

## Wood for Salmon Working Group Meeting Summary

Date: June 3, 2015  
Location: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Rosa, CA

Attendees: Jonathan Warmerdam, NCRWQCB  
Brandon Thompson, NCRWQCB  
Dave Wright, CGI  
Cheryl Hayhurst, CGS  
Dave Longstreth, CGS  
Brad Valentine, DFW (RA)  
Rick Macedo, DFW  
Kathie Lowrey, PCI  
Carrie Lukacic, PCI  
Patty Madigan, Mendocino Co. RCD  
John Green, Gold Ridge RCD  
Aaron Fairbrook, Sonoma Co. RCD  
Cliff Harvey, SWRCB  
Nick Kunz, SWRCB  
Erika Lovejoy, SusCon  
Erik Schmidt, SusCon  
Anna Halligan, TU  
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Participating by Conference Line/Webinar:

Mary Olswang, DFW  
Lance Salisbury, DFW

**Action items are shown in BOLD font**

### Agenda Items

This Wood for Salmon Working Group (WFSWG) meeting focused on the following topics: (1) wood and fisheries restoration-related announcements; (2) drought/fisheries status reports; (3) update on implementation of AB 2193—Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act; (4) Coho HELP Act workshop summary; (5) General 401 Water Quality Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects update; (6) Pudding Creek BACI large wood experiment update; (7) Coho salmon responses to drought in Pudding Creek; and (8) summary of restoration grant funding opportunities.

#### **1. Wood and Fisheries Restoration-Related Announcements**

- Lance Salisbury announced that DFW is sponsoring a Conservation Lecture Series, including topics on restoration, over the next year. They are open to public (in-person or via webinar). For more information, see: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Lectures>

- Jonathan Warmerdam stated that the final report from The Nature Conservancy/Trout Unlimited/Cal Trout titled “California Coho Salmon Restoration: A Decade in Review” is now available. This report includes (1) details on completed restoration actions to benefit coho, (2) identifies restoration needs, and (3) provides restoration funding analysis.
- Pete Cafferata announced that the Coho Recovery Team (CRT) will meet on July 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento. Presentations from past meetings are posted at: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/documents/ContextDocs.aspx?cat=Fisheries--CohoSalmon>
- Mary Olswang stated that the updated DFW report prepared for the California Fish and Game Commission titled “Recovery Strategy for California Coho Salmon: Progress Report 2004-2012” is available at: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/Documents/ContextDocs.aspx?cat=Fisheries--CohoSalmon>  
The author is Dr. Stephen Swales, DFW.
- Erik Schmidt informed the group that it would be beneficial for Jonathan Warmerdam, acting as Chair of the WFSWG, to contact both NMFS and USACE to solicit participation from their agencies (anticipating that Jonathan Ambrose will be less active with his new position in Sacramento).

## 2. Drought / Fisheries Status Reports

- Rick Macedo stated that the mouth of the Navarro River was illegally breached. A permit is required for any breaching effort and is often denied.
- Dave Wright stated that coho salmon had a good spawning year in Mendocino County, due to the abundant rainfall that occurred up to late December. The main problem is carrying capacity over the summer period due to very low summer streamflow levels.
- Patty Madigan brought up the issue of water rights and concern by some residents in Mendocino County that they are afraid that they may lose their diversion/pumping rights if they do not use them. She stated that additional education and outreach is needed to address this issue. Rick Macedo added that riparian water rights cannot be lost, but appropriative rights could be lost.
- Anna Halligan stated that the Salmonid Restoration Federation is sponsoring a series of workshops on water rights and diversions in southern Humboldt County over the coming year. The clinics will focus on riparian and appropriative water rights. For more information on water rights education, see this SRF website: <http://www.calsalmon.org/programs/water-rights-education>
- Jonathan Warmerdam informed the group about TNC’s California Drought Dashboard website, off the California Salmon Snapshots site. The Drought

Dashboard uses USGS stream gauging station data to illustrate current stream flow conditions on 189 streams. See: <http://www.casalmon.org/disappearing-rivers>

### **3. Update on AB 2193—Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act**

Erika Lovejoy and Erik Schmidt updated the WFSGW on AB 2193, the Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act, that Sustainable Conservation sponsored last year. The law became effective on January 1, 2015 and allows for a simplified and expedited DFW permitting process for small restoration projects. Erika stated that DFW staff is working hard to implement the Act and Sustainable Conservation staff is assisting with program coordination and outreach, and providing assistance to project proponents. She said that Sustainable Conservation may hold workshops in the near future to assist with education about the new program and encourage the submission of strong applications. They hope to see extensive use of the Act to expedite the number of restoration projects being implemented on the ground. The main advantage is time savings—for the same fee project applicants pay for 1600 agreements. Detailed information on AB 2193 is found on Sustainable Conservation's webpage at:

<http://suscon.org/acceleratingrestoration/AB2193.php>.

Lance Salisbury provided input on AB 2193 from DFW's perspective. He explained what is included on DFW's AB 2193 webpage, including links to the Act, LSAA, SWRCB 401 Certification, etc. (see: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/HRE-Act>). Lance explained that there are two pathways available for project proponents: (1) no SWRCB 401 Certification (60 day approval—use FGC § 1652 Request Form on DFW website); and (2) SWRCB 401 Certification obtained (streamlined review—covers LSAA and CESA; review in 30 days—use FGC § 1653 Checklist, which will be available soon). A flowchart is available on the DFW website, illustrating the steps needed for planning a small restoration project (e.g., finalizing plans and designs, cost estimates, securing funding, etc., prior to obtaining agency permits). Application fees are the same as those for LSAA's. Numerous hyperlinks are available on the right side of the webpage for related information to assist project proponents. Lance is the DFW contact for additional information and assistance. To date, he has received three applications using AB 2193 (one was withdrawn). A fact sheet is provided at:

<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=94109&inline>

### **4. Coho HELP Act Workshop Summary**

Mary Olswang summarized the Coho HELP Act workshop held on March 19<sup>th</sup> in Caspar. She provided an overview presentation on the Act; Jonathan Warmerdam covered the SWRCB General 401 Cert, USACE permits, and spreadsheet calculator for determining project size; Anna Halligan summarized the SF Garcia large wood project, which used the Act; Joey Howard reviewed a streambank restoration project in Siskiyou Co. using the Act; and Dave Wright discussed the evolution of large wood projects in North Coast watersheds. Approximately 40 people attended the workshop at Jughandle Farm. Mary is the lead contact for the Coho HELP Act. She has updated the DFW Coho HELP Act webpage (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/Coho/HELP/>) to include photos of the SF

Garcia large wood site and the Parks Creek streambed restoration project in Siskiyou County. There were two large wood projects done with the Act in 2014, five are online for 2015, and one is proposed for 2016. Counting streambank restoration and culvert removal projects, a total of 11 projects using the Act have been approved. Carrie Lukacic informed the group about the requirements of recently passed AB 52, which creates a new category that must be considered under CEQA—"tribal cultural resources", beginning on July 1, 2015. AB 52 imposes new requirements for early consultation regarding projects with tribal members. There was considerable discussion regarding how this new requirement may affect Coho HELP Act/2193 Act submissions. **Carrie volunteered to report back to the WFSWG as she learns more about AB 52 requirements.**

Pete Cafferata briefly summarized the four large wood augmentation projects visited on March 20<sup>th</sup> in the Fort Bragg area as part of the workshop. The tour served as a field meeting of the WFSWG (the field notes/photos will be posted on the WFSWG webpage at: <https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/california/salmon/woodforsalmon/Pages/default.aspx>). The field tour of was hosted by Trout Unlimited, Campbell Global, Jackson Demonstration State Forest, and Christopher Blencowe and Associates. Field stops included (1) the 2010 Kass Creek Accelerated Recruitment Instream Wood Project (CGI), (2) the 2013 SF Noyo River Accelerated Recruitment Instream Wood Project (JDSF), (3) the 2012 NFSF Noyo River Large Wood Project with traditional anchoring (JDSF), and (4) the 1996 Parlin Creek Unanchored Instream Large Wood Pilot Project (JDSF). Approximately 25 people attended the field tour.

## **5. General 401 Water Quality Certification Update**

Cliff Harvey provided an update on the SWRCB 2012 Small Habitat Restoration Project General Order for Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification (SHRP 401 Cert). He listed three reasons why revision was required for the SHRP 401 Cert: (1) conversion of the SHRP 401 Cert into Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) that are applicable to all waters statewide, regardless of jurisdiction; (2) reconciliation of any inconsistencies that might conflict with elements of AB 2193; and (3) clarification of elements of the existing order that are causing uncertainty for staff and planners. Cliff stressed that most importantly, the goal is to keep the components in place that are currently working well (i.e., no unnecessary changes).

SWRCB staff is reaching out to practitioners on the ground for input on revisions. They are working to (1) reconcile the NOI with DFW's AB 2193 form (to reduce duplication of effort), (2) clarify NOI instructions, (2) provide clarification of CEQA exemption eligibility, and (4) introduce basic BMP conditions to provide for use of mechanized equipment and specify erosion control practices. While stakeholders have expressed an interest in increasing the size limit for SHRPs to greater than the 500 linear foot cap, Water Boards and DFW staff agree that some limit is needed to ensure that there is consistency with CEQA Class 33 (which specifies a 5 ac limit). **Cliff stated that the 500 foot limit appears to be a reasonable number that conforms to the spirit of CEQA Class 33, but that WFSWG participants can send him their ideas on this topic (or other comments on**

**the revision process).** Overall, SWRCB staff recommend including clarifications in the revised SHRP 401 Cert for interpretations of Class 33 exemptions, including addressing possible ways to quantify cumulative effects, approving use of mechanized equipment, and making it clear that the presence of listed species does not rule of issue of SHRP 401 Certs (since we are trying to improve habitat). The General Order will not list specific BMPs to use; they need to be specified in the restoration plan for the project.

## **6. Pudding Creek BACI Large Wood Experiment Update**

Dave Wright provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Pudding Creek BACI large wood experiment being conducted in western Mendocino County. This is a cooperative project involving Campbell Global, Trout Unlimited, DFW, The Nature Conservancy, and Chris Blencowe and Associates (including Ken Smith). Pudding Creek is the treatment watershed, while Caspar Creek on Jackson Demonstration State Forest is the control watershed. Life cycle monitoring has been occurring in these basins since 2006. Approximately seven miles (~75%) of Pudding Creek will be treated with standard unanchored large wood structures using FRGP funding. Biological indices have been monitored for three years before treatment and will be monitored for three years after treatment. These indices include smolt abundance monitoring, spawner abundance monitoring, and summer juvenile abundance monitoring. Physical indices, such as the Columbia Habitat Monitoring Program, will also be monitored before and after treatment. Implementation is planned for the summer of 2015, with a summary publication in 2018-19.

The primary question is whether treating the majority of the Class I channel length will increase egg-to-smolt survival or carrying capacity (e.g., more than doubling smolt production from 20,000 smolts to hypothetically 50,000 smolts). The Pudding/Caspar Creek ratio of smolt abundance before and after treatment will also be examined, as will physical factors such as residual pool depths. The greatest uncertainty for the project is the changing landownership that is anticipated for the Pudding Creek watershed.

## **7. Coho Salmon Responses to Drought in Pudding Creek**

Dave Wright continued with a second PowerPoint that addressed coho salmon responses to drought conditions (2012-2015) in the Pudding Creek drainage. Dave stated that during the summer of 2014, the only places with water was where there was structure in the channel to scour pools. The standard life history for coho was displayed, illustrating that usually coho spend one year in freshwater, and return to spawn at age three. Usually there is no recognition of a second freshwater year. In the 2012-2015 three year period, there were good fall streamflows in 2012, no large flows in the fall and early winter of 2013-2014 (with late winter peak flows), and good fall flows in 2014. There were zero spawners in water year 2014, since the rain was too late for coho, but large juvenile fish were found in freshwater. These fish had to be from water year 2013, meaning that they remained a second year in Pudding Creek. Dave stated that this observation raises several questions, including (1) whether this is a coho survival strategy for drought-prone northern California?; (2) are coho programmed to live exactly three years?; (3) If so, will all these fish return as jacks, and is this how most jacks originate?; (4) if this is true, what

happens to the females (will the males return as jacks, but the females as four year old spawners?); and (5) do we need to rethink our present recovery strategy?

## **8. Summary of Restoration Grant Funding Opportunities**

Nick Kunz provided a brief presentation on funding opportunities associated with AB 1492, which established the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFRF) Program, led by Dr. Russ Henly, California Natural Resources Agency. AB 1492 established a 1% tax on lumber products sold in California; set a limit on fire liability for timber companies at fault; eliminated fees for timber harvesting permits; set annual reporting requirements for timber regulatory programs to the Legislature, including ecological performance; and provides for funding of regulatory programs and restoration for existing grant programs addressing fish/wildlife and water quality improvement (e.g., DFW's FRGP and Water Boards CWA 319). For current information on the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Program, visit: <http://resources.ca.gov/forestry/>.

Nick stated that through the annual legislative process, the Water Boards have requested \$2 million for each of the next two years, in the fiscal year starting July 1, 2015. He noted that DFW's FRGP program has received \$2 million for two years, starting last year. The limited term funding request is in recognition that the long term revenue projections are less certain, given the fund has only been collecting the tax revenues since January 2013. The Water Boards will be working with the Natural Resources Agency to determine if future appropriations for restoration funding can continue. The Water Boards intend to align TRFRF appropriation for restoration grants within the 319 grant process. The State Water Board is in the process of evaluating potential changes to the 2016 CWA 319 Request for Proposal (RFP) solicitation and will be working to incorporate the TRFRF requirements into the 2016 RFP. The 2016 Program Preferences is scheduled to be presented to the State Water Board at their July meeting. Follow-up questions can be addressed to Nick at: [Nicholas.Kunz@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Nicholas.Kunz@waterboards.ca.gov) or (916) 341-5566.

Jonathan Warmerdam provided information on additional restoration funding opportunities. Lisa Hulette, TNC, has stated that The Nature Conservancy has \$100,000 private funding available for large wood projects. Requirements include 2015 implementation and that projects are installed in TNC coho priority areas (identified in TNC's SalmonScape report and aligned with State/Federal Recovery Plans). Brief project description information is to be provided to Lisa Hulette at [lhulette@tnc.org](mailto:lhulette@tnc.org). These projects can utilize the Coho HELP Act, be part of a THP, etc.

Also, funding is available from Proposition 1 funding sources. These include DFW's Watershed Restoration Grant Program, which has \$285 million statewide over 10 years for promoting restoration, pollution control, Conservation Easements, etc. These grants do not include funding for required permits or CEQA coverage. Prop 1 funding is also available through the California Wildlife Conservation Board's Stream Flow Enhancement Program (\$200 million statewide over 10 years for habitat restoration projects, water studies, gauges, water efficiency, reconnecting floodplains). For more information on both of these programs, see: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Watersheds/Restoration-Grants>

### **Next WFSWG Meeting Information**

**The next WFSWG meeting was tentatively planned for August. Pete Cafferata will send out a Doodle poll in June. When additional information on the next meeting date and location is available, it will be emailed to the group. It was agreed to keep webinar access to allow for remote participation.**