

In addition to the three approaches listed above, the guidance document will include information on: (1) watershed context assessment (planning watershed assessment/cumulative effects analysis), (2) process development (e.g., pre-consultation guidelines), and (3) templates for RPFs to facilitate use of the guidelines. The VTAC hopes to have a complete draft document later this fall. Locations for pilot projects to demonstrate the feasibility of using Section V are being sought on both private timberlands and State Forests. The draft VTAC paper presented at the Redwood Forest Science Conference in June was handed out to the WFSW.

6. Brief Landowner Outreach and Funding Mechanism Discussion

Landowner outreach and possible funding mechanisms for landowners to implement large wood augmentation projects were discussed throughout the meeting. Key take-home messages included: (1) Tom Moore stating that NRCS will likely be able to help support large wood placement projects through WHIP and EQIP funding, and that NRCS would like to expand its funding programs to address instream habitat improvement projects, (2) **Steve Smith agreeing to continue to investigate how NRCS funding from the WHIP and EQIP programs can be used to fund large wood**

augmentation projects, (3) Bill Snyder informing the group that he is anticipating that CAL FIRE will receive funding for developing Forest Conservation Plans, and this may apply to instream restoration projects (NRCS and CAL FIRE are to be partners for providing funding of large wood augmentation projects), and (4) Bill Snyder stating that he would like to address landowner outreach this winter, after the consolidated permit application form has been finalized.

Next Meeting Dates

The next WFSW meeting will be scheduled for the second half of October through the use of a Doodle online poll. A second meeting for November is also to be scheduled, possibly as a field trip (**suggestions for field trip locations should be emailed to Bill Snyder and Pete Cafferata**).