

Wood for Salmon Workgroup Meeting Summary

Date: March 22, 2013
Location: CAL FIRE Forest Practice Conference Room, Santa Rosa, CA

Attendees: Jonathan Ambrose, NMFS
Patty Madigan, MCRCD
Doug Albin, DFW
Erika Lovejoy, SusCon
Joe Pecharich, NOAA
Dave Wright, CTM
Steve Smith, NRCS
Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE

Participating by Conference Line:

Bill Snyder, CAL FIRE
Rick Macedo, DFW
Dr. Stephen Swales, DFW
Curt Babcock, DFW
Lance Salisbury, DFW
Dennis Hall, CAL FIRE

Action items are shown in BOLD font

Agenda Items

This Wood for Salmon Workgroup (WFSW) meeting focused on the following topics: (1) general wood and fisheries restoration announcements, (2) update on DFW implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961 (Huffman), Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act (Coho HELP Act), (3) discussion of MCRCD RFP wood enhancement projects selected for funding, (4) update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program, (5) update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT), (6) CTM large wood THP update, (7) update on SDSF large wood enhancement project, and (8) brief discussion on CAL FIRE/NMFS possible approaches for a THP process for wood enhancement [other agenda items for this meeting will be held for future discussion].

1. General WFSW Announcements

- Erika Lovejoy announced that Sustainable Conservation, along with NOAA Restoration Center staff, have worked to obtain a programmatic Coastal Commission approval for all projects that receive funding or technical assistance from the NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center (i.e., consistency determination or CD). If the Coastal Commission agrees, this CD will allow restoration projects in the coastal zone within the scope of an existing Biological Opinion without the need for additional permitting (i.e., Coastal Development Permit). The CD is scheduled to be

reviewed by the Coastal Commission at their May 8-10, 2013 meeting in Marin County. **Erika asked for letters of support from WFSW participants.** Joe Pecharich added that currently the NOAA Restoration Center provides reviews on a project-by-project basis, but this CD would provide a highly advantageous programmatic approach. **See the short write-up describing the CD attached to the email message sent with the WFSW meeting notes.**

- Jonathan Ambrose announced that 45,000 coho salmon will be out-planted this year in Scott Creek and San Vicente Creek, located in Santa Cruz County. Stock is from Olema Creek, located in Marin County, and fish are raised at a hatchery run by the Monterey Bay Salmon and Trout Project. The hatchery is located on Big Creek Lumber Company land in the Scott Creek watershed. This is a voluntary effort that both NMFS and DFW support. Many of the fish are tracked with coated wire tagging or PIT tags, and fish range from fry to adults. See: http://www.mercurynews.com/san-mateo-county-times/ci_22484583/Endangered-coho-salmon-released-into-san-vicente-creek.
 - Dave Wright announced that he gave a presentation at the Salmonid Restoration Federation meeting held March 13th-16th in Fortuna titled “*A Short History of Large Wood Abundance, Accelerated Wood Recruitment Methods, and Effectiveness Monitoring in Several Mendocino County Streams.*” He reported on how wood volumes have changed in the Ten Mile River watershed after work at approximately 160 sites, with addition of over 300 pieces of wood, and how these wood volumes compare to that found in old-growth systems. His research of the literature (e.g., Wooster and Hilton 2004) found that old-growth systems have wood loading of 8,000 to 18,000 ft³/ac, compared to approximately 2,000 ft³/ac in managed systems, including South Fork Ten Mile. After the wood enhancement project work, wood loading was elevated approximately 400 ft³/ac. While system-wide wood loading increases were small, substantial channel changes have been documented. For example, pool habitat almost doubled, up from 24% to 44%. Dave’s paper abstract is available at: <http://www.calsalmon.org/files/documents/conference/Conference2013Proceedings.pdf> (see page 81).
 - Steve Smith announced that NRCS has \$2 million available to support restoration projects in the Russian River, Navarro River, and Usal Creek watersheds, mostly through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). **Project proposals should be submitted to NRCS in the very near future.**
 - Rick Macedo announced that Doug Albin will be replacing Rick on the WFSG.
2. **Update on DFW implementation of Assembly Bill No. 1961, Coho Salmon Habitat Enhancement Leading to Preservation Act (Coho HELP Act)**

Stephen Swales informed the WFSW that DFW’s AB 1961 program is up and running. There has been one application to date from Siskiyou County. **Doug Albin and Mary Olswang, DFW, have field reviewed the SF Garcia project by Trout Unlimited that may be**

submitted in the future for AB 1961 applicability. Joe Pecharich stated that the FRGP application deadline just passed, and it is likely that project applicants will now focus on using AB 1961 more in the coming months. Other state agencies (e.g., Caltrans) can use AB 1961; see the following website DFW has for AB 1961: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/Coho/HELP/>.

3. Discussion of MCRCD RFP Wood Enhancement Projects Selected for Funding

Patty Madigan stated that there were two successful applications to the MCRCD for wood enhancement projects using CAL FIRE funding. The projects being funded are: SF Garcia (submitted by Trout Unlimited) and NF Gualala (submitted by the Gualala River Watershed Council). These projects will use the MCRCD permit coordination program CEQA document, and possibly AB 1961.

Approximately \$10,000 remains from the contract with CAL FIRE, and CAL FIRE Staff Chief Chris Zimny has determined that these dollars can be used for education activities related to large wood placement stream habitat improvement projects. **Patty is planning for a training session in May using the BLM office in Ukiah, as well as field sites along Orr Springs Road. Training will be for practitioners and landowners, emphasizing how to do large wood projects (e.g., permitting, project design). Steve Smith suggested involving UC Cooperative Extension staff. Patty will create a short survey and send it to WFSW to help plan this training session. She will create a draft agenda in mid-April.**

If there are still remaining funds, Patty proposed to amend the CAL FIRE contract and use the dollars to help fund additional California Cooperative Management Plans in Mendocino County (supported by the second part of the contract with CAL FIRE). Management plan applications are starting to be sent to the MCRCD, with the expectation of funding 8-10 plans.

4. Update on the Mendocino County RCD Permit Coordination Program

Patty Madigan informed the group that the MCRCD permit coordination program CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) document covers nine common practices (1. access roads, 2. critical area planting, 3. stream habitat improvement and management, 4. grade stabilization structure, 5. road/landing removal, 6. stream bank protection, 7. stream channel vegetation, 8. structure for water control, and 9. restoration and management of declining habitats). There is widespread agreement that this programmatic CEQA document will be highly advantageous for small habitat improvement projects.

She said that MCRCD staff had met with DFW staff, and that it has been decided that DFW will use conventional LSAA permitting, with the promise of expeditious permit processing associated with MCRCD permit coordination program applications. There is no federal nexus process in place for incidental take, but discussions continue with Joe Pecharich, NOAA Restoration Center, and USACE staff. The expectation is that they will receive a Regional General Permit (RGP) from the Army Corps of Engineers. **The goal is to have all components of the Permit Coordination Program completed by August 2013.** This will be the first summer when the new coordinated permit program will be used

in the field, and it will be tested by the NF Gualala and SF Garcia projects being funded by the MCRCD and CAL FIRE.

5. Update on the Central Coast Priority Action Coho Team (PACT)

PACT is a joint effort between NMFS and DFW that is attempting to identify new and available resources to expedite immediate actions to prevent extinction of coho salmon within the CCC coho salmon ESU. Formed in early 2011, the PACT consists of a management team, coordination committee, and six technical working groups (including outreach, funding, restoration, water flow, hatcheries and fish rescue). The technical working groups supplied draft recommendations to the coordination committee in 2012. Dr. Stephen Swales informed the WFSW that the six working groups are still producing their final products, with the expectation that there will be submissions from all the groups in 1-2 months. The goal is to implement the recommendations from the working groups during 2013, but the exact timing for implementation is unknown.

6. CTM Large Wood Project THP and VTAC Potential Pilot Project

Dave Wright stated that Campbell Timberland Management has developed a THP with a large wood enhancement component in the Smith Creek drainage, part of the SF Ten Mile River watershed in western Mendocino County. The incised channel has been cleared in the past; current wood loading is very low and pool habitat is lacking. This is a coho core area for recovery and is located in a good thermal zone. The project calls for direct felling of wood along a 2,500 foot stretch of Smith Creek. The small-scale proposal is to: (1) fell 17 trees at 6 sites, (2) harvest trees in the Core and Inner zones of the Class I WLPZ to offset costs. Photo and long profile monitoring will occur. This is a potential Section V Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC) pilot project to demonstrate active riparian management to enhance habitat conditions for listed anadromous salmonids. **A pre-consultation field review of the project will occur on April 4th with the reviewing agencies.**

7. Update on the SDSF Large Wood Enhancement Project

Pete Cafferata provided a detailed PowerPoint handout prepared by CGS's Stephen Reynolds illustrating the large wood project implemented at site #1 on the East Branch of Soquel Creek, located on Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF), during late August-early September 2012, and subsequent changes following early winter storm events. While only site #1 has been constructed to date, the entire SDSF project includes installing large wood along a 0.7 mile stretch of the East Branch of Soquel Creek in four, 200-foot reaches, as well as installing a fish-friendly log revetment project associated with a streambank failure site along Hihn's Mill Road.

Steve Reynolds designed the installations and has supervised field installation at site #1. Work at this site was completed under a grant from the RCD of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC), with the RCD contracting directly with the operator. Three log clusters (non-anchored) were installed by excavating coast redwood clumps located along the streambank, and pushing the clumps over toward the channel. Two of the clumps fell across the channel, instead of downstream. The trees were bucked at approximately 65-

70 feet, and then rotated so that the tops were pointed downstream. The multiple stems stayed attached to one large rootwad for each of the three clumps and each are functioning as a cluster. Streamflow in December 2012 produced a peak flow with a return interval of almost 5 years, slightly moving the log clumps and beginning the process of scouring pools and forming complex wood jams. Channel long profiles run by CGS show improved habitat complexity. The NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center will monitor the large wood structures to document wood movement, aquatic habitat changes, and fish community changes. **A contract to finish the remaining sites will be advertised in April, with the expectation that the remaining three wood sites and the road repair site will be completed by mid-October of this year.**

Jonathan Ambrose added that while this project on SDSF is limited in scope, a greater benefit may come from demonstrating the feasibility of wood projects to landowners and regulators in Santa Cruz County, where very little of this work has previously occurred. For example, a landowner located just downstream of SDSF is interested in constructing a large wood project because of the work conducted on SDSF. Additionally, he stated that while “chop and drop” unanchored wood projects are good, the demonstration of log clusters with attached rootwads in systems with high winter streamflows is valuable.

8. Brief Discussion on CAL FIRE/NMFS Approach for a THP Process for Wood Enhancement

Bill Snyder stated that CAL FIRE and NMFS staff are in the very beginning stages of working on a programmatic approach for recovery actions on non-federal timberlands in California. NMFS staff is developing a draft Question and Answer document prior to undertaking landowner outreach efforts.

Next WFSW Meeting Date

Pete Cafferata agreed to send out a Doodle poll for a WFSW meeting to be held in June 2013.