Meeting Summary

FLOW WORK GROUP

Friday February 23, 2024

USFWS Office Arcata/TRRP Office Weaverville/MS Teams

Friday, February 23, 2024: 1:00 PM

Participants*

Core members: Justin Alvarez (HVT), Galen Anderson (USFS), Todd Buxton (USBR/TRRP), Kyle De Juilio (YTFP), Patrick Flynn (Trinity Co.), Ken Lindke (CDFW, coordinator), Seth Naman (NOAA)

Other participants: Lauren Alvarez (USBR/TRRP), John Bair (McBain Assoc.), Mike Dixon (USBR/TRRP), Justin LaNier (CDWR), Chris Laskodi (USBR/YTFP/TRRP), James Lee (USBR/TRRP), Eric Peterson (USBR/TRRP), Reuben Smit (USFWS), Ty Wallin (USFWS)

* List may be incomplete.

Action Items Derived During the Meeting

Action Item 1: Ken will compile DSS results for the following hydrographs for consideration at the next meeting: "WET8.5" and "WET11" from 2011, "BPR Wet" and "BPR Ex. Wet" from 2016, and the Extremely Wet and Wet hydrographs implemented in 2017 and 2019, respectively.

Meeting Summary

Lindke recapped TMC discussions and vote results from the December TMC meeting and the January TMC call. Trinity County remained a "no" vote on winter variable flows in December, and subsequent discussions did not change that position. Further details can be found in TMC meeting summaries.

Flynn asked what the plan was for water year 2025. Will we go through the same process not knowing if Trinity County will change their position? When will planning start? Lindke replied that we don't have a plan yet and wondered if ESA reconsultation on flows would be a factor. Could it be done by then, changing the process considerably? Naman didn't think reconsultation would be done in time for WY25, and Dixon agreed it was very unlikely. L. Alvarez and Laskodi noted that the FONSI is complete and ready to be signed. As far as Trinity County and the timeline, Dixon relayed that USBR asked the County to provide a flow proposal or constraints in writing by the June 2024 TMC meeting. Lee recommended we clarify what is needed from the County so we get something we can work with and reduce the need for an iterative process. De Juilio said nobody should expect any technical recommendation from the Flow Workgroup that is different than winter variable flows (WVF), particularly with respect to volumes. The WVF volumes were specifically identified as the minimum necessary to yield a measurable benefit based on the best models currently in use in the Trinity.

Laskodi had looked at fishable days lost and gained during the WY23 winter flow partial implementation. He offered to do that again and present it to the County. Naman recommended looking at fishable days for the entire water year, including the spring Chinook fishery. Focusing only on the winter flow period exagerates the actual impacts. Loss of fishable days was a major concern of the County. De Juilio asked that any non-technical constraints or recommendations be taken to TMC, not to workgroups. Workgroups are tasked with making technical recommendations based on the best available science, so it is not the purview of workgroups to accommodate other concerns without direction from TMC. If TMC agrees to non-technical constraints, then TMC can direct workgroups accordingly. Dixon agreed with this process recommendation. De Juilio also pointed out that strictly flow-based analyses of "fishable" days are theoretical because other factors can make the river unfishable, e.g., high turbidity from Deadwood Ck. or dam releases. Someone relayed a message from Cory (manager of Indian Ck. Lodge) that almost all cancellations from last year and this year were from Deadwood Ck. turbidity. The river has been essentially unfishable all of February 2024. Kyle pointed out that we lost six months of fishing opportunity due to the fall Chinook fishery closure, a longer-term problem that we are trying to address by increasing production through flow management. There is a give and take relative to compromised fishing due to flow in the short term vs. increased opportunity from production benefits in the longer term. Kyle also suggested that it may be ill advised to ask the County what the definition of "fishable" is because it would only be a few voices speaking for a large group of people. A questionnaire to the fishing community would be better. James suggested bringing these questions up at the next IDT meeting to see if we can provide guidance to the County to help make their requests workable.

Discussion turned to WY24 spring release planning. Lindke presented Wet and Extremely Wet water year objectives from the flow study, most of which are geomorphic. He also presented the Wet hydrograph implemented in 2019 and the Extremely Wet hydrograph implemented in 2017 along with the stated objectives from the workgroup from those years. These had been suggested prior to the meeting for consideration of "off-the-shelf" options for WY24. De Juilio pointed out that we hit all the geomorphic objectives three times in WY23, so we may not need to prioritize these objectives in WY24. Also, a peak release does not need to exceed 6,000 cfs to meet riparian scour objectives because the 1-year-old year class is the only one on the landscape that can be scoured with our flows. Bair noted that there are geomorphic objectives aside from riparian scour and asked why we wouldn't try to meet those. De Juilio responded that we went big last year so it may not be a priority.

Lee asked Bair for his thoughts on revegetation needs at Oregon Gulch. Bair responded: the whole surface is below the 1,000 cfs elevation, so what would we do with all that water if we're trying to get to that surface at the right time, then do a recession? Lee conceded that we wouldn't be able to hit the cottonwood dispersal window with all that water, but we could hit the narrow leaf willow window. Naman noted that we just have too much water all at once at the wrong time, too late, which is one of the primary issues we attempted to address with winter flows. De Juilio cautioned that we might not want to colonize a whole 20 acres with narrow leaf willow in year 1, and floated the possibility of bringing flows back up to submerge the area during narrow leaf season to prevent mass colonization. Bair noted that we might be forced to skip an entire year of riparian colonization at Oregon Gulch because of flow constraints. Lee noted that we expect the surface to change, so it may be OK to skip a year and let the surfaces settle out before a big recruitment year. Bair noted, however, that we might expect a lot of inundation mortality of planted stock, which would be lost effort. Peterson suggested that we will likely

see topographic change before seed dispersal because the site will be hit with a big flow first. There will still be opportunity for topographic variability. De Juilio highlighted a unique risk at Oregon Gulch that there is (will always?) be limited opportunity for scour of willows because the valley is so wide and velocities will remain low. Dixon opined that if we don't want riparian recruitment this year, maybe we do want to facilitate future topographic variability for future riparian recruitment with a large geomorphic release. This could be an alternative way to achieve riparian species diversity if scour is ineffective at the site. Buxton asked that if we focus on Oregon Gulch, that we make sure it isn't detrimental to the rest of the river. Bair agreed with the concern about managing a whole river for one restoration site. De Juilio noted that there is still a lot of uncertainty there, so it is probably best not to develop hydrographs specifically for the one site.

Lindke noted that there is an on-going egg survival study in the mainstem river just downstream of Lewiston and requested that the spring release begin on April 16th to maximize the duration of the study and give crews a Monday to pull artificial redds.

De Juilio noted that the temperature synthesis report recommended a monthly average of 1,000 cfs and 1,500 cfs in May of Wet and Extremely Wet water years, respectively.

Lindke suggested using an old hydrograph, either one that was implemented or a proposed one that was modelled. There was general agreement among the group. Buxton informed the group that if someone proposes a novel hydrograph, and it were selected, that person would also have to develop the subdaily schedule. He has a spreadsheet to help. J. Alvarez asked what would be the threshold for changes to an existing hydrograph that would trigger new modelling? General consensus was enough change that we think would make a meaningful difference in model results. De Juilio suggested limiting consideration to whatever year we stopped the 2,000 cfs habitat bench and adopted new riparian rampdown rates (2011?). The group reviewed hydrographs implemented or proposed in Wet and Extremely Wet years since 2011 and agreed to gather modeling results from several hydrographs from 2011, 2016, 2017, and 2019 for consideration at the next meeting.

5:00 PM Adjourn