

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting – July 6, 2004

Chair ~ Anjanette Martin

Vice Chair – Stacy Cepello

The Chair opened the meeting with self introductions, followed by announcements and public comments. Vickie Newlin, CALFED Bay-Delta Authority, asked if the September TAC meeting could be scheduled in the afternoon so that representatives could come to discuss the Action Specific Implementation Plan. The group agreed to a start time of 1:00 p.m. on September 7th with the informational workshop starting between 2:00 and 2:30 p.m. SRCAF staff will email the broader TAC group to see if skipping the August meeting would create any problems for anyone, specifically regarding projects.

Activity Reports -

Annalena Bronson, Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported the Reclamation Board will consider the Hamilton City Project on July 16th to certify the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement. DWR is the state lead under the CEQA process.

Gregg Werner, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), reported the SRCAF Board approved the Memorandum of Agreement between the SRCAF and TNC regarding the Colusa Subreach Planning Study. The SRCAF will partner with TNC on the public outreach aspects. The study will include identifying and addressing landowner concerns. They are currently in the process of choosing a facilitator; Gregg will bring more information back to the TAC and Board in the next 2-3 months.

Vickie Newlin, California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA) announced the CBDA Committee is meeting July 8th and will be discussing the Delta Improvements Package and the Finance Options Report. CBDA staff released the Finance Options Report which included discussion on user fees that has generated a lot of comments and concerns. They are now looking at creating a 10-year financing plan focusing on what they need rather than how to finance it.

A question was raised about a proposed project in Butte City by CalTrans and Sacramento River Partners and whether or not it had been discussed at the TAC. SRCAF staff will follow up on the status of this project.*

*(*Following the meeting it was determined this project, The Gaines Ranch Project, had been discussed at the January 7, 2003 TAC, the April 1, 2003 TAC, and the April 17, 2003 Board meeting. A letter to the potential funding source, Wildlife Conservation Board, was sent on April 18, 2003 finding it consistent with the guidelines of the Handbook.)*

Current Projects/Updates –

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge – Kelly Moroney, Assistant Refuge Manager and Jackie Ferrier, Refuge Planner, discussed the Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) which has just been completed. The public comment will be open from July 8th through August 20th. The CCP is a requirement of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. The plan looks at three alternatives for managing the Refuge in Tehama, Butte, Glenn, and Colusa counties for the next 15 years, as funding allows. Several public input meetings are scheduled: July 20th in Willows, July 21st in Chico, July 27th in Red Bluff, and July 29th in Colusa. They will also be meeting with the Boards of Supervisors of Butte, Colusa, Glenn and Tehama counties to give a briefing on the plan. The two main issues that were addressed were habitat management and public use. Currently there is no public use on Refuge lands other than daytime use at Packer Lake. The EA recognizes three alternatives: (1) No Action (2) Optimize habitat restoration and public use (proposed action) and (3) Accelerated restoration and maximize public use. The Draft CCP/EA can be obtained electronically at

<http://sacramentovalleyrefuges.fws.gov>. Copies are also available in the Tehama, Butte, Colusa, and Glenn County libraries and many of the local businesses such as Kittle's Outdoor and Sport Company, Scotty's, Four Corners Store, The Tackle box in Chico, Woodson Bridge Mini-Mart, and others.

Discussion on Safe Harbor –

Robert LaFleur, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), discussed Safe Harbor Agreements (SHA) which can be developed between the USFWS and non-Federal property owners. Before entering into a SHA, the USFWS must make a finding that the covered endangered or threatened species will receive a “net conservation benefit”. The Agreement refers to Federal threatened or endangered species only and can list one or several species. The SHA participant can request an amendment to the Agreement to add new species as they are listed. The development of a SHA includes establishing a baseline to document the current conditions. Once the Agreement is finalized, the USFWS would issue a 10(a)(1)(A) permit; the permit allows the participant to return their property to the baseline conditions at the end of the Agreement. Neighboring landowners who are concerned about possible endangered species migration onto their property can also get assurances under the SHA but would need a baseline and follow-up monitoring.

It was noted that DWR Flood Management is discussing the possibility of a programmatic SHA with USFWS to help reduce the conflict between protecting threatened and endangered species and carrying out required flood maintenance activities. If this effort moves forward, there is potential to partner with groups like the SRCAF to incorporate landowner issues and make it as broad an umbrella as possible.

Cross-Boundary Issues – Stacy provided a handout of a draft work plan dealing with identifying significant cross-boundary issues, prioritizing those issues, gathering and summarizing information on the items of greatest concern, and providing specific recommendations on how to avoid or minimize conflicts between neighbors. The draft work plan listed tasks to be completed to develop a final summary report and recommendations. One of the tasks involved developing a comprehensive description of all Endangered Species Act and California State Endangered Species Act threatened and endangered species and special status species found in the Conservation Area. Stacy agreed to gather existing information on listed species for the next TAC meeting to help narrow this task down to the actual species that would need to be addressed. It was noted this is very close to what the Landowner Assurances Committee is working on and the TAC Chair felt the draft work plan should be taken to the Board for their input on how to proceed. The Chair and Vice Chair will prepare a memo on this issue to be included in the Board packets and will ask for direction from the Board at the July 15th meeting.

Miscellaneous Items -

- John Merz, Sacramento River Preservation Trust, noted that some projects, such as maintenance, are not coming before the TAC and should be more involved in the process. He also noted there needed to be more follow-up on studies that have been completed so that the committee can be informed of the results of those studies.
- Kelly Moroney reported they are not moving forward with the work at South Avenue because it was determined it would not be cost-effective.
- Stacy reported that Chico State is looking for additional funding to expand the recreation and public access site. Currently there are plans to extend its coverage above Shasta Lake.

The database for the project tracking website has been completed but because it is interactive, security issues prevent DWR from hosting the site. A third party option is being considered for the interactive site.

Next Meeting - The next meeting was tentatively set for September 7th at 1:00 p.m. at the Willows City Hall.