

Meeting Summary  
**Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)**

Tuesday, September 5, 2023, 9am  
Via Microsoft Teams and at TRRP Office, Weaverville, CA

## **Participants**

Kiana Abel\* (TRRP/USBR), Galen Anderson (USFS), John Buffington (SAB), Todd Buxton (TRRP/USBR), Morgan Knechtle (CDFW), James Lee (TRRP/USBR), Trevor Morgan (CDWR), Eric Peterson (TRRP/USBR), Patrick Flynn\* (Trinity County), Jerilyn Smith (Member of the Public - Trinity River Watershed Alliance), Chris Laskodi (Yurok), Dave Gaeuman (Yurok), Kyle De Julio (Yurok), Karl Seitz (Hoopa), Justin Alvarez (Hoopa), Connor Shea (FWS), Ken Lindke (CDFW), Oliver Rogers (TRRP/USBR), Mike Dixon (TRRP/USBR), Duncan McIntosh (TCRCD), NMFS (Absent)

\* = note takers

## **Action Items Derived during the Meeting**

Advancing of Flow Workgroup recommendation on Water Year 2024 to TMC

Acceptance of bid on Limiting Factor Analysis

## **Summary of Meeting by Agenda Items**

### **1 Introductions / Agenda Review and Finalization (Peterson)**

Participants were asked to introduce themselves. No changes to the agenda were suggested.

Peterson is suggesting to schedule regular meetings a bit longer (e.g. from two hours to four hours) due to topics being added thus constraining time. If topics are not added, it is easily to cut meeting time back. No objections.

### **2 Updates (Peterson)**

**Cohort reconstruction project.** Lindke comments: project should meet the timeline of starting on October 1. On track, anticipate the model being completed by the end of the calendar year. Results should follow shortly after the model being completed.

Rogers comments: should we have a public comment period since there is someone here from the public? Member of public has no mic and will place comments in the chat; Abel will monitor chat.

**2022 Terrain and Flow Modeling.** Please reach out to Peterson if you have additions to flows for modeling.

**Synthesis Reports.** Two posted in the last few months, bed mobility and scour, and water temperature analysis.

Final edits – Adult salmon spawning.

Channel Complexity delayed with an uncertain timeline.

Large Wood Management – under review and moving along. DTA done 2024.

Flow Synthesis – no solid ETA, in progress

**Implementation Update** (Lee). Oregon Gulch pilot channel created before the boat dance flows, river was diverted during the flows and plug was partially constructed. Turbidity spike prior to the flows but is back down and all is moving forward and on time. Veronica Yates (HVT) is prepping to plant shortly. Focus moving into Upper Conner Creek (UCC) – we have increasing landowner buy-in including a key landowner. Looking at 2024 implementation. EA for both UCC and Sawmill. No solid plan for FY25, may be UCC or Sawmill or Sky Ranch.

Comments: Lindke asked about the Sky Ranch land transfer and where Sky Ranch fits into the queue. BLM looking at the end of the calendar year for a complete transfer, then the EA process can begin. Rogers reported that land transfer between TPUD, US Forest Service, and BLM has been delayed to Feb 2024. Sky Ranch queued for 2026 or farther. Gaeuman asked Lee to send a notification out to the YTF Design team when Upper Conner Creek gets going so they can finish their 60% design. Looking at finishing the 60% design with a late October deadline. Mid-October is too soon. Lee will confirm timelines with Emily Thorn, don't want to delay UCC.

**Phase II Review** (Peterson / Lee). Phase 2 Review is in final edits for clarity. Should have final any day.

Comments: De Julio asked if the Phase 2 review is just a document summarizing the recommendations at the TMC? Peterson answered that it is a review of phase 2 channel rehab activities, and likely has more detail than what was presented to TMC. TMC presentation covered the basics, but the report is much longer. Their recommendations, no back and forth between the Program and only an outside perspective. The final edits currently in progress don't influence the review, just some technical adjustments and complete the 508. Was due the end of July and are still waiting. Rogers asked for clarification if the Program phase 2 review was not exclusively channel rehab? Peterson clarified that there are recommendations related to channel rehab and how that interacts with the rest of the program, which can include flows. There could be some overlap into policy and/or flow implementation in the recommendations that influence channel rehab projects.

### **3 Interaction between SAB/IDT (Peterson)**

Peterson has been communicating with the SAB, inviting them to meetings to keep them informed. Should we have a general open invite to SAB members to IDT Meetings? Not members, but add them to the invite list? Are there other ways to increase interaction with SAB?

Comments: Buffington, SAB, is looking for more ways to interact with the scientists. Thinks IDT meetings are very valuable, and will encourage new members to interact. Also will help with learning curve. Lindke asked Buffington how has engagement varied through time. Buffington has been on SAB 10 yrs and reported that SAB engagement has varied with who is leading the program and science branch. SAB members didn't usually attend IDT or TMC meetings. Tasks were delegated to SAB by the ED and varied depending on who was ED. Lindke welcomes more engagement and a broader depth of knowledge. Only concern is the time given to SAB and that the meetings don't interfere with other important tasks. John – yes limited amount of time, would depend on workload. Peterson confirms that we're underusing the SAB time. SAB members can join IDT/workgroups if they are available. De Julio: encourages more SAB engagement. Don't want them to become too aligned with the workgroups. Could this interfere with the independence of the SAB or create bias? Buffington: more engagement is beneficial. Science plan – sometimes it's difficult to understand what is important and why when reviewing. Certainly wants to remain objective and unbiased. Peterson: extend invitations to specific work group invites to relevant SAB members? Buffington: case by case basis, not all meetings. Gaeuman: technical workgroup level makes more sense vs IDT, subject matter experts engage at the technical level. Gaeuman: email list, good idea so they can

receive meeting minutes and agendas and can determine which meeting is best for them to attend. Lindke: all meetings are open – should be picky in joining. If SAB members are going to join workgroups, should be increased responsibility for the coordinators to stick to agendas; additionally, notes should be better if they are going to rely on those. Peterson: All workgroup meetings should have an agenda posted prior and a summary of the meeting afterwards. Dixon: please review the Program Document; there is discussion of lane-following within workgroups. Peterson: consensus to move forward. Determination is yes.

Peterson asked for a consensus on SAB at-will involvement in workgroups or IDT

CONSENSUS DECISION REACHED

#### **4 TMC Agenda Review (Peterson)**

TMC will vote on a new vicechair. Tanya Sommer is now unavailable and TMC will need to replace Don Bader who will move to chair. Lindke: any federal agency can be chair? Dixon: yes, must be a federal agency.

Peterson reviewed the TMC agenda.

Day 1 - 9/13

TMC will decide whether to add an additional SAB member, and will consider selecting one or more members. There is a dilemma around choosing the geomorphology SAB rep – Dr Tonina or Dr Bledsoe. Could solve by having the TMC to make this decision with a simple majority, or expand the SAB to 6 members and take on both candidates.

Comments: De Julio: don't want to complicate this further, but we'd like to have both individuals at some point. Would it work out best, Dr. Bledsoe was chosen now, and Dr. Tonina take the position soon when Dr Buffington leaves us. Peterson: let's not re-open this now. We have our recommendation with pros and cons for the TMC to make the final decision. Peterson suggests De Julio to bring that solution forward at the TMC meeting via his TMC rep. Buffington: said if both are selected, he would step down as soon as it's possible. Buxton asked about Dr. Bledsoe's experience with geomorphology, because Dr. Buffington is a great resource for geomorphology, and some of that expertise could be lost if he is replaced by a hydrologist (as Dr. Bledsoe is). Todd suggested that Dr. Bledsoe be selected as the candidate for this reason. Peterson: thinks both members are appropriate choices in the hydrology and geomorphology world. Peterson and Buffington agree that either Tonina or Bledsoe would be fine in both positions. TMC will decide.

Greg Courtice (British Columbia scientist) will give a fire-induced sediment presentation. Timely with North Fork sediment issues and gill rot.

Day 2 - 9/14

TMC will decide WY24 flow recommendation based on the Flow workgroup recommendation.

Comments: none.

#### **5 10 min break – return at 10:20**

#### **6 LFA – ITD decision item**

First phase - "Planning Team", develop the plan. Second Phase "Study Team", outside experts conduct the study plan and do the work of the LFA (entirely external). NFWF – placing the RFQ for

the planning phase. Phase 1 Planning Team RFQ, proposals were due 8/18. Received only one response. Cramer Fish Sciences. Peterson likes the proposal, but recognizes that it is only one. NFWF indicated they can move forward with a single response but asked if TRRP wanted to move forward or re-fly the RFQ. Other contractors couldn't meet the timeline. IDT – should we re-compete? Or accept Cramer Fish Sciences. Extend the timeline if we re-compete. May end up at December of 2025 for the complete LFA if re-compete.

Comments: Buxton: TRRP LFA experts? In scoping, should we request recommended time frames? Funding can take as long as 6 months on our side. Shea: Confused by the dates – re-compete would have the optimistic outcome of the end of phase 2 in December of 2025? Peterson: reason we didn't get a lot of proposals was due to the timeline. Speculating timeline at this point, Buxton's point is that if the timeline is developed with the "planning team" the timeline may become more clear. Shea: advertising via NFWF – decisions are made by price or quality? Dixon: caution flag – grant solicited via NFWF, if shopped as a contract, then the submitted proposal would have to be chosen. Chance that the grant award could be contested if the proposal was not chosen (if in contracting world). Not clear that this applies here. Lindke: advocates for resolicitation. It's not competitive with only one applicant. Cramer is well known and respected but some Red Flags - highest level PHD, journeyman scientists are allocated to this project which seems fishy. Time budgeted seems inadequate, i.e. 8 hrs for TRRP report reading – does not seem adequate. Surface looks good, but not convinced. Peterson pointed out that the "planning project" could have far lower timelines than the "implementation project" and that McBain advocated for Cramer based on team and experience. Peterson asked the group if the planning team needs to have comprehensive TRRP knowledge, or if the implementation team is the group that needs to have the level of knowledge. De Julio asked if program scientist interaction is still on the table. Staff could give input to help out the applicant to meet the short timeline. Peterson: Yes, three internal scientists/three external. De Julio: emphasis on quick implementation – science plan recommends first three years of phase 2. Dissatisfying to have only one applicant, and they are committing their best scientists, hopefully they commit to that. Is the timeline the most important thing here? De Julio points out that the Program sort of narrowed down the candidates by creating such a short timeline. Shea: advocates for re-competing. Flynn: does extending the timeline mess with any program goals in the short term? Might help make a decision. Peterson: this analysis would help with bottlenecks that the program is struggling with. We're producing more young fish, but they are not coming back as adults. Alvarez: advocates for choosing Cramer. We are looking for the best and brightest for the scope and analysis conducting – and that is what they are offering. Does not agree that we may get more or better applicants. Peterson: this is just the plan and not the actual LFA. Thinks this is a great start. De Julio: leans toward moving forward, because it's just generating a plan. We don't have an obligation to enact. Commitment seems small financially. However, gives a lot of deference to FWS since they were a big driver for the Science Plan. Lindke: Science Plan puts LFA completion at the end of 2025. Peterson: USGS was considering a proposal but did not submit. Unclear if federal agencies can accept grants from other federal agencies via NFWF. Otherwise heard in general that everyone is busy and they don't need low funded quick timeline projects. Largely this would be our staff being advised by outside experts. Shea: Nick Som said lots of people would have submitted if not for the timeline. Buxton: suggests considering reviewing Cramer's work. See if they are touching on the things that are important on the Trinity. Opinions are important and agrees with having more applicants and larger suite of work. Dixon pointed out that TRRP provided funding to NFWF to solicit the proposal, and then award a grant based on that solicitation. It is ultimately NFWF's decision. What is that IDT ask? Dixon also reinforced his opinion about the chance of someone contesting the award. Peterson: LFA subcommittee put together a proposal on how to move forward with the LFA.

With the one response, NFWF asked if this was sufficient or should we recompetete? Concern about qualifications was not raised by NFWF. De Julio: applicant is qualified, would just like more of a response and may have to revise the timeline to do what the IDT is recommending. Peterson: plan could identify broader timelines for the analysis. This is just to develop the plan. Feels the response is sufficient for the proposal. Shea: IDT decision – one proposal acceptable, or do we recompetete? Peterson: Is this proposal unacceptable? Lindke: would like to understand NFWF’s intent on asking if this applicant is sufficient. Peterson: NFWF compliance said one applicant is sufficient however would like to know if the applicant is qualified for the scope. Buxton: say we got two applicants in a recompetete - could we task each applicant with a portion of the work? Peterson: can only hire one organization. Knechtle: if there is no requirement for multiple solicitations, seems like the company who solicited would be a good choice. Lindke: study plan is the bulk of the development to understand how the analysis will be implemented. This is the most important step. What happens if the study plan is inadequate? Important that we get it right not that we do it fast. Lee: is this applicant qualified and can we reject if they are? Alvarez: would advocate for more proposals if he though Cramer would not do well. Doesn’t feel like he’s settling. Suggests looking at other groups, such as Stillwater Sciences, to develop a basis of comparison for making a decision. Alvarez has done this and is confident that Cramer will do a good job. Peterson: the study plan team will involve Program Scientists as well.

Is the Cramer proposal sufficient to move forward:

- (reclamation) yes
- (FWS) recompetete/no
- (Yurok) yes – not having the blessing of FWS is not ideal
- (Hoopa) yes
- (State of California – dwr/cdfw) recompetete but will not stand against a consensus
- (NMFS) - absent
- (Forest Service) - yes
- (Trinity County) - yes

Majority consensus decision to move forward with Cramer. FWS, State & majority would have liked to see more applicants. Phase 1 group should identify if we need to move the timeline for phase 2.

CONSENSUS DECISION REACHED with differing views from FWS and State (Lindke)

IDT accepts proposal from Cramer

## **7 Flow WG recommendation for WY24 – does the IDT concur? (Lindke)**

Ken: presentation tomorrow night? ½ is stream ecology, 1/2 is results from WY23 and also the recommendation.

Discussion: Shea: would like to see results. Peterson: can we review WY23 results, want the recommendation to be before the lunch hour.

WY23 recommendation: WFV

Trigger-based synchronized flow event December – February 15, 6500cfs peak with ramp down rates elevation for 3 weeks total. 4500 cfs at the NF gauge [not enacted WY23]. Elevated Base flow period: mid February – mid April dependent on the forecast and synchronization period.

Recommendation is the same for WY24. WY23 sync flow did not occur, also an upper limit constraint to elevated baseflows until Apr 1 due to infrastructure limitations.

WY23 results:

Geomorphic objectives: disturbance for macroinvertebrate community. % of the bed that is disturbed within the flow magnitude. Disturbance follows the hydrograph pretty well, except the January 15 disturbance event that did not happen. Would have reset the food web. Lower downstream has less need than by the dam.

Fine sediment deposition just stayed and likely suffocated redds. Wetted width ecological mechanism that grows food for fish. Flows go up and the wetted width expands. As more fish are coming out of the gravel we have more fish finding those food resources. Would have had also reset invert community on bed if a synchronized flow in December would have happened.

What's happening out on those floodplains? Measuring monthly to 4 sites in the 40-mile stretch. Taking samples to find macroinvertebrates and measuring length of inundation. Sawmill site (purest look at elevated baseflow period) & junction city (more effected by tributary accretion). Enumeration of bug species and estimated bio-mass. After 5 wks vs 2 weeks there is a significant increase in food availability. Not a surprising result, but great empirical evidence to back up the WFV hypothesis. Half or more spawning occurs above these sites so this food availability is really important. Temperature: flows are increasing space and food supply, what is happening with temperature? Looks like this year, we spent more time in the optimal rearing temperature range and for a longer period of time.

Fish data: more messy, Willow Creek screw trap from this year, first time this was an option. Saw a small but significant increase in fork length, relative to previous wet water years. Looks like the first monitoring results are bigger/longer. However, weight did not increase. Population productivity fits close to (below) the fitted line. May have lost a lot of redds from the sediment suffocation at deadwood creek. Despite the loss, we did as expected. Reasonable to think that occurred, but it's a hypothesis at this point.

Monitoring results in brief:

- Stream Bed Disturbance
- IF sync flow HAD BEEN enacted, then there would have been bed mobilization in January from WVF up to 35 of bedload
- Stream Bed Inundation
- About 150 ft wider stream bed inundation during elevation baseflow period
- Inundated floodplains (what is actually happening during WVF implementation?)
- King and Laskodi results
- Juveniles observed in both Sawmill and Junction City
- After 5 weeks of inundation at sawmill there is over 1000 mg/m<sup>2</sup> greater than 2 week inundation period

- Direct observation of making food for fish
- Likewise at Junction City, there is a 250 mg/m<sup>2</sup> increase from 2 weeks to 6 weeks
- Temperature results: better temps for a longer period of time
- Fork Length: larger
- Weight: smaller

### **Does IDT concur with recommending the same flow recommendations as WY23?**

Comments: Buxton: can this recommendation allow for flexibility to smooth into the spring flow release? Include latitude for changes. Lindke: Components are intentional to preserve habitat going onto the spring release.

Jerilyn: Are storage levels being taken into consideration? Ken: we work specifically on the water year allocation (B120 allocation). Reclamation is required to release this amount for restoration purposes. Biggest factors are water from the sky, diversions and then releases to the river.

Gaeuman: decouple the synchronized flow with the feb-april flow. Losing the synchronization would be a shame. Peterson: suggest individuals take that idea to TMC members.

De Juilio: storage is at 83% of average. Planned outage of Carr tunnel, less diversion than normal. More storage recovery due to this. Storage doesn't seem to be a concern this year.

Is there any hesitation with advancing the Flow WG recommendation? No responses.

CONSENSUS DECISION REACHED

Flow WG is forwarding winter flow to TMC

## **8 Flow Presentation – Public version**

Abel: Caddisfly casings – cows of the river – they graze and remove algae. Riparian Habitat (also a benefit) - last Science on the River – John Bair went into detail about how flows help to create riparian habitat conducive for fish and other wildlife growth. Adding numbers to slides so people can reference. Sting Ray Violin Plot– fork length. Buffington: great presentation, make sure to define synchronized flows.

Shea: decision matrix to respond to flows based on the weather. Not just “what we did last year”. Will see changes as the season moves.

Dixon: 90 minutes for time. Length of presentation is fine.

Peterson: One slide for take home points for WY23 then recommendation slide

Laskodi: refer to fish food to juvenile fish – adult fish, don't really eat for growth, but for sustenance. Not as important vs juvenile food. Lewiston most effective by WVF, make sure to mention that. Responses in macroinvertebrates – you can see the response vs gravel.

De Juilio: ecology & water management slides – take questions. [others later suggested taking questions mid-way would throw presentation off-track]

Flynn: reading Jerilyn's comment.

Jerilyn's comment: This my observation for tomorrow's presentation. Yes keep micro sampling slide. will help many understand the why behind the length of time. Making the statement on the full natural flow and storage you may want to reword or leave out? it will not be taken well in a large group.

Flynn: describe the violin chart. Both the 2023 and previous wet year graphs look much the same.

De Julio: 90mm is the fork length that really determines how much more efficient fish are at surviving. Suggest putting in a line on the graphs to show.

Rogers: BMI and Chris' work.

**Adjourned 1:41 pm**