

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (TAC) Notes – February 5, 2008

Chair – Ajay Singh

Ajay Singh opened the meeting with self introductions. The following were in attendance: Kelly Williams, Basia Trout, Seth Paine, Steve Tussing, Dan McManus, Bruce Ross, Aric Lester, Adam Henderson, Rebekah Funes, Dan Efseaff, Scott Rice, Bobie Hughes, Henry Lomeli, Beverley Anderson-Abbs, Josh Brown and Ellen Gentry.

Announcements

Bobie Hughes, Sacramento River Discovery Center is hosting their Annual Meeting on February 15, 2008 at Rolling Hills Casino. Donations are \$25 and include membership in the Center. Tickets are available at the Discovery Center.

Beverley Anderson-Abbs reported the Draft EIR for the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Habitat Restoration and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Development Project is available. A Public Hearing is scheduled at Bidwell Mansion, in Chico, February 19, 6:30-8:30PM. SRCAF will send notices and a link to the information.

Dan Efseaff reported the Snow Goose Festival and field trips were very successful.

Team Sunsweet is hosting a 50k/50k relay and 10k, highlighting the habitat and trails of the Bend Area BLM in Tehama County on April 19.

The Sierra Club is sponsoring a hike April 19 from Perry's Riffle along Paynes Creek in the Bend Area BLM, Tehama County. Kelly Williams will lead the hike. Additional hikes will be held during weekends in March and April.

Ajay Singh reported a benefit concert for Kids and Creeks will be held February 16 in Chico.

It has been recommended that the TAC reinstate a Vice Chair for continuity, if Ajay is unable to attend. Discussion centered on MOA signatories voluntarily rotating into the position on an annual basis, which would help keep up with communications between groups. Basia Trout, US Bureau of Reclamation, volunteered for the remainder of this year.

Activity Reports

Department of Water Resources - Scott Rice, URS/DWR, thanked those who participated in the mitigation workshop on January 8. Summary reports are in final review and participants will receive an email copy this week. He asked that SRCAF post the notes on the website.

Off site mitigation for the work at SAC182 is still incomplete. The title search and Phase I is completed for the property at SAC189.5R and assessment is forthcoming. No offer will be made on the mitigation site until April. The site was an active bank swallow site with 491 burrows last year. DWR is looking at purchasing 50 acres.

Scott reported there will be no field activities on the non-urban levee investigation program in 2008. There will be public outreach and three workshops beginning in April.

COE levee repair activity will be reported next month as available. There has been no update on the COE system wide vegetation policy. They will be addressing vegetation on the crown and land side of levees.

Bureau of Land Management - Kelly Williams gave a brief history on the 17,000 acre Bend Area BLM land. In 1993 the area was designated by BLM as a natural Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and managed as such. In 2002 it was identified as a potential National Conservation Area (NCA) in the Wilderness Bill, but met with opposition in Tehama County. In 2004 the Northwest Regional Advisory Council for BLM approved a resolution to designate the land as a National Recreation Area (NRA), supported by Tehama and Shasta Counties.

In December 2006 Congressman Herger and Senator Boxer produced independent bills (HR1241 and SB811 respectively) to designate it as an NRA. The bills were introduced in March 2007.

Both bills are in committee and designation is supported; however, language is not yet reconciled. Herger's bill requires an Advisory Council and identifies categories of participants. This bill focuses on recreation and economic improvement. Boxer's bill focuses on conservation for recreational opportunities. There are minor differences in the two bills that need to be reconciled, and either is acceptable to BLM. Copies of both bills are available.

Legislation would require a management plan within the first 2-3 years, which BLM would provide. No fees are currently charged and the management is for protection of biology. There is easy access for hiking, horse riding, hunting, etc., and use has been increasing. Resources include 17 miles of river frontage with riparian habitat of various widths and continuity of riparian habitat and uplands. Four leases provide grazing of 11,000 acres which would continue, along with hunting, fishing, and other activities. The new designation as an NRA would put the property into the National Landscape Conservation System which could allow for additional funding. For more information on this project, visit #131 at www.srcaprojectracker.org.

The TAC determined the project met with the principles and guidelines of the SRCAF Handbook and would present it to the SRCAF Board for approval of a support letter, thereby encouraging Congressman Herger and Senator Boxer to move forward.

Department of Water Resources - Aric Lester reported the Kopta Slough/Woodson Bridge Public Meeting was well attended with approximately 50 people and good coverage by the Red Bluff Daily News. Comments were addressed for the draft feasibility study and the project schedule was provided. The feasibility study still needs a decision memo from DWR Flood Management. Information will go into Project Tracker as appropriate.

CSU Chico - Rebekah Funes, CSUC Projects Coordinator, reviewed the Sacramento River Monitoring and Assessment Project (SRMAP) to assess current conditions and change in riparian vegetation and river dynamics on the Sacramento River. The aerial flight was done in June 2007. They are now working on a revision of the schedule of deliverables and a no-cost time extension. UC Santa Cruz has finished their portion of the field study which included understory analysis. TNC is consulting on the survey scorecard and monitoring plan for ecosystem indicators and protocols for analysis of data. A Public Meeting will be held in the fall.

The Nature Conservancy - Information is available on the SRCAF website regarding the Ecological Flows Study. A meeting was held last week in Sacramento to outline the Study. Discussion centered on focal species and how flows, quality of sediment for spawning, temperature data, and daily flows for the system affect species. More data can easily be included as science changes. Ryan Luster (TNC) was the lead for this CalFed funded project.

Current Projects

There were no current projects reviewed at this time

New Projects

Jelly's Ferry Habitat Restoration Project (RM 266-267L) (Tehama County) – The restoration is planned for 201 acres of BLM land near the Jelly's Ferry Bridge that serves as one of the main entrances to the Bend Area ACEC. River Partners and BLM will collaborate on the project. The surviving plants from a prior restoration attempt by CSU Chico will be irrigated and new plantings will be added to create a self-sustaining native habitat that establishes connectivity between the riparian and upland regions. Objectives include establishing both self-sustaining plant populations as well as structurally diverse wildlife habitat within a three year period. Impacts are not foreseen with regard to the county bridge project. Adjoining landowners have been contacted. Ajay Singh suggested contacting neighbors across the river as well. For more information on this project, visit #117 at www.srcaprojectracker.org.

The TAC determined the project met with the principles and guidelines of the SRCAF Handbook and would present it to the SRCAF Board for approval of a support letter.

Gover Ranch (RM 217-274L) (Tehama, Shasta Counties) – Gover Ranch has previously had Conservation (308 acres) and Agricultural (406 acres) easements purchased on the property. The current project includes providing restoration planning (River Partners) for the conservation easement on the private land including riparian restoration of fallow land and the phase-out and conversion of existing walnut orchards and grain fields. Restoration is planned in phases although a summary of the entire project was given. Details will be shared as it comes into focus. It was pointed out that the SRCAF has been involved in the project from the beginning. A question was raised about wildlife depredation on the agricultural easement. Kelly was unsure if the easement allowed for that but reported the landowner is deemphasizing farming for recreational hunting and eco-tourism. For more information on this project, visit #132 at www.srcafprojectracker.org.

The TAC determined the project met with the principles and guidelines of the SRCAF Handbook and would present it to the SRCAF Board for approval of a support letter.

Programmatic Safe Harbor/Voluntary Local Program

Josh Brown discussed the baseline survey forms being developed for the SHA/VLP. A meeting is scheduled for February 13 with DFG and USFWS to coordinate language. The baseline forms are simple; one page for each species. There is an allowance for GIS to be used to determine baseline habitat for some species. Comments or concerns are appreciated and information is available electronically if needed. The entire document has been sent for comment to those who have made requests and will go out more broadly. The person doing the baseline needs to be approved by agencies, the Program Administrator and the landowner. The SRCAF has been working with the California Rangeland Trust indirectly to ensure continuity of the two programs.

Ajay Singh requested a presentation about how baseline is established and who is approved to do baselines. It was pointed out that the baseline survey form and requirements are being kept as simple as possible to encourage private landowners to get involved in the program. The Agreement will be brought before the TAC and the SRCAF Board, public meetings will be held, and signatures are expected by the end of the year.

Next Meeting Date and Location

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, March 4, at Willows City Hall. The next SRCAF Board meeting is scheduled for March 20 at the Monday Afternoon Club in Willows.