

## Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (TAC) Notes – October 7, 2008

Chair – Ajay Singh

Vice Chair – Basia Trout

Chair Ajay Singh opened the meeting with self introductions. The following were in attendance: Scott Rice, Tom McCubbins, Jessica Gibbs, Kelly Williams, Henry Lomeli, Michael Fehling, John Merz, David van Rijn, Tom McCubbins, Jeff Sutton, Ashley Indrieri, Debbi Lemburg, Seth Paine, Woody Elliott, Gabe Garbarino, Ryan Bonea, Beverley Anderson-Abbs, Josh Brown, and Ellen Gentry.

### Announcements

The Sacramento Environmental Flows Tool (SacEFT) Workshop is being held October 7-8, hosted by TNC. USFWS and DFG will be attending.

The CALFED Science Conference is being held October 22-24 at the Sacramento Convention Center. Detailed information is available on the SRCAF website: [www.sacramentoriver.org](http://www.sacramentoriver.org).

The Sacramento River Discovery Center is holding their Fall Festival and Plant Sale, Saturday, November 1, 9AM to 1PM, 1000 Sale Lane, Red Bluff. For more information call (530) 527-1196.

The Return of the Salmon Festival is October 18, 9AM to 4PM, at Coleman National Fish Hatchery, Anderson. For more information call (530) 365-8622.

The Dairyville Orchard Festival is October 18, 10AM to 4PM, at Lassen View School, Los Molinos.

PRBO Conservation Science provided booklets titled Bringing the Birds Back – A Guide to Habitat Enhancement for Birds in the Sacramento Valley. For additional copies, contact SRCAF or PRBO at [www.prbo.org](http://www.prbo.org).

State Parks is updating their Strategic Plan and will be hosting public meetings; SRCAF will announce dates as soon as they are set.

The SRCAF Board Policy regarding Proposal/Project Review was reexamined, as a result of recent requests for letters of support made directly to the Board. The policy requires that, before going to the Board, a project must be entered into Project Tracker at least ten days prior to the next TAC meeting and be on the TAC agenda as a New Project or Proposal. The project is presented to the TAC for discussion, with attention given to how it meets the Principles and Guidelines of the SRCAF Handbook and a letter of support may be requested. If found to meet the Principles and Guidelines, project information and the TAC recommendation will be sent to Board members, and the project will be placed on the agenda as an action item (for the letter of support). It is important that the project proponent attend the Board meeting to respond to any questions that may arise. Copies of the Board Policy and Goal of the SRCA Program were made available and are on the SRCAF website.

### Activity Reports

Department of Water Resources – Scott Rice, URS, reported the PL84-99 site repairs at Elder and Deer Creeks are in construction and vegetation planting has begun. Use of a stinger tool for planting will speed up the process and increase survival of the 24,000-30,000 new plants. Scott will make arrangements with the Corps and DWR for a presentation next month.

The Sacramento Bank Protection Program is underway. Repair at RM177.8 is in construction and is expected to be completed by the end of the month. Planting will be done in November. Five sites from the 2008 program have been postponed until 2009. Twenty seven other sites are being considered; more specific site(s) information will be available next month. DWR is reviewing bank swallow habitat to see that the species is not impacted by these repairs. More information on outreach for these projects will also be made available next month.

DWR will be holding a public workshop on the draft guidelines for the Early Implementation Program October 15. Other workshops and meetings are available on the DWR website: [www.water.ca.gov/calendar](http://www.water.ca.gov/calendar).

Outreach is currently being planned for the non-urban levee evaluation and floodplain mapping program. Initial contact with stakeholders will be made.

DWR will go for another grant cycle for the local levee assistance grant program. Another workshop for guidelines will be scheduled.

Another levee vegetation roundtable will be held in October. Meanwhile, current levee inspection policy is still in place. The final phase will work more with the Corps' white paper.

### **New Projects or Proposal Review**

There were no new projects or proposal reviews at this time.

**Hamilton City Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration** – David van Rijn, USACE, presented the 60% design phase for the proposed setback levee and existing levee removal for the Hamilton City project. The Corps process includes five phases: reconnaissance, feasibility, design, construction, operation and maintenance. The 90% design should be completed by late December, 100% by March 2009.

TNC has purchased most of the land that will be on the water side of the new levee; other parcels are being negotiated and traded so affected farmers can continue to farm. TNC will donate the land to Reclamation District 2140. 1,500acs of restoration are planned, connecting to other restoration areas owned by DFG and USFWS. Cost for the entire project is estimated at \$53.6 million.

David explained the need for a positive benefits/cost ratio on Corps projects and that the habitat restoration along with the setback levee made this a feasible project. They are looking into using material from the degraded J-levee and spoils from the Glenn-Colusa canal in construction of the setback levee. An 8ft chain link fence with gates is planned for the length of the project (6.8mi) to protect orchards from possible wildlife damage, and to keep people out of the restoration areas. A 15ft wide road on either side of the levee will provide access for general maintenance. A new drainage canal will carry water under Hwy 32. Drainage to the river is planned to avoid pooling in specific areas. Soil samples (1,600) were matched with the moisture content of plant correct species for specific areas.

Henry Lomeli, DFG, noted that the fencing is a significant barrier for wildlife movement during a flood event. He also asked about estimates on the maximum amount of inundation time when the fence could be blocking escape of animals from flood events. They would be trapped on the levee with no thermal protection or means of dispersal. He recommended the impacts on wildlife need to be reviewed very carefully.

John Merz, Sacramento River Preservation Trust, felt the fence would also have unintended consequences, serve as a barrier for debris, and blocks County Road 23. He also pointed out that there is a potential recreation component in the restoration area that has not been considered.

David recommended contacting the Reclamation District 2140, which can then talk to the Corps. The Reclamation District announced they will be the non-federal sponsor for construction and the ecosystem restoration, and has responsibility for maintenance. The plan is to move forward unless they hear otherwise. He said the Public Review was done in 2003, and was unsure if the fence was brought up at that time, but that the fence was included in the feasibility report.

Woody Elliott, CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation, asked about the 10 year level of protection now for Hamilton City. David said the new levee will provide a 75 year level of protection with 90% certainty. He will talk to the head geology engineer to find out at what flood event the town sees inundation. Also, a permit would be needed to block off the county road. Dave will check on this as well.

Kelly Moroney, USFWS, asked if elderberry that grows naturally would have to be removed during maintenance. Dave said they would need to be removed before they reach 1" diameter, and reviewed the required 300ft buffer of no elderberry from the toe of the levee. Kelly added that USFWS wouldn't consider being responsible for the project area if it meant keeping a 300ft buffer clear. Beverley suggested a review of the biological opinion would be in order.

A letter of support from the SRCAF was requested, however due to concerns and questions regarding design issues and maintenance, it was recommended that Reclamation District 2140 provide information at the December TAC. The letter of support was tabled until there are communications with Reclamation District 2140.

### **Current Projects/Updates**

*Sacramento Valley Fish Screen Monitoring Program* – Ashley Indrieri, Family Water Alliance, reported that 24 small water diversions have been screened since 1996, and that FWA has just entered into a new agreement with DFG to continue for five years with 15 diversions. The voluntary program is now

implementing biological assessments from Natural Resource Scientists, Inc. (NRSI) to gather preliminary data. Biologist Dave Vogel will be available for two seasons of monitoring the diversions, followed by the installation of fish screens. Screens, Inc. will be fabricating and installing their fish screen systems. MBK Engineers, Inc. will provide engineering, construction management, oversight, and approvals. Efforts will be prioritized. The current focus is in the Chico Landing area. Handout information states that each diverter who participates in the pilot assessment will be provided a fish screen.

Jeff Sutton, Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, added that the program is an entrainment monitoring study. The number of diversions taking fish will determine whether to continue funding small diversions, streamline permitting processes or give farmers a waiver if they're not taking fish. There is no environmental review; the baseline is simply to gather data, and there is an assumption that diversions take some fish. Sites are ranked by engineering and environmental needs. Sites will be selected on ease, cost, and location, and will be done in stages: three the first year, six the next year and six the last year. Education and outreach will continue throughout the life of the program.

DFG and the Bureau of Reclamation are funding the program with a 50/50 cost share. There is no cost to landowners during this program. FWA is the grantee and program manager. Ashley explained the "other side" of FWA is still funded by private donations.

There are currently 2,000 unscreened water diversions on the Sacramento River and 2,000 in the delta, according to DFG's Cal fish database. The cost for screening is estimated to be \$9,000/cfs for FWA, while DFG has estimated their cost at \$30,000/cfs. 100cfs is the largest diversion FWA has done, but they expect to screen a 126cfs diversion. Ashley will work to continue updates to the TAC.

Codora Unit Habitat Restoration and Public Use Project-EA (PT#130) RM167.5-168.5 (Glenn Co.)– Kelly Moroney, USFWS, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Environmental Assessment. The goal of the ongoing project is to restore 274.5ac of native wildlife habitat for fish, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species. The unit contains approximately 130ac of existing riparian habitat.

TNC and FWS are seeking funding for the 399ac project through WBC to include orchard removal, site preparation, plant propagation and planting, three years of irrigation, weed control, and monitoring. Alternative A – (No Action) includes no restoration; 274.5ac of walnuts would be removed and land would remain fallow with continued control of pest plant species. Alternative B – (Preferred) includes restoration of 208ac valley oak savanna, 30ac of cottonwood riparian forest, 28.5ac of mixed riparian forest, 8ac of grassland, with no elderberries or woody plants within 100' of the Butte City Bridge. Alternative C – restoration would include 274.5ac of mixed riparian forest with no elderberries or woody plants within 100' of the Butte City Bridge.

The hydraulic analysis, conducted by Ayres in 2005 and 2007, indicted no increase to surface elevations and no impacts to overflows in the Butte Basin with the preferred alternative restoration. Following restoration, public access to the Codora Unit will be opened for fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and environmental education. FWS is working with State Parks to develop a conceptual visitor service program including trail access and public parking.

Copies of the EA are available at [www.fws.gov/sacramentovalleyrefuges](http://www.fws.gov/sacramentovalleyrefuges). Hardcopies are available to review at the Refuge office and at local libraries in Willows and Princeton. A 45 day comment period is open until Nov. 17. Comments should be sent to Kelly Moroney, 759 County Rd. 99W, Willows, CA 95988 or call (530) 934-2801.

Red Bluff Diversion Dam (PT#144) – Basia Trout, Bureau of Reclamation, summarized the fish passage improvement project. The purpose is to substantially improve the long-term ability for anadromous fish and other species of concern to pass the Red Bluff Diversion Dam during migration(RBDD), and reliably and cost effectively move sufficient water into the Tehama-Colusa and Corning Canal systems to meet the needs of the water districts served by Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority (TCCA). Currently the Bureau of Reclamation operates the diversion dam. TCCA will operate and maintain the fish screen and pumping plant.

The Bureau's decision is to implement the Preferred Alternative as described in the FEIS/EIR, specifically to construct a new pumping plant at the Mill site on the north side of Red Bank creek. Two comments were received on the Final EIS/EIR regarding air quality rules and water quality monitoring during

and post construction. Currently the dam gates are in four months out of the year, creating lake Red Bluff to allow gravity irrigation. The Bureau now anticipates gates in July 1 through August.

Litigation has begun on the environmental documentation relating to mitigation and there are concerns regarding losing Lake Red Bluff's aesthetic and recreational values. The SRCAF received a call from the Mendocino Forest Service regarding potential loss of the lake and asking that they be included in communication by TCCA and BOR. Jeff stated that he had not heard from them but that the Forest Service has expressed concern.

Jeff added that Pactiv landfill is a specific part of the design and will be remediated. Bev asked about the possibility of including a research facility of some kind and partnering with Shasta College or CSU Chico. SRCAF has discussed some possible solutions for new recreational or research opportunities with the city of Red Bluff and will continue to try to work with them.

The project is currently in the design phase for construction. More information is available through Jeff Sutton and Don Reck, contacts for the project, or on the SRCAF website: [www.sacramentoriver.org/srcaf](http://www.sacramentoriver.org/srcaf).

It was determined that the project meets the SRCAF Principals and Guidelines and will go to the Board for a letter supporting funding for the project. John Merz, Sacramento River Preservation Trust, did not participate in this determination due to the litigation.

#### **Next Meeting Date and Location**

The next TAC meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, November 4, at Willows City Hall.