

SRCAF Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Meeting notes – May 3, 2011

Chair: Tom McCubbins

Tom McCubbins opened the meeting with self introductions. The following were in attendance: Henry Lomeli, Ryan Luster, Mary Lee Knecht, Sharon McHale, Mary Randall, Kathy Bishop, Ron Ganzfried, Kelly Moroney, Dan Frisk, Chris Barr, Michael Fehling, Les Heringer, Kirk Coon, Jeff Sutton, and James Wiekling.

Staff: Jane Dolan, Rob Irwin and Ellen Gentry.

Announcements

Kelly Moroney, USFWS, announced a Public Scoping meeting for the PCGID-PID Riparian Sanctuary Project, May 10, at the Ord Bend Community Center. DFG is the lead agency for CEQA; Tracy Reynolds is the point of contact.

Mary Randall, DWR, reported the Governor has issued a non-essential travel ban for state agencies. There will be a Regional Forum, June 2, for stakeholders in the Sacramento River Valley to learn of reports and actions on water issues, an update of the Californian Water Plan and information on DWR programs and other agencies. The IRWIM Conference will be held in Sacramento on May 24-25. Water industry leaders and stakeholders from across the state will meet and discuss how to work together to craft regional water management plans, and how to coordinate with DWR and the State Water Plan. The CA Water Plan Advisory meeting will be held in Sacramento, May 18. Green sturgeon abundance surveys have begun. This is an effort with DWR and UC Davis, funded by USACE. Data is used for modeling biological opinion. Also, the Golden Guardian exercise will take place May 16-18. This emergency response simulates major flooding in the Central Valley in order to locate potential problems.

Activity Reports

There were no activity reports at this time.

New Projects or Proposal Review

M&T Llano Seco Fish Screen (Project Tracker #58) - Les Heringer gave a review on the M&T/Llano Seco Pumping Plant/Chico Outfall. The preparation of the environmental report of alternatives for protection of the facilities located at RM192.5 is underway and is being coordinated by Ducks Unlimited (DU). This analysis is expected to be completed by the end of this calendar year. Underwater assessments of the gravel bar and continued encroachment of gravel on the fish screens are planned when the water has cleared. DU is working on a third suction dredging at this time, as it appears another removal of gravel will be needed. There is a need to make space for the next dredging for placement of additional gravel spoil. DFG has granted the ranch permission to screen fines from the existing gravel stockpile, use the fines on ranch roads and continue to stockpile the larger rock sizes for their use for salmon spawning at a later date. Les indicated other potential uses might include the Caltrans construction project planned for the replacement of the Hwy 99 Bridge over Butte Creek, south of Chico, and the use of gravel in Butte Creek below the Hwy 99 Bridge to fill the large holes that impair salmon spawning movement upstream. DU is also putting together funding and working with HDR Engineering for CEPA/NEPA environmental documentation for the suction dredging. Mike Harvey, Tetrattech Engineering, will be arriving later this spring to use river sounding to determine exactly where the gravel has accumulated. DU is working to see that the rock on USFWS property on the west bank stay until there is a long term fix.

Kelly Moroney noted the permit/environmental compliance for the temporary toe rock, on USFWS Capay Unit property, expires in 2012. The intent was a temporary measure to maintain the viability of long-term solution alternatives. Stakeholders are continuing to work on a long-term solution to protect the pumping plant, so a time extension for the toe rock project is needed. The USFWS will be developing a joint CEQA/NEPA document in the interim, proposing to extend the time period for the toe rock until a long-term solution is developed.

Current Projects/Updates

North of the Delta Off Stream Storage (NODOS) - James Wieking, DWR, presented a Power Point and reviewed the NODOS objectives: water supply reliability (agricultural, urban, refuge and emergency response), anadromous fish and other aquatic species survival, Delta water quality, flexible hydropower generation to support renewable integration, recreation and flood damage reduction. Stakeholder participants identified the flow regime of the Sacramento River as one of the primary areas of concern related to potential implementation impacts. Early conceptual formulations of a NODOS project conceived that the flow regime and associated ecosystem processes of the river could be improved with an Offstream storage facility.

Investigation requested the formation of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to identify potential NODOS flow regime impacts and improvements, and further the general understanding of Sacramento River flow regime. The TAG can help identify ecosystem restoration benefits of NODOS and help develop operational guidance for NODOS diversions. The group identified improvement opportunities: increase peak flows during winter/spring to support physical river functions, restore spring snowmelt pattern to support cottonwood success, stabilize fall flows to avoid stranding and desiccation, increase spring flow duration in the Yolo Bypass, reduce diversions and improve river temperatures for salmonids. They also suggested an assessment of the river's flow regime using a shorter time-step than CALSIM II - a modeling tool for water resource systems simulation (monthly), consideration of additional tools to describe effects of the project and consideration of the CalFed Ecosystem Restoration Program. The model is a product of joint development between DWR and Bureau of Reclamation.

Red Bank Reservoir (and others within Cottonwood Creek watershed), Newville Reservoir, Colusa Reservoir and Sites Reservoir were considered as alternatives. Three alternatives for detailed evaluation were reviewed for Sites Reservoir.

Ecosystem Enhancement Actions (EEA) included in alternatives: improve the reliability of coldwater pool storage in Shasta Lake; provide releases from Shasta Dam to improve Sacramento River water temperatures during below normal, dry and critical water year types; improve the reliability of coldwater pool storage in Folsom Reservoir to maintain or improve water temperatures in the lower American River, May through November - all year types; provide supplemental Delta outflow during summer and fall months to improve X2 (a measure of water quality); improve the reliability of coldwater pool storage in Lake Oroville to improve water temperature from May through November during all water year types; stabilize flows in the Sacramento River between Keswick Dam and the Red Bluff Diversion Dam, particularly during fall months; and provide increased flows from spring through fall in the lower Sacramento River, by reducing diversions at Red Bluff and Hamilton City.

James Wieking also reviewed the NODOS operational schedule and assumptions regarding NODOS intake operations. He also reviewed an example of Pulse Protection (graph) and gave some sample results from the NODOS alternatives. Charts were shown total storage, total diversions and releases, river temperatures, stability flows and Delta Water Quality improvement.

The Public Draft NODOS EIR/EIS and Feasibility Study report is expected in December 2011. The Final Draft NODOS EIR/EIS and Feasibility Study report is anticipated in December 2012. For more information, contact James at jwieking@water.ca.gov; Sharon McHale, Bureau of Reclamation, smchale@usbr.gov; or go to project websites: <http://www.water.ca.gov/storage/northdelta/index.cfm>, <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nodos/index.html>. The PowerPoint presented today will also be placed on the SRCAF website: <http://www.sacramentoriver.org/srcaf>.

Jeff Sutton, Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, commented that there is a lot of support in this region for this project. This is a way Northern California can contribute upstream, to protect what we have here with local governance.

Department of Fish and Game Presentation

Henry Lomeli, DFG, was invited by Jane Dolan, SRCAF Manager, to present information about the deer population along the Sacramento River. Henry talked about the importance of habitat on successful restoration activities and reported deer live in remnant areas and acquired orchards now planted in habitat areas. In

impenetrable jungle, bears and mountain lions can also be found. With recreation and refuge lands there are now well over 20,000acs of preserved and restoration habitat between Redding and Colusa.

The deer population carrying capacity – generally what is needed for herds to survive when the river floods - is impacted when habitat is inundated for several weeks. As deer seek higher ground, this can cause extensive mortality due to vehicle collisions, illegal hunting and direct contact with other animals. Deer preen, lick, bite, scratch, and can become infested through direct contact with louse causing hair loss. Nutritional stress causes scours. Cold temperatures for a continued period of time cause mortality. Nematode worms spread in lung tissue, which creates perfect conditions for pneumonia. Animals then consume their own fat to fight the pneumonia. Larvae are deposited in feces in vegetation, which migrates into the system. Lung worms are a natural biological element specific to deer, and have long been documented as a sign of deer in close proximity to each other. Lung worms are not contagious when consumed by humans in deer meat. Agricultural problems with overpopulation also includes: depredation impacts, droppings in orchards, trespass poaching and deer killing or stunting growth of new trees. Although costly, fences can be designed as removable in order to be reused.

CSU, Chico is involved in studying healthy ways to use this resource. As reporting of conflicts with agriculture increase, obtaining population density estimates, calculating carrying capacity, body conditions and life spans can assist in finding ways to deal with healthy, surplus animals. Hunting is a tool that generates revenue and can help solve the surplus. Trying to integrate legal, recreational sport hunting, with a depredation permit, can integrate a public benefit by providing a chaperoned presence and minimizing losses. Antlerless hunting works to control large populations, but some areas are opposed to antlerless hunting. Henry will provide updates if antlerless hunting is pursued. Jane commented that due to discussions with landowners, the SRCAF will continue to monitor this issue and work to seek solutions for both wildlife and farmers.

Next Meeting Date and Location

The next TAC meeting is scheduled for 9:30-Noon, June 7, 2011, at Willows City Hall.