

## Wood for Salmon Workgroup Meeting Summary

Date: October 29, 2012  
Location: CAL FIRE Forest Practice Conference Room, Santa Rosa, CA

Attendees: Bill Snyder, CAL FIRE  
Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB  
Kathie Lowrey, PCI  
Jonathan Ambrose, NMFS  
Patty Madigan, MCRCD  
Dave Wright, CTM  
Catherine Woody, SWRCB  
Rick Macedo, DFG  
Lisa Hulette, TNC  
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

### Participating by Conference Line:

Dr. Stephen Swales, DFG  
Lance Salisbury, DFG  
Steve Smith, NRCS

**Action items are shown in BOLD font and italicized**

### Agenda Items

This Wood for Salmon Workgroup (WFSW) meeting focused on the following topics: (1) an update on the revision of the SWRCB General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects, (2) an update on implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961 (Huffman), Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act (Coho HELP Act), (3) discussion on possible approaches for including restoration as a part of a THP, (4) update on landowner outreach efforts, (5) discussion of ranking criteria and technical review team identification for the RFP for Mendocino County wood enhancement projects funded by CAL FIRE, (6) an update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program, (7) updates on implemented large wood placement projects (CTM Clark Fork and SDSF), and (8) an update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT).

### General WFWG Announcements

- The NMFS CCC Coho Salmon Recovery Plan was released November 5<sup>th</sup>. It is available at: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/recovery/>.
- Coastal Off-channel and Tidal Habitat Restoration Symposium, November 15-16, 2012, Eureka. Sponsors include the Salmonid Restoration Federation, Five Counties Salmonid Program, and DFG. (see the following website for information: <http://www.calsalmon.org/news/stories/coastal-channel-and-tidal-habitat-restoration-symposium>).

- The Feliz Creek dam was removed recently. This was an old 12-foot high concrete dam located approximately four miles upstream from the confluence with the Russian River near Hopland in Mendocino County. Sediment had accumulated above the dam, partially filling the reservoir. Removal of the dam added approximately nine miles of anadromous salmonid habitat. See: <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/dot/felizdam.htm>.

## **1. Update on the Revision of the SWRCB General 401 Certification**

Jonathan Warmerdam stated that Catherine Woody, SWRCB, has been tasked with heading up the revision process for the SWRCB General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects, which expired in August 2012. Ms. Woody informed the group that an interim permit was currently in place, while the revision work continues. The interim permit is essentially the same as the expired General 401 Cert., and will be used until a new order is adopted. Outreach and input from Regional Board 401 staff and restoration practitioners (MCRCD, NRCS, TNC, *Alnus* Ecological) have identified numerous elements in the existing General 401 that will likely be addressed with the new permit. Goals for the revised General 401 cert. are to include a WDR, have it cover both state and federal waters, and not have an expiration date for the permit. Including a WDR component is necessitating a longer process than originally envisioned (a fee schedule change will be required with inclusion of a WDR). The goal is to develop a transparent process that is easy for small habitat restoration project proponents to use. ***A revision draft is currently being prepared, with the revised permit expected to be adopted in late 2013.***

In terms of how it will relate to the draft consolidated permit application form for non-FRGP projects developed by the WFSW, it was stated that the scope and scale of the permitted projects will remain the same (500 ft, 5 ac), still being tied to the CEQA CatEx 15333 exemption. Therefore, the diagrams and Excel spreadsheet developed by Jonathan Warmerdam last year will still apply. The group decided that it would be best to continue to put the consolidated permit application on hold while the General 401 Certification revision process continues. Bill Snyder suggested that it may be appropriate to continue refining the form, as discussion with DFG continues. ***Jonathan Warmerdam suggested resending the draft consolidated form to DFG staff.*** Pete Cafferata stated that he had begun work on a draft MOU for the agencies, as had been previously suggested by Cathie Vouchilas to make the consolidated form more acceptable to DFG (MOU to state approval of the form by the agencies, the intent of the form, its utility, and responsibilities for updating the form). ***Bill Snyder said that more discussion regarding an MOU is required with DFG and Water Board staff prior to further development.***

## **2. Update on implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961 (Huffman), Coho HELP Act**

Dr. Stephen Swales stated that Kevin Shaffer and his staff are actively working on determining how AB 1961, the Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act, will be implemented in the coming months (i.e., how the streamlining process for projects approved by DFG will be accomplished). Monitoring is not specifically required under AB 1961, but is needed for the General 401 Certification. The goal is not to

have separate monitoring requirements from DFG and the SWRCB. Dr. Swales stated that DFG would have a meeting on November 2<sup>nd</sup> to discuss an implementation plan for AB 1961. **A procedure for implementation will be in place before the first of the year.** AB 1961 is consistent with the 5 acre/500 foot size limitation that the Water Board and DFG have determined constitutes a small restoration project involving placement of wood structures in a stream channel. Patty Madigan reminded the group that AB 1961 projects are not limited to large wood enhancement projects. A coho salmon habitat enhancement project fitting under the CEQA exemption is defined in this bill as: (1) a barrier removal, (2) streambank stability restoration using bioengineering approaches, or (3) large wood placement.

Jonathan Warmerdam informed the group that the State Board and the NCRWQCB are evaluating opportunities to streamline permitting through the revision of the General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects with DFG's Coho HELP Act. One possible avenue being considered is an expedited certification through the General 401 Certification for projects that have been approved by the Director of DFG.

Lisa Hulette informed the WFWG that the Nature Conservancy is enthusiastic about AB 1961 and that they are looking forward to cooperating with the agencies and landowners to implement projects on the ground. They are working on putting a pilot large wood project together for the summer of 2013. The goal is to use this pilot as a model for other projects, using existing programmatic permits (e.g., NMFS BO, MCRCD consolidated permit) as much as possible. It should illustrate to landowners and agency staff that they now have a simple, quick pathway for these types of projects. No landowner or project site has been identified to date by the Nature Conservancy.

### **3. Possible Approaches for Including Restoration as a Part of a THP**

The WFWB discussed progress that has been made to date on developing possible approaches for including restoration projects as part of a Timber Harvesting Plan. **Bill Snyder and Jonathan Warmerdam agreed to discuss this topic more and attempt to move forward with this concept.** The goal is to take advantage of having heavy equipment on-site during a THP to do restoration work. Roger Sternberg, Forestry and Land Conservation Consulting Services, was stated has having an NTMP in Sonoma County with a closely related project that could serve as a possible prototype for this type of endeavor. Jonathan Ambrose said that currently NMFS must analyze upslope impacts associated with a THP, as well as wood project potential impacts, for possible take of federally listed species. Bill Snyder stated that 14 CCR Sec. 916(9)(v) [Section V] provides a nexus for restoration work and plan approval, but that in-channel work (e.g., large wood placement) is constrained by NMFS take approval (e.g., NMFS BO for each project). Bill suggested that it would be highly beneficial if further guidance on this topic could be provided by NMFS staff. Jonathan Ambrose stated that NMFS cannot sanction a project without an analysis of potential impacts and possible take of species. **Bill Snyder said that it should be a goal to have the federal authorities and state forest practice rules aligned to allow conservation planning as part of THPs that both the federal and state agencies can endorse by the end of 2013.**

Dave Wright informed the WFSW that CTM is considering large wood enhancement as part of a THP in the Smith Creek drainage, part of the Ten Mile River watershed in western Mendocino County. The channel has been cleared in the past and current wood loading is very low. This is a coho core area for recovery and is located in a good thermal zone; cable yarding can be used to bring wood into the channel. The THP will be submitted in approximately one year. Jonathan Ambrose suggested that CTM could attempt to use the NMFS programmatic BO for the THP. He stated that there are four main options for wood placement and NMFS coverage: (1) NMFS programmatic BO, (2) stand-alone BO for the restoration project, and (3) silent (no action), and (4) FRGP [not plan mitigation, not part of the THP]. He said that a stand-alone BO could be written with one year of lead time. **Bill Snyder asked if this project could be a VTAC pilot project, and Rick Macedo added that this could be an AB 1961 project. CTM staff are relatively positive on including the wood placement work in the plan, but Dave asked for an agency meeting to discuss the various permitting options that are available. [Pete Cafferata has initiated a Doodle poll to select a date for this meeting.]**

#### **4. Update on Landowner Outreach Efforts**

Lisa Hulette stated that the WFWG needs to sponsor one or more workshops to explain the process for implementing large wood restoration projects to landowners. She added that the Nature Conservancy would be willing to help put on these workshops. Bill Snyder suggested waiting until we have greater clarity on how AB 1961 will be implemented by DFG staff. **It was decided that fall 2013 is likely the best time to have these types of workshops.** UC Cooperative Extension should be able to provide assistance. Bill Snyder stated that CAL FIRE has a contract with Greg Giusti for UC outreach assistance that should be available.

#### **5. MCRCD RFP for Mendocino County Wood Enhancement Projects**

Patty Madigan stated that the MCRCD Request for Proposals for wood enhancement projects funded by CAL FIRE were due on November 5<sup>th</sup> [three proposals were received]. She stated that a scoring sheet template is needed and asked for volunteers for both providing assistance in developing the template, and evaluating the RFPs that are received. Evaluations must be completed by November 19<sup>th</sup>. **Doug Albin, DFG, Scott Harris, DFG, Jonathan Ambrose, Jonathan Warmerdam, Kathie Lowrey, and Pete Cafferata are assisting Patty.** Contracts will be awarded after the December MCRCD meeting.

#### **6. Update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program**

Patty Madigan informed the group that the MCRCD permit coordination program CEQA document was finished in June and delivered to the State Clearinghouse. A grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (\$150,000) is providing funding to allow Patty to continue working on this project, and it will allow projects to be implemented on the ground. There may be additional funds available from AB 1492 for restoration of salmonid habitat. **The goal is to have permit coordination program in place by next summer (before August 2013).** Draft application templates may be completed by November 2012 for meetings with the US Army Corps of Engineers, DFG, and the NCRWQCB.

## **7. Updates on Implemented Large Wood Placement Projects**

Dave Wright provided an updated PowerPoint presentation showing photos of a FRGP grant project for large wood placement completed on the Clark Fork of the Ten Mile River watershed in August 2010. The project entailed falling 120 foot tall coast redwood trees into the channel without anchoring, engineering, or heavy equipment. 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 wood removed from the 1960's through the 1980's. 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. 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 provided to the WFWG on January 27, 2011 showed sites prior to tree felling, immediately after felling, and in mid-January 2011.

Dave added new slides showing the same sites now after an additional over-wintering period. The ten mile reach shows evidence that new wood is being recruited to the channel, with a steady progression of movement downstream. For example, site #7 blew out the second winter, with a new, very complex wood site now located between site #7 and site #8. Dave emphasized that while site-level monitoring may appear poor in some locations, larger scale (watershed reach) monitoring reveals excellent wood accumulations, particularly in the lower half of the reach where the project was implemented.

Dave also informed the WFSG that a large wood placement project had been successfully implemented in the North Fork Usal drainage (20 wood sites over 2 miles of channel), and that the project will be monitored for effectiveness. Lisa Bolton, Trout Unlimited, completed the permitting work for the project.

Pete Cafferata showed a PowerPoint presentation and video clip shot by Jim Robins, *Alnus* Ecological, of the large wood project implemented at site #1 on Soquel Demonstration State Forest on the East Branch of Soquel Creek during late August-early September 2012. The entire SDSF project includes installing large wood along a 0.7 mile stretch of the East Branch of Soquel Creek in four, 200-foot reaches. Work for site #1 was completed under a grant from the RCD of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC), with the RCD contracting directly with the operator. Three log clusters (non anchored) were installed by excavating coast redwood clumps located along the streambank, and pushing the clump over toward the channel. Two of the clumps fell across the channel, instead of downstream. The trees were bucked at approximately 65-70 feet, and then rotated so that the tops are pointed downstream. The multiple stems stayed attached to one large rootwad for each of the three clumps and each will function as a cluster. Two of the clumps were located on the north side of the channel and one on the south side. The excavator crossed the channel on industrial sized gravel-filled bags (holding approximately 1 ton of gravel), placed in the channel with the excavator (10 bags total—2 rows of 5). The NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center will monitoring the large wood structures to document wood movement, aquatic habitat changes, and fish community changes.

## **8. Update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT)**

Jonathan Ambrose provided a brief update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team. PACT is a joint effort between NMFS and DFG 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 a management team, coordination committee, and six technical working groups (including outreach, funding, restoration, water flow, hatcheries and fish rescue). The technical working groups have supplied recommendations to the coordination committee. ***The goal is to have the recommendations enacted by the end of 2012.*** Dr. Stephen Swales provided a handout with the PACT Technical Working Groups summary recommendations, dated October 1, 2012 (contact Dr. Swales or Pete Cafferata for a pdf version of the handout).

## **9. Next WFSW Meeting Date**

**Pete Cafferata agreed to send out a Doodle poll for a WFSW meeting to be held in January 2013.** Prior to that meeting, several interim meetings and/or discussions are to occur, including:

- Agency meeting with CTM to discuss their possible THP large wood project in the Smith Creek watershed (Ten Mile River basin).
- Review and scoring of the three MCRCD RFP wood enhancement project proposals received by Patty Madigan.
- Meetings with USACE, DFG, and the NCRWQCB on the MCRCD permit coordination program.
- Discussion with NCRWQCB and DFG regarding the need a multi-agency MOU for the WFWG coordinated permit application form.
- DFG meetings to finalize how AB 1961 will be implemented on the ground in January 2013.
- Discussion with landowners for additional outreach.