

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (TAC) Notes – May 2, 2006

Chair - Ajay Singh

Vice Chair - Stacy Cepello

Vice chair Stacy Cepello opened the meeting with self introductions. The following were in attendance: Kelly Moroney, Dean Kwasny, Craig Isola, Ladybug Doherty, Gregg Werner, Greg Golet, Tom McCubbins, Dan Efseaff, Myrnie Mayville, Beverley Anderson-Abbs, and Ellen Gentry.

Announcements

Dean Kwasny, Associate Wildlife Biologist, CA Dept. of Fish and Game, discussed the CA Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) proposal, an effort to reverse the decline of special status species in the Central Valley through the enhancement and management of habitat on private lands. Once funded, the program will provide participating landowners with annual incentive payments in return for implementing habitat management efforts designed to benefit special status species. Focus areas include the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers. Funding for projects under the LIP should be available by 2007, and will compensate landowners up to \$400/acre/year for a 10 year period.

Craig Isola, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, says the program establishes corridors linking existing areas of habitat, slows down the erosion rate, and provides Ag and natural resource benefits. There is a 75% cost share on actual restoration. The landowner's 25% may be in-kind.

Beverley Anderson-Abbs asked what happens if habitat is put in and the river continues to erode leaving a landowner with fewer acres than the initial agreement. Dean said there is flexibility and such things could be written into the agreement up front. It would be hard to add additional money if habitat grew. They will consider this when program rules are developed. Outreach will include the TAC.

Activity Reports

M & T Ranch (RM 192) - Kelly Moroney gave an update about the April 24/25 workshop where alternatives to protect the water supply while allowing river processes were discussed. Channel dredging and rock groins are still feasible options and will go into Phase II for further analysis, environmental review, and final design. Ranney Collectors have been determined to be economically unfeasible and have been taken out of consideration. Gregg Werner asked about offsets for the placement of rock. Kelly reported this would be part of the analysis with consideration given to erosion and meander.

Drumheller Slough (RM 164) – Kelly reported that, in partnership with River Partners, the Drumheller Slough/Princeton Ferry area has gone through NEPA compliance and funding has been secured through WCB and CVPIA. Additional Ayres analysis has been done to make sure there is no impact on the system. After Reclamation Board review, they are expecting to break ground this spring. Kelly has met with all adjacent landowners.

La Barranca Unit (RM 137-139) – Kelly announced this project has been previously presented to SRCAF by River Partners. In 2002 the feasibility study for habitat restoration on 450 acres of walnuts, weed control, and eventual removal of a “nuisance” levee was completed. River Partners and US Fish and Wildlife have worked with Tehama County and have determined that removal of the levee will reduce flood impacts downstream. An agreement has been made with neighboring landowners to complete restoration, to act as a filter for debris coming into the orchard, before breaching the levee. There has been no evidence of fish stranding and fishery experts have said it is not a significant issue for juvenile salmon.

Kelly announced a grand opening event for a new walking trail at the Rio Vista Unit on South Avenue, May 13 at 8:00am. This will be part of Migratory Bird Day. Call for more information to reserve a spot.

Big Chico Creek (RM 193) – Woody Elliott reported all permits have been satisfied for putting in the gravel parking lot and slab for the boat ramp. Installation is expected by the end of summer. This project is in Project Tracker (#92).

Del Rio (RM 175) – Dan Efseaff reported on the notice in the Federal Register for a Safe Harbor Agreement on the Del Rio Property, owned by River Partners. The SHA will allow them to plant 2,000-4,000 elderberry plants on the property with assurances that they may be removed if necessary for levee maintenance. They are in the process of securing a Reclamation Board permit. Adjacent landowners may sign up for assurances under this agreement. This will be the first Safe Harbor Agreement on the Sacramento River. Dan also reported on a tour last weekend at Ord Bend.

Vance Russell, California Audubon, will be hosting a restoration tour after the meeting today, beginning at Audubon headquarters in Winters. The tour will include several sites and options available to landowners who are interested in doing small scale habitat enhancements, including corridors along roads, streams, irrigation ditches and tail-water ponds. Much of the work is being done with local students involved in the SLEWS program. The group is scheduled to meet at 1:30PM.

Current Projects/Updates

Greg Golet reported the Colusa Subreach Planning Advisory Workgroup have requested a meeting Wednesday, May 3 in Colusa, with experts regarding pest species impacts and regulatory constraints. The focus is to review the draft scope of work and get feedback to help adjust the project and make it complementary to the SRCAF cross boundary work. Gregg Werner added that the master plan for expansion of recreation in Colusa includes TNC donating the 238 acre Ward property to CA Parks and Recreation, and developing a public access improvement plan. A public meeting is scheduled for May 11, 7PM, at Industrial Properties in Colusa.

Beverly reported the BLM is in the process of applying for National Recreation Area designation for the land north of Red Bluff, in the Paynes Creek area. Congressman Wally Herger will be taking a tour of the area Saturday, May 6. Also, the Sacramento River Discovery Center is hosting its Annual Watershed Celebration, May 13. Beverly spent last week in Portland at the 9th National Mitigation and Conservation Banking Conference. NOAA and Wildlands Inc. are working together to develop an umbrella conservation bank for Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River with which private landowners could get involved. She reported that questions arose concerning designation of credits in a meandering river.

Ellen Gentry reported on the Good Neighbor Policy. Many good comments have been received and are being considered for incorporation by the GNP Committee. The GNP will be reviewed at the next Board meeting, May 25.

New Projects or Proposal Review

Greg Golet gave a PowerPoint presentation on Project Tracker #114, updating the Sacramento River Riparian Monitoring and Assessment Program. The program evaluates previous remnant habitat, old restoration sites, and new restoration sites, to determine the benefits of restoration work from Red Bluff to Colusa and the overall health of the system. This project is combined from three separate projects submitted by TNC, River Partners, and CUSC that have been presented previously. The combined project was briefly outlined at the March Board meeting, no action is required. For more information, visit #114 at www.srcafprojecttracker.org.

Cross Boundary Issues

Stacy reported cross boundary discussions are in a holding pattern until Colusa Subreach studies define tasks at tomorrow's meeting. Input was provided for the Working Landscapes Proposal. There will be a meeting Thursday on Working Landscapes in Sacramento to discuss submitted proposals and how they are progressing. The first round of decision making is expected in late May.

Next Meeting Date and Location

The next TAC meeting was set for Tuesday, June 6 in Willows.