

Wood for Salmon Workgroup Meeting Summary

Date: August 26, 2013
Location: CAL FIRE Forest Practice Conference Room, Santa Rosa, CA

Attendees: Bill Snyder, CAL FIRE
Jonathan Ambrose, NMFS
Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB
Patty Madigan, MCRCD
Erika Lovejoy, SusCon
Erik Schmidt, SusCon
Dave Wright, CTM
Lisa Hulette, TNC
Kathie Lowrey, Prunuske Chatham, Inc.
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Participating by Conference Line:

Doug Albin, DFW
Dr. Stephen Swales, DFW
Lance Salisbury, DFW
Steve Smith, NRCS

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 SWRCB General 401 Certification revision, (3) update on DFW implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961 (Huffman), Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act (Coho HELP Act), (4) update on MCRCD wood enhancement projects selected for funding, (5) discussion of a large wood workshop and large wood guidance document produced by the MCRCD, (6) update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program, (7) update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT), (8) CTM large wood THP update, (9) update on the SDSF large wood and channel complexity project, and (10) brief discussion on CAL FIRE/NMFS possible approaches for a THP processes for wood enhancement [other scheduled agenda items for this meeting were held for future discussion].

1. WFSW Meeting Announcements

- Erika Lovejoy announced that NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center (NOAA RC), with assistance from Sustainable Conservation, has obtained programmatic Coastal Commission approval for projects that receive funding or technical assistance from the NOAA RC (i.e., consistency determination or CD). This CD will allow restoration

projects within the coastal zone from the Oregon Border through San Luis Obispo County that fall within the scope of NOAA's Community Based Restoration Program to move forward without the need for additional permitting (i.e., Coastal Development Permit). NOAA RC has existing programmatic Biological Opinions for the Santa Rosa and Arcata NOAA offices, however projects covered under other Biological Opinions may also qualify. The Coastal Commission approved this CD at their May 2013 meeting in Marin County. Those interested in more information on the CD and project selection/approval process should contact NOAA RC directly.

- Jonathan Warmerdam stated that he is attempting to learn if SWRCB Cleanup and Abatement Account could be used by RCDs for restoration projects, such as large wood enhancement projects. It appears that RCD Boards would be supportive, especially if a Mitigated Negative Declaration could be used to cover CEQA. **Patty Madigan stated that she would put the topic on the next MCRCD Board meeting agenda for clarification. Jonathan suggested that supportive letters from other agencies would be helpful.** There was also discussion whether AB 1492 (lumber tax) funds could be used for fisheries restoration projects. While restoration is specified in the bill, it is generalized restoration and not well defined. It was stated that Assembly Member Chesbro may be receptive to this concept. **WFSW participants agreed that NGO support (e.g., TU, TNC, SusCon) would help move this concept forward.**

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

Jonathan Warmerdam stated that the revision of the SWRCB General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects (SHRP), which expired in August 2012, is still underway. The expired General 401 Certification was extended with minor modifications, and continues to be available for use for small habitat restoration projects until the new permit is complete. Mr. Warmerdam worked with SWRCB staff, including Catherine Woody and Bill Orme, to develop a new application form, which is currently available for use on the State Board website under the interim permit. A new, revised permit for small habitat restoration projects is likely to be developed over the next year, and will either be another general certification, waiver, or a WDR permit.

State and Regional Water Board staff is continuing to evaluate whether the revised SHRP can utilize the CDFW's Coho HELP Act (AB 1961) process to streamline the Water Board's permitting process. A decision regarding coordination of these two permits is ongoing.

In 2012, Jonathan Warmerdam and members of the Wood for Salmon Working Group developed two [tools](#)¹ to assist restoration practitioners determine the size of large wood projects, and ensure conformance with various permit size limitations: (1) the *Visual*

¹ The *Visual Guidance for Calculating Discharge Area for Large Wood Augmentation Projects* and *Calculator for Determining Project Disturbance Area* can be found on the world wide web at the following address: http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/california/salmon/Pages/wfs_resources.aspx

Guidance for Calculating Discharge Area for Large Wood Augmentation Projects; and (2) the *Calculator for Determining Project Disturbance Area*. These tools were developed for guidance purposes only, are not required by any permit, and included review and feedback from both State and Regional Board staff including the lead for CWA 401 permitting statewide. Regional Board 401 staff have reported receiving positive feedback from project proponents regarding use of the tools.

To date, CDFW Sacramento staff who oversee the Coho HELP Act, have not been amendable to using the guidance tools in part because they have not received an “official endorsement” from the State Board. Mr. Warmerdam will continue to work with his management and State Board staff to determine what additional steps, if any, would be required to achieve an official State Board endorsement for the guidance tools.

3. Update on DFW implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961, Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act (Coho HELP Act)

Dr. Stephen Swales 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 are focused on the Scott River system and aim to improve habitat conditions for coho with bioengineered streambank stabilization and instream placement of wood. 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 received have been deemed incomplete and negotiations are underway with the project applicants to modify project designs to allow them to be approved. Dr. Swales stated that revisions have been submitted and DFW staff are close to approving them. He added that the main problem with the applications was that project proponents did not follow the guidelines adequately and the engineering plans were not adequate. A detailed handout was provided.

Considerable discussion regarding this update followed. It was stated that DFW staff are expecting standards that exceed those used for FRGP projects, and that currently the Coho HELP Act is unsuccessful. Improved policy and legal guidance regarding what qualifies for the Coho HELP Act was suggested (e.g., does dewatering a stream reach and moving fish disqualify an application?). **Dr. Swales and Doug Albin stated that DFW staff will soon complete an internal review of the Act and the issue of dewatering and coverage will be determined.** Bill Snyder stated that if DFW is not willing to use the Act for dewatered reaches, a legislative fix may be necessary. There was general agreement from the WFSW that the Act application should not be more onerous than that required for FRGP projects or 1600 agreements. Information on the Coho HELP Act is posted on the following DFW website: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/Coho/HELP/>.

4. Discussion of MCRCD RFP Wood Enhancement Projects Selected for Funding

As reported earlier, Patty Madigan reiterated that there were two successful applications to the MCRCD for wood enhancement projects using CAL FIRE funding. The projects being funded are: SF Garcia (submitted by Trout Unlimited) and NF Gualala (submitted by the Gualala River Watershed Council). These projects will use the MCRCD permit coordination program CEQA document, and the TU project has been submitted under AB

1961. It is still undecided if the Gualala project will be submitted under the Coho HELP Act. No invoices have been submitted to date for these projects.

5. Discussion of a Large Wood Workshop and Large Wood Guidance Document Produced by the MCRCD

Patty Madigan stated that approximately \$12,000 remains from the large wood contract with CAL FIRE, and CAL FIRE Staff Chief Chris Zimny has determined that these dollars can be used for education activities related to large wood placement stream habitat improvement projects. Two projects are proposed with the remaining funds:

- A one day large wood workshop to be held in western Mendocino County coordinated by consultant Chris Blencowe, who has extensive experience with unanchored wood enhancement projects (“accelerated recruitment”). The workshop/tour will include two to three sites, with handout materials. **A Doodle poll was posted through the end of September, but it was decided to extend the poll through mid-October to increase attendance (the poll is located at: <http://doodle.com/yhax8c4qcfdhr65dqth8wqmx/admin?#admin>).**
- A short guidance document illustrating currently used large wood recruitment approaches, including “accelerated recruitment.” It would focus largely on unanchored wood approaches and supplement the documents currently available, using text, good drawings (“typicals”), and local examples. The WFSW participants present stated that they thought this would be beneficial and worth producing. **Patty stated that she would send out a short statement/proposal to further explore the idea, and that the draft document would be vetted through the WFSW.** Bill Snyder suggested that it is important to ensure that DFW staff approve of the material included in the guidebook.

6. Update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program

Patty Madigan stated that the MCRCD permit coordination program is moving forward. This 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.

Currently, Patty is working with Jonathan Warmerdam so that General 401 Certification and a Waiver of Waste Discharger Requirements can provide water quality permitting for the program. The NCRWQCB will hold a public workshop on September 26th in Fortuna, in which Jonathan will provide an overview of the coordinated permit process, and propose adoption as part of the coordinated program at the Board’s November meeting. The General 401 Certification has been drafted as a Waiver with a monitoring and reporting order, and 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. The DFW 1600 agreement and USACE 404 permit components have yet to be

incorporated in the RCD permit coordination program (i.e., CEQA and General 401 certification are streamlined; other permits remain outside the program).

The first project to use the MCRCDD permit coordination program is located in the Upper Rancheria Creek watershed, where a landowner with 3600 acres is proposing to complete nine miles of road upgrade work, including installation of new bridges.

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

Dr. Steven 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. As of August 2013, the PACT Coordination Group is having internal discussions on the best way to move forward with PACT implementation. A detailed handout on the PACT effort was provided.

Dr. Swales stated that this has been a slow process, but hopefully in a few weeks some of the recommendations will be utilized in the field. Jonathan Ambrose added that he too is optimistic that some of the recommendations will be put into effect soon. Jonathan added that not all of the recommendations are controversial, but some are difficult to implement (e.g., hatchery recommendations).

8. CTM Large Wood Project THP and VTAC Pilot Project

As discussed at previous WFSW meetings, Campbell Timberland Management has developed a THP with a large wood enhancement component in the Smith Creek drainage, part of the SF Ten Mile River watershed in western Mendocino County. The incised channel has been cleared in the past; current wood loading is low and pool habitat is lacking. Smith Creek is a coho core area for recovery and is located in a good thermal zone. This is a Section V Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC) pilot project to demonstrate active riparian management to enhance habitat conditions for listed anadromous salmonids.

Dave Wright updated the group on this effort, stating that there are six sites where up to 30 trees will be felled along a 2,500 foot stretch of Smith Creek. The Mill-Smith THP (1-13-031 MEN) was submitted on April 15, 2013. It went through first review on April 25th and a PHI was held on May 30th-31st. Several recommendations were made by DFW staff and there were some disagreements, particularly related to monitoring requirements. Other issues included: (1) whether leaning WLPZ trees should be left for natural recruitment or felled for rapid entry, (2) felling red alder trees for “cushioning” redwood trees (reducing breakage), and (3) take of wildlife trees. Second review for the THP was held on August 14th, with a Second Review Team decision to recommend approval with five additional mitigation measures. Dave stated that CTM RPF Zach Jones will accept the Second Review Team recommendations. Before and after habitat typing and photo monitoring will

be utilized, but not long profiles or water temperature monitoring (this type of monitoring is occurring at numerous other reaches with wood projects on CTM timberlands). **Field work for this small scale project will occur during the summer of 2014.** Dave stated that he will continue to ask CTM RPFs to attempt to incorporate accelerated recruitment projects into future THPs.

9. Update on the SDSF Large Wood and Channel Complexity Project

A brief update on the Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) large wood and channel complexity project was provided by Pete Cafferata. Site 1 was completed last fall under a grant from the RCDSCC. Three redwood clumps were excavated and placed in the channel by Bob Pinkard Excavating. Monitoring by CGS has occurred, as was discussed at the last WFSW meeting. **Sites 2, 4, and 5 are being completed by Bob Pinkard Excavating under a CAL FIRE contract being implemented from August 15th to October 15th (contract amount: \$221,284).** Pre-project monitoring was completed by Dr. Sue Sogard, NOAA SWRSC.

To date (September 5, 2013), three structures have been installed at site 2 (a semi-engineered log cluster, an engineered log-vane with rootwad, and one non-engineered large log cluster). Approximately 200 foot of the channel was dewatered with a cofferdam and flexible pipe; fish removal occurred with qualified biologists. Jim Robins, *Alnus* Ecological, has coordinated the permitting process and assisted with the field installation. Steve Reynolds, CGS, is the lead engineer on the project. Jim posted a video showing the larger clump of redwoods being felled to create the non-engineered log cluster at the downstream end of site 2 (<http://youtu.be/HQYljQjY-xg>).

Goals of the project are to: (1) accomplish placement of large wood that will contribute to survival of coho salmon and steelhead in the Soquel Creek watershed, (2) demonstrate feasibility of a large wood placement project within the NMFS Recovery Plan area, and (3) conduct an experiment to determine success of different types of wood placement projects. Jonathan Ambrose, who initially asked for the project, stated that Soquel Creek, along with Aptos Creek, are the southern most streams with coho salmon, and are key drainages for recovery efforts. While this project on SDSF is limited in scope, a greater benefit may come from demonstrating the feasibility of wood projects to landowners and regulators in Santa Cruz County, where very little of this work has previously occurred. He added that he is excited about the project, but not about the cost of the work.

10. Brief Discussion on CAL FIRE/NMFS Approach for a THP Process for Wood Enhancement

Bill Snyder stated that a focused agency discussion is needed regarding: (1) what has been learned from the Mill-Smith THP and Rockpile Creek THP (1-13-023 SON) large wood site-specific proposal experiences, including ways to make large wood enhancement proposals as part of THPs less expensive for landowners, and (2) how the agencies can better coordinate their plan review efforts for these types of proposals. Bill suggested that at a minimum, the following agencies be involved: DFW (Jon Hendrix, Curt Babcock, Craig Weightman), NCRWQCB (Jonathan

Warmerdam), NMFS (Jonathan Ambrose), CAL FIRE (Leslie Markham and Mendocino/Sonoma Unit Foresters), and CGS (Dave Longstreth).

Next WFSW Meeting Date

Pete Cafferata agreed to send out a Doodle poll for a WFSW meeting to be held in late October-early November 2013.