

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (TAC) Notes – April 1, 2008

Vice Chair – Basia Trout

Vice Chair Basia Trout opened the meeting with self introductions. The following were in attendance: Aric Lester, Adam Henderson, Barbara Castro, Carol Barsotti, Chuck Nelson, Tom McCubbins, Rebekah Funes, Dan Efseaff, Scott Rice, Lady Bug Doherty, Gregg Werner, Woody Elliott, Tricia Bratcher, Suzanne Langridge, Josh Brown, and Ellen Gentry.

Announcements

The Watershed Festival is being held at Caldwell Park in Redding on May 3. The Sacramento River Discovery Center is holding a plant sale May 10, 9AM-1PM, 1000 Sale Lane, Red Bluff, as part of the Watershed Celebration. Other activities will be held concurrently. Call 527-1196 for details.

The California Native Grassland Association (CNGA) will be hosting a fieldtrip at Hedgerow Farms in Winters, Friday, April 18th, from 8:00am-4:00pm. For registration questions, contact CNGA at (530) 659-8458, or email admin@cnga.org.

A Riparian Weed Control Workshop is scheduled for April 16, 8:30AM-12:30PM at Cache Creek Nature Preserve, 34199 County Rd. 20, in Woodland. The focus on is tamarisk and arundo. Contact Tanya Meyer, Yolo Co. RCD, at (530) 662-2037 X 114, meyer@yolorcd.org, for detailed topics and speakers.

A flyer was made available on the Ecosystem Restoration on Agricultural Lands (ERAL) program. Eligible applicants include nonprofit conservation organizations and federal, state or local governmental agencies, including eligible resource conservation districts, ag land trusts and farm bureaus. Contact: Chad Fien, Program Manager, WCB, (916) 323-8979, cfein@dfg.ca.gov for specifics.

The SRCAF Annual Board Meeting/BBQ is scheduled for June 12, at Woodson Bridge State Park. The SRCAF May and July meetings have been cancelled.

Activity Reports

Department of Water Resources - Scott Rice, URS, presented the DWR Field Activities Report. The final AE for the Sacramento Bank River Bank Protection Program alternatives evaluation is expected mid April to allow the Corps time to work with landowners. Designs including hydraulic analysis are underway. The Corps has been made aware that Yolo County landowners were not informed regarding work at RM83.9R. Final report will reflect work with landowners, and that effort is underway. Because it is a setback, no mitigation needs or impacts are expected.

Additional comments have been received concerning the RM177.8R repair plan. The Modesto formation, the soil at this site, is not good bank swallow habitat; however there is an historic bank swallow habitat site just upriver. Surveys for raptors and past evidence of other birds are being completed. There were some concerns regarding fish screens. Hydrologic analysis work has not been completed yet, but no significant changes to flow patterns are anticipated. Reports will continue as analysis is completed. Ayres is doing the initial work with Tom Smith as the primary contact.

Before and after photos showing the re-vegetation at the RM 182 site were reviewed as follow-up to the site visit last year. A second site visit is being arranged.

DWR is working on the purchase of an easement at RM190 as mitigation for bank swallow habitat losses at RM182. This location would provide good bank swallow habitat for the long term. An assessment is anticipated in April/May. However the purchase through the State is not expected until the end of 2008. There are assurances from the property owner that they will not attempt to control erosion. Woody Elliot questioned whether habitat would be successful with rooted material at the site. Scott will report back to the group on his findings.

DWR Floodplain management is beginning the non-urban levee evaluation program. Workshops are tentatively scheduled for mid May in Chico, Sacramento, and Fresno to discuss the planned activities. Contracts are in place and histories and existing data are being gathered. LIDAR work is being done related to floodplain mapping. The 2007 fall levee inspections results have been released and the State is working on a strategy to maintain vegetation on levees as opposed to the Corps request to have all vegetation removed. An update will be given on how various districts are addressing these issues (i.e., visibility of crown so that waterside berms can be seen).

The initial phase of the Floodplain Evaluation and Delineation Project was launched in February, including topography, aerial photography and bathymetry, which will be incorporated into the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan. A ten year accounting of floodplain risks will ultimately occur by 2012. Chuck Nelson asked if the photography will be made available. Scott reported their contracts develop the database, which will hopefully be available online.

Scott added that Butte County would like to raise a flow structure to minimize flooding at the RM291.4 erosion site. They are waiting to see how the county can match funding.

Current Projects

Sacramento River Monitoring and Assessment Project (SRMAP)- Chuck Nelson gave an update on the mapping component consisting of two Sacramento River projects: The Sacramento River Monitoring and Assessment (Colusa to Red Bluff) and the Working Landscapes Project (Verona to Keswick Dam). A third project, the 2006 Cantara Mapping (Trustee Council) included Shasta Lake to Lake Siskiyou. The mapping effort will update and quantify changes since the 1999 map, support the SRMAP effort: habitat value, extent, impact scenarios, and restoration success; support the wildlife habitat conservation incentive program and establish a baseline for future monitoring.

The mapping process includes aerial photography taken last year with boundaries a mile from riparian habitat. Missed areas will be re flown next spring. The images have been orthorectified, assembled mosaically, and compressed for use. The interpretation and vegetation mapping from Colusa to Red Bluff has been completed using the CA Native Plant Society (CNPS) rapid assessment protocol, establishing crosswalks to the 1999 classification and the wildlife habitat relationship. Some problems with CNPS riparian classes included tree overstory vegetation, shrub overstory vegetation, and herbaceous vegetation. These are being reconciled.

The mapping draft and verification process is expected to be complete by May. Vegetative analysis field work will begin again in May. The Verona to Keswick Dam mapping is due November 2008. The scorecard, measuring the riparian ecosystem condition, is due July 2009. The aerial photos and the recreation and public atlas using the new photos can be reviewed on the www.sacramentoriver.org website homepage. These will be available for download and use once validation is complete. For more information, or for the user name and password, contact Chuck at cwnelson@csuchico.edu or go to www.gic.csuchico.edu.

Distribution of Agricultural Pests and Pest-Predators on the Sacramento River - Suzanne Langridge, UC Santa Cruz graduate student, gave a presentation on bird pests and pest control in walnut orchards along the Sacramento River. Twenty three farms have been monitored between Red Bluff to Colusa, each with an eight hectare area for bird and foraging surveys. The insect pests were found to have a negative effect on agricultural yield and included codling moth, European corn borer, and other herbivorous insects. Also included in the study is the effect of adjacent habitat types (remnant, restored and agricultural).

Monitoring was done during winter, because farms are least disturbed by fungicides and pesticides at that time of year. Suzanne has been comparing local and landscape variables to explain the density of insect eating birds. Local variables include average tree height and the percent of herbaceous cover. Landscape variables include distance to water. There was no landscape effect in 2006.

Bird pests were found to decrease with a proportional area of riparian habitat. With more riparian habitat there is higher density of insect eating birds, more insect eating birds foraging, more successful foraging attempts, higher species richness and lower density of pest flocks. Suzanne plans to follow up in the summer on migratory birds and hopes to continue follow up with changes over the seasons. Suzanne's pest and regulatory information was used in the Colusa Subreach Planning work as a valuable data source.

Kopta Slough Flood Protection and Habitat Restoration Project (Tehama County) – The main goals of this project include providing flood damage reduction benefits, advance mitigation credits, and ecosystem benefits, establishing long term public ownership and expanding recreational opportunities. Implementation elements include: protect the west abutment of Woodson Bridge and the City of Corning sewer outfall; reduce the erosion rate along the east riverbank at the Woodson Bridge State Recreation area; and restore 176 acres of mixed riparian forest habitat on the Kopta Slough property as mitigation for DWR flood control projects. The project appears to be consistent with the multiple objectives that DWR seeks to accomplish under its FloodSAFE program and has potential as an advance mitigation project. DWR Flood management has decided to move forward with preparation of the feasibility study. The final feasibility report is scheduled for January 2009. Construction may begin in early 2011

The removal of revetment (partial and full removal alternatives) would restore natural processes. One alternative, including a pilot channel, would result in the river taking a course to reoccupy Kopta Slough-taking pressure off State Parks Property, reducing erosion at Woodson Bridge State Park and providing ecosystem benefits. The project would include the transfer of the 708acre property from the CA State Controller Environmental Trust to the State of CA for management by CA State Parks and restoration of 176 acres of mixed riparian forest habitat on the Kopta Slough property. An extended revetment would protect the west abutment of Woodson Bridge and the City of Corning sewer outfall and provide flood damage reduction benefits.

The feasibility study will incorporate biological resources and economic function, cultural resources, recreation, deauthorization process, permitting process and mitigation cost, geomorphic assessment, engineering analysis and hydraulic modeling, recommendations and conclusions.

Adam Henderson, DWR reviewed some background data for the stretch RM218-221 showing channel maps beginning in 1937. Geology mapping shows the 100 year meander belt as well, including a 25 year erosion projection and a 50 year erosion projection. The DWR Geology section has also been doing more specific erosion studies at this location. These studies are showing that erosion rates are fairly high and the east bridge abutment may also become a concern.

Tricia Bratcher expressed interest in coordination with the Deer Creek Conservancy. Aric noted that there is a level of coordination and that two dimensional modeling will be done. Josh Brown, SRCAF, will schedule a meeting with DWR and Deer Creek Conservancy to discuss overlap and collaboration opportunities.

New Projects or Proposal Review

Lake California Water Intake Fish Screen (RM 170) (Tehama County) -Tricia Bratcher, DFG, reported on the project. The current fish screen is owned by DFG and does not have the minimum size criteria required. At the current location, silt and debris build up require constant maintenance. The project would involve removing the existing screen and associated structure, and installing a new screen on a track system. Intake would also be relocated to avoid the backwater area. The new fish screen would meet federal and state mandates for safe fish passage by protecting naturally produced juvenile salmon and steelhead from being drawn into an irrigation diversion while allowing agricultural irrigation to continue. The project is a collaborative effort between local landowners and state and federal agency partners, including USFWS and the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP). DFG will provide cost share for the project.

Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement/Voluntary Local Program (SHA/VLP)

The SRCAF Board approved staff to send in an application for the incidental take permit under the safe Harbor Program. A summary handout was provided detailing the program, which will be offered to private landowners within the SRCA. The summary and a draft copy of the SHA/VLP is available on the SRCAF website: www.sacramentoriver.org/srcaf, under News and Announcements. Two public meeting will be set for later this month. Specifics are available by contacting Josh Brown, SRCAF (530) 528-7401, brownj@water.ca.gov.

Next Meeting Date and Location

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, May 6, at Willows City Hall.